



## Atherton SHS Position paper – Junior Secondary

### **Context:**

From 2015, Year 7 will be established as the first year of high school in all Queensland State and Non-State schools. As part of these reforms, from 2013 Queensland state schools will recognise Years 8 and 9 as Junior Secondary, with Year 7 to be included when it joins high school in 2015. The Junior Secondary Agenda 2012–2015 identifies the six principles which underpin a school's planning and consideration of Junior Secondary. The six principles are: distinct identity, quality teaching, student wellbeing, parent and community involvement, leadership and local decision-making. Schools have been tasked to develop a locally contextualised position paper to begin stakeholder consultation. Accountable staff have analysed the school's preferred position relative to these six principles.

### **Version:** 1.1

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this paper is to publish Atherton SHS's preferred Junior Secondary position for community consultation.

### **References:**

[Junior Secondary Theory and Practice ACER 2012](#)

[DET - Junior Secondary Agenda 2012–2015](#)

### **Philosophy:**

Atherton SHS understands that early and pre-adolescent learners make up a discrete group of students. Developmentally, they have academic, social and physical needs that are different from those of young children or older teens. As a result, we aim to develop an exceptional junior secondary environment based on our current guiding principles:

1. Maximise outcomes for all students
2. Work in a culture of excellence
3. Provide efficient, effective service delivery

### **Area 1 – Distinct Identity:**

"Junior Secondary students are supported to develop their own group identity within the broader school community, and have a strong sense of belonging and ownership of their school and their learning." (ACER Research paper)

Atherton SHS intends to develop Junior Secondary group identity within the school that leads to a strong sense of belonging and ownership of our school and their learning. We will do this by:

- Year 7 Designated Area:
  - Year 7 students will be orientated to Atherton SHS via a designated Year 7 area. Year 7 classes will have dedicated rooms that minimises student movement and increases a sense of ownership of their space. Amenities for Year 7 students will be part of the Year 7 area.
  - Two teachers will deliver the core subjects of English/SOSE + Maths/Science. This allows us to develop positive student/teacher relationships and capitalise on the increasingly specialised learning opportunities offered by secondary schools.
  - Students will experience the full range of specialist subject offerings (e.g. Home Economics, Industrial Technology and Design etc.) on a rotation basis.
  - Students will experience specialised instruction in purpose built facilities for all subject areas.
- Student leadership:
  - A student leadership program exists for students in Junior Secondary, all students in years 7-9 are eligible to apply for this program.
- Belonging:
  - As members of the Atherton SHS family, students will wear the current everyday uniform and/or formal uniform as per the [school dress code](#).
  - Specific information for Junior Secondary students will be published in a customised student handbook.
- Events:
  - Events for Junior Secondary students will be published to the school community via student handbook, letters to parents and weekly e-news updates (*Eagle Update*) via subscription.



## Area 2 – Quality Teaching:

“The learning and achievement of Junior Secondary students is supported by highly skilled teachers with pedagogical knowledge and practice appropriate for this age group.”

Based on research, the desired culture for Atherton SHS’s Junior Secondary in this area is:

### *Junior Secondary teachers at Atherton SHS:*

- Are a team of student centred teachers that take responsibility for their designated Junior Secondary classes. These teachers have
  - Content knowledge and teaching strategies suitable to Junior Secondary
  - Have an in-depth understanding of the concerns and needs of adolescents and develop positive relationships with students, families and the community.
- Will be professionals recruited from local and state resources as per existing departmental processes. Identification processes will occur through 2013 and 2014.

### *Teaching in Junior Secondary at Atherton SHS:*

- Curriculum in Junior Secondary reflects the Australian Curriculum
- In Year 7 the preferred model is:
  - Two teachers in the four core areas (English/SOSE + Maths/Science)
  - Students will rotate through the other key learning areas (Health, Technology, Arts and LOTE)
- In Year 8 the preferred model is:
  - Two teachers in the four core areas (English/SOSE + Maths/Science)
  - Students will choose elective subjects from the key learning areas of Health, Technology and Arts
  - Students study one term of LOTE
- In Year 9 the preferred model is:
  - Students complete core subjects of English, SOSE, Maths and Science then choose two electives as part of a two year course of study (year 9 and 10) in preparation for senior.

The pedagogical approaches include:

- Direct teaching methods for specific content and skills (e.g. for new/recent learnings across a variety of contexts)
- Co-operative approaches for open ended or group activities to teach higher order thinking and social process skills (e.g. individuals/teams collaboratively problem solving group challenges to provide divergent responses to stimulus)

Individual student needs are determined by teachers using the Atherton SHS data procedures.

Classes are structured using processes that reflect increased student autonomy and choice as they progress through Junior Secondary into Senior.

- In Year 7:
  - Year 7 classes are formed based on what's best for each student. Our staff use the information gained from a range of sources such as primary teachers, data and parents to form productive, academically and socially balanced classes.
- In Year 8 and 9
  - As with Year 7, classes are formed based on what's best for each student. Heads of Department determine student placements in core areas. Students determine placement in elective areas via subject selection processes.



## Area 3 Student Wellbeing:

"Student wellbeing is positioned as core business, and there is a whole of school commitment to ensuring a safe, supportive, inclusive and disciplined environment for all Junior Secondary students as they make the transition to a secondary setting".

Based on research, the desired culture for Atherton SHS's Junior Secondary in this area is:

### Organisational Structure:

#### *Student Services Team*

- The social/emotional wellbeing of students is the focus of the Atherton SHS [Student Services team](#).
- The key contact for Junior Secondary students and parents is the established Head of Junior Secondary.
- The student services team provide social and emotional support for the developing needs of Junior Secondary Students. This team includes Head of Junior Secondary, Guidance Officer, School Based Youth Health Nurse, Community Education Counsellor, Youth Support Worker, School Chaplain, Student Support Teacher, Responsible Thinking Classroom supervisor, student services admin officer, Deputy Principal (student services) and Principal.

#### *Education Services Team*

- The academic wellbeing and engagement of students is the focus of the [Education Services Team](#).
- The key contact for Junior Secondary students and parents are the student's classroom teachers.
- Classroom teachers are led by specialist Heads of Department in their faculty areas. The eight faculty areas are English & Languages Other Than English, Maths, Science, Studies of Society & Environment and Industrial Technology and Design, Health, Business, Information Technology and The Arts, Special Education.
- Classroom teachers plan and deliver curriculum focussed on the individual needs of a student. Other opportunities exist to extend and support the individual needs of every student through tailored programs.

### Student Expectations:

- Existing high expectations of student behaviour is articulated through the published [Responsible Behaviour Plan](#). This framework focuses on creating positive, respectful interactions between students and staff within a culture of high expectations.
- Student behaviour reflects the core values of respect and responsibility.
- Student's social and emotional skills are developed through the existing Valuing Education Program.
- A structured induction program orientates every student and their parent to Atherton SHS's cultures and rituals. The key contact for the orientation to Junior Secondary is the Head of Department for Learning Enhancement.

### Cultural Engagement:

- A wide variety of Leadership, Arts, Sporting, Social and Community activities are offered for all students at Atherton SHS. These are published to the community annually as part of the [Beyond Learning](#) information



# Atherton State High School

*On Eagles' Wings*

## Area 4 Parent and Community Engagement:

"There is a range of avenues to build the active and authentic involvement of Junior Secondary parents and community, and reciprocal partnerships exist between parents and the school"

Based on research, the desired culture for Atherton SHS's Junior Secondary in this area is:

### *School Governance:*

- Parents actively shape the school's strategic and policy direction. Parents can nominate to join the Atherton SHS Parents and Citizen's Association (meets second Tuesday of every month) or the Atherton State High School Council (three parent reps are elected from the P&C body).

### *Assisting Students:*

- Parents participate in volunteer programs such as breakfast club, tuckshop, tutoring, sporting events and cultural events that enhance the opportunities for student success.
- Parents participate in programs and opportunities (for example, Michael Carr-Gregg, Brainstorming, guest speakers).

### *Communication:*

- Parents stay actively informed of their child's progress through a multitude of communication programs. These include:
  - Participation in special Junior Secondary programs and events (e.g. camps, festivals)
  - Weekly email detailing school events (*Eagle Update*)
  - Published school Master Schedule detailing school events
  - Atherton SHS website
  - Direct contact with teachers and support staff
  - SMS for absent students
  - Parent teacher interviews with every teacher
  - Letters and mail outs of relevant information
  - Junior Secondary handbook detailing all information relating to a child's orientation to Junior Secondary.

### *Community partnerships:*

- Atherton SHS has forged strong links with the community that assist students to be actively involved in a variety of ways to meet the needs of Junior Secondary students. Some current examples include:
  - Partnerships with external agencies (VPG, Health, Church Groups)
  - Involvement in extra-curricular events (Carinya carolling, ANZAC day, Octofest, Spirit of the Youth concert, Relay for Life, Maize Festival)
  - Work experience with a variety of local businesses (Yr 9)
  - Facility usage for sporting, dance, events

## Area 5 Leadership:

"Leadership opportunities for staff and students are delivered through strong school leadership and a focus on support for Junior Secondary students".

Based on research, the desired culture for Atherton SHS's Junior Secondary in this area is:

### *Staff Leadership:*

All staff at Atherton SHS have clearly defined roles as part of the organisational structure of the school. The Junior Secondary team is comprised of a range of professionals and para-professionals with clearly defined roles. Teaching teams have specific knowledge about working collaboratively, early adolescence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, how to teach early adolescent boys and girls.

### *Student Leadership:*

As mentioned in *Area 1 - Distinct Identity*, a student leadership program exists for students in Junior Secondary, all students in years 7-9 are eligible to apply for this program.

## Area 6 Local Decision Making:

"Local school communities influence the shape of the Junior Secondary model in each school, reflecting local needs".

Based on research, the desired culture for Atherton SHS's Junior Secondary in this area is:

Over the next 18 months in the lead up to Year 7's joining the Atherton SHS family, consultation will occur with local primary schools, parents, teachers, students and community members with the goal to establish the best Junior Secondary model for our community context.