

SOUTHWELL SCHOOL

Location: Hamilton

Independent Co-educational (Years 1-8)

Roll 612

Ethnicity Pakeha 79%; Maori 3%; Other European 4%; Asian 5%

Headmaster: Royce Helm

History

Royce Helm, the current Headmaster of Southwell School had been closely involved with values programmes in two former schools, St Kentigern Preparatory School, where the Living Values programme was introduced, and St George's School Wanganui. At St George's he first became interested in Art Costa's "Habits of Mind" and found it a useful and inspirational basis from which to work.

At Southall Mr Helm has developed the Habits of Mind concept using the sixteen habits and Costa's format (available on-line) in chapel, and in a school-wide approach that provides for a focus on one "habit" every fortnight or so, linking a way of thinking (for example, persistence) to the school's stated values.

The values programme has become an integral part of a much wider picture at Southwell. As a church school Christian values have always been fundamental to school philosophy and parental expectations. A commitment to service has also always been an important part of school life. But Art Costa's "Habits" have provided a framework to ensure that day-to-day there are practical opportunities to bring the values to life and make them more meaningful for children.

At first teaching staff were wary, feeling that the introduction of the programme might add an unwelcome workload. Their concerns have dissipated, however, and now they are enthusiastic about a programme that is well-integrated and working well.

The programme is still evolving, and other philosophies and ideas are allowed to add a multi-dimensional aspect to it. The concept of Building Learning Power, for example, is a new way of approaching the development of children into individualised thinkers which the school is currently looking at. The work of Guy Claxton is also of interest. Future developments will include an approach that seeks to integrate even further the values with the thinking skills into learning and pedagogy.

Systems

- The school's Christian foundation provides for religious observances in chapel and elsewhere which provide a focus for their values and an opportunity for discussion and demonstration.

- There is a strong belief in the importance of using the language of values. Staff have worked with Ross Gilmour, a clinical psychologist based in Wellington, who teaches the theory that you change a child's behaviour if you change the vocabulary. If values words are introduced and used with consistent meaning across the school behaviours will change as a result. Vocabulary must be positive if the theory is to work in practice as, according to Gilmour, the sub-conscious mind will not work with the negative. So staff are encouraged to reinforce the positive, and avoid a punitive approach.
- A rewards system is in place that works on the basis of points earned. These acknowledge citizenship and academic success and go towards a house competition. There is also a more prestigious Achiever's award which is earned on the basis of four categories: academic, cultural, sporting and service. These are highly regarded, take time to earn and result in the recipient being given a special tie.
- The school makes the most of regular staff professional development opportunities with visiting speakers and teacher-only days to support the on-going evolution of the values and thinking programmes. The Headmaster reads widely and works hard to keep the school abreast of new and fresh ideas.

Results

- The school enjoys a stable staff who are prepared to make a long-term commitment to the school and its culture.
- A recent ERO report observes that "School values of respect, courtesy, honesty, integrity and responsibility are modelled by staff and students and are integral to the school climate and culture".

Key Features

- The Headmaster's leadership is clearly evident. He is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, keen to explore new ideas and ways of improving learning and pedagogy. He ensures that teachers have access to good quality professional development.
- Traditional Christian values are developed and enhanced through the use of up-to-date theory and ideas.
- There is a strongly philosophical and theoretical base from which the school develops its approach to values.
- The programme is well integrated and evolving.