ELC Philosophy

“Bringing to life a thriving culture of teaching and learning...” (CGGS Values)

The Canberra Girls Grammar School (CGGS) Early Learning Centre (ELC) journey began in 1926 by the trailblazing women of the Community of the Sisters of the Church, led by Mother Emily Ackbowm. First called St Gabriels’ School, with only 10 students, CGGS is proudly the oldest, independent, non-selective school in Canberra, with approximately 1500 students, from 3 year olds to Year 12.

The ELC opened in 2004 on the Junior School Campus in Deakin, a leafy inner south suburb. We acknowledge and respect the traditional custodians of the land on which our School and local community connect, the Ngunnawal people, and seek to nurture a community in which every person is supported to flourish and thrive. The modest original building was expanded in 2019, to provide a contemporary, purpose built space for our 3 to 5 year old boys and girls, where they can safely explore generous indoor, outdoor and ‘beyond the fence’ environments.

Mother Emily and the Sisters of the Church had an unwavering dedication to their school community and a commitment to education for all, particularly girls. The Sisters had a reputation for taking a holistic view of each child, exemplified by the act of giving fruit buns to poor and hungry students to help them focus on their day of learning, for which they were well known. The ELC continues to build on this foundation, focusing on the holistic wellbeing and development of each student during this important and unique phase of early childhood. Nurturing and trusting relationships between educators, students and families are cultivated, as our students and families are supported to explore “more of their best selves” (Mother Emily Ackbowm) and to show compassion and a generosity of spirit to others.

As you venture through the modest entryway of the ELC, you are immediately drawn to explore deeper. There is an explosion of the senses, with beautiful learning spaces filled with light, nature, colour and texture, including the busy sounds of students engaging with carefully chosen resources which support and enhance learning through play, relationships and inquiry. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (PYP) are embedded and transformative in all that we do. They work harmoniously together, valuing the natural curiosity and agency of each student as we support children to become resilient, confident, responsible and compassionate citizens of the world, who have fun and love learning.

All educators and co-educators have specialist early childhood qualifications and impressive levels of teaching experience, which is evident throughout our commitment to quality early childhood education, highly intentional practice, professional knowledge and collaboration. The belief that “in every human being there is the seed of a great future” (Mother Emily Ackbowm) motivates and excites us all.

Always striving forward, we are continually inspired by contemporary research and responsive to current issues, however, the core of our strength and vision comes from our authentic identity derived from our founding Mother Emily and the Sisters of the Church. As the ELC grows and evolves, we hope to be held fondly in the memory of all who share time with us, as we nurture them towards a positive and fulfilling future.