



Emerging Artists

Empowering the next generation
of Emerging Artists

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**IPSWICH GIRLS'
GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

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IPSWICH JUNIOR GRAMMAR SCHOOL

When we reflect on the purpose of education, school strategic plans often refer to the development of the whole child, through a balance of academic, cultural, sporting, service, and spiritual opportunities. The intention of a holistic education is to equip students with the skills and knowledge to succeed post-schooling: growth mindset, grit, passion, collaboration, creative thinking. Educational excellence, therefore, comes in many shapes and forms, and at Ipswich Girls' Grammar School we are proud to offer a suite of Signature programs designed to extend students and nurture their individual passions and pursuits. In the Arts, this means embracing creative identities to empower the next generation of Emerging Artists.

The far-reaching benefits of the Arts go beyond enhanced communication skills and self-confidence. Through the Arts, learning includes taking risks, making mistakes, and applying feedback; processes that “equip students with the skills and capabilities to meet difference, difficulty and the previously unimaginable with confidence” (Australia Council for the Arts, 2020). In these times of VUCA, it is this resilience and confidence that they need for future success and our Emerging Artists program aims to do just that.

The Emerging Artists Program

Reflecting the school's commitment to personalised learning, Emerging Artists is designed to provide our most accomplished students across the domains of Performing and Visual Arts with an excellence program that extends their skills beyond the curriculum. Tapping into Seligman's Positive Psychology framework, students are challenged to enrich their practice through real-world partnerships and performance opportunities, developing their skillset in preparation for work within the arts industry.

Central to its design is fostering a growth mindset as students require resilience and grit to both master their craft and do well academically. Early in the program's application process, students are encouraged to set clear goals and balance their expectations with outcomes. In preparing for admission, students must demonstrate initiative and commitment by selecting, recording, and submitting an audition folio and accompanying expression of interest questionnaire to the judging panel. Through this process, students cultivate their self-awareness; awareness of talents, strengths, and weaknesses, to gather and communicate a comprehensive view of themselves and are challenged to be self-reflective, critical in their reflections and future focused. Not all students are accepted into the program, with participant numbers capped to a maximum of ten students per discipline. This means embracing failure, a concept that many students struggle with and yet is pivotal to growth and tenacity. Accepting challenge as necessary to achieve anything worthwhile is a core value of the program, and students are supported to view their shortcomings in a different light, taking away valuable feedback that encourages their continued commitment to developing their craft. In reframing deficits as opportunities for growth, student mindsets are transformed from seeing failure as an identity to an action, where rather than defining you, is a problem to be faced, dealt with and learned from. Those few students who are successful are provided mentorships with working artists to expand their horizons and stimuli for creative practice. While acknowledging the skills that got them to where they are, we focus on messages about process and growth, setting high standards in a nurturing, warm and accepting environment.

The desired outcomes of this course are diverse, and there are no shortcuts. As an Excellence program, students are challenged to aim higher, to challenge themselves as artists and strive for continued educational excellence. Through key partnerships and public exposure of their work, students are inspired to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and purposefully explore career development, personal branding, and business opportunities. Amongst the pressure of competing demands, high expectations and routine practices, students must develop the intrapersonal skills to flourish in times of increased stress. Life skills that transcend product-based outcomes and refocus our attention on the development of the whole learner.

Excelling in a Global Pandemic

In 2021, despite the ongoing challenges of the global pandemic, Ipswich Girls' Grammar saw twelve students engage across the fields of physical and musical theatre, wearable art, and street photography, working through weekly afterschool workshops and lecture series to extend their skills and talents. Building on their skillset over the year, our visual art students were challenged through independent practice, requiring them to shift their motivation from extrinsic to intrinsic. Under the guidance and support of professional, working artists, this approach fostered a more sustainable and real-world learning environment, and promoted a passion for lifelong learning as students strove for artistic growth and positive outcomes. This was observed when students engaged with fashion and makeup designers to explore the concept of sustainable, wearable art and designed their own runway pieces. Having complete control over the creative process fostered intrinsic motivation, allowing students to truly grow and develop as young artists. This level of engagement certainly impacted on the student's self-enjoyment and satisfaction through an elevated excitement for learning. A highlight for our Visual Art strand was working with photographer Katie Fergus, a fashion and street style photographer who has been featured in the likes of Vogue, Elle, Harpers BAAZAR and Who What Wear. Under her tutelage, students captured their design work from the year and shared these images in a public exhibition. At our annual Arts Showcase, audiences were captivated by their creative use of reusable resources and make-up designs.

"Through participating in the Emerging Artists program, I discovered many skills and interests I would've never thought relevant to my journey as an artist. Having only briefly attempted these artforms in previous years, the one-on-one teaching with industry professionals encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone and reveal talents that I wasn't aware of. This incredible opportunity has provided me with not just an addition to my portfolio or resume but enlightened me to the world of creative industry professionals, affirming the diverse world of visual art as a credible and viable pathway for my future."

Jon Whitehead, 2021

"The Emerging Artist's program allowed me to become independent in my own studies...It helped hone my existing skills in my familiar fields as well as help develop new skills in other areas. There is great variety within the program with areas of art I never even imagined doing myself but were enjoyable, nonetheless. Additionally, I am used to feeling insecure about my own art however having experts teach me directly gives me more confidence in my own work."

Emma Dawson, 2021

Within the same cohort, our Performing Artists had the opportunity to develop their independence through practical workshops and opportunities to showcase their work at this signature school event. Throughout the program, students worked with Brisbane company 'Wilde Applause' in the styles of puppetry and physical theatre. Within this unit of work, they devised original pieces that incorporated sustainable arts practices to explore a strong social message. Driven by student interest, this was inspired by our 2021 school theme 'Rise of the Phoenix' and made commentary on the bounce back and future possibilities post covid.

Students were also challenged as triple threat performers, guided by performance tutor Miss Marcia Penman, whose extensive background in Musical theatre pushed students to step outside their comfort zone and develop as artists. Some of these performance students were challenged well beyond their experience through fast paced hip-hop musical routines, spoken word and dance, but all walked away with an immense sense of pride and achievement, singing the praises of the program to the next generation of applicants. Perhaps the most beneficial outcome through this process of workshops was the facilitated feedback loop and opportunity for students to learn from their mistakes. Within the Arts, a continuous feedback loop underpins our practice as students frequently perform for peers and tutors, receive feedback, workshop changes, and reperform. Encouraging students to take risks, this process of applying and receiving constructive feedback contributes to developing a growth mindset and can

be applied to all aspects of their life, including academic pursuits. Being able to want, appreciate and accept feedback is an important skill and by modelling this process, students are encouraged to develop the skills of both giving and applying critical feedback, calling on skills of resilience and adaptability. With any art form, students can fall into a pattern of doing what they're comfortable with or what they're good at doing without risking something new because they don't want to make a mistake. Behind this program is the methodology of encouraging students to try that new trick, take the risk, go to the precipice. Choice is risky, and in life we will always be challenged by decisions, fears, and anxieties, but that isn't a reason to stay stagnant. As Minero (2016) notes, by challenging students through this growth mindset, "we're helping them to explore their craft and expand their ability - whether they execute a new technique right out of the gate or over time with feedback and practice. Either way, they see that taking risks pays off."

"The Emerging Artists program was a highlight of my schooling years. I was able to gain a whole new range of skills that immersed me in the arts and allowed me to feel confident in my knowledge and abilities. As someone who isn't strong in singing, I never imagined I would sing in front of so many people. However, with the excellent instructors and getting to bond with my ensemble, I had an incredible time both performing and during the lessons."

Sophia Beitz

"The Emerging Artist Program was one of the best experiences of my school years. As a reserved student in my early years, I would never have imagined myself on stage singing and dancing having had no previous experience or training. It was an empowering moment and furthered my desire to follow a path into acting."

Stephanie Beitz, 2021

2022 and Beyond

Beginning in 2014, The Emerging Artists Program has grown to double its offerings and industry connections. Originally developed to extend our Senior Performing Arts students, applications are now open to students in Years 8 to 11 and responsive to a number of facets within the arts, including backstage, production and performance. Driven by student interest and emerging trends, networks are established to expose students to an entrepreneurial mindset where they can turn their passion into a career. The response to the Emerging Artists program from both our students and wider school community has been incredibly positive and the number of students who apply for the program each year is increasing.

The world needs art, and we need artists. Recent university fee increases, funding cuts and course closures will have a disastrous long-term impact on both the number and quality of artists in Australia. We are not simply losing pathways and facilities - we are witnessing the erosion of vital sites of experimentation, creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and joy (Australia Council for the Arts, 2020). As institutions that embrace and encourage a holistic approach to learner development, we must find opportunities to bridge these gaps, and provide our students with the opportunity to develop their creative practices. An Arts education can positively impact on student learning and educational outcomes, as Swapp (2016) reminds us, "Art is at the very core of our identity as humans... the greatest gift we can give students, and humanity, is an understanding, appreciate and ability to create art."

We look forward to watching this program continue to grow. With clear objectives and strong outcomes, this excellence program will continue to push students beyond their creative comfort zone to empower the next generation of emerging artists. Offering such a program maintains our commitment as a school to holistic and personalised education, developing important life skills such as grit and determination as they plan for life beyond school.

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A woman with glasses and a dark top is speaking at a podium. The background is dark with many small, bright white dots, resembling a starry night sky. The entire image has a blue tint.

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