



Ficino School prospectus

AUCKLAND • NEW ZEALAND



FICINO
SCHOOL

our values

Speak the Truth

Practice: Truthfulness

Obey Lawful Direction

Practice: Obedience

Respect All

Practice: Respect

Learn to be Responsible and
be Responsible to Learn

Practice: Responsibility

Practise what is Good with
Resilience and Courage

Practice: Resilience



Nothing gives greater
delight than learning united
with virtue"

Marsilio Ficino



It is a privilege to introduce you to Ficino School, where the potential within every child is recognised and developed.

Our unique approach is founded on giving our students confidence through understanding themselves fully.

Excellence and strength of character are nurtured through the power of attention; a much-needed skill in this age where distraction abounds.

welcome

In all philosophical and religious traditions great weight is placed on the need for inner quiet and contentment.

We believe that it is important for children to gain an early taste of their own capacity to experience the quiet within. Using a mindful approach, our students develop self-discipline and the ability to think more deeply.

By fostering a love of learning, teaching the ability to be calm and centred, and encouraging children to have respect for all, Ficino School helps students to build strong foundations for life.

Catering for girls and boys Years 1-8, our students experience a rich curriculum, which includes the Arts, and supports their emotional, intellectual and physical development by nourishing their mind, body and heart.

Peter Crompton
Principal



“

The beginning is the most important part of the work.”

Plato



PETER CROMPTON

PRINCIPAL

Peter has over 20 years' teaching experience at primary, secondary and university level, both in New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

After qualifying and working as a Chartered civil engineer, Peter discovered his love of teaching at Oxford University, where he taught engineering for five years, combining this with studying for his master's degree. He qualified as a teacher in the UK during these years, teaching at primary and secondary school level at our sister school, St James, in London.

Since his arrival in 2010 the school has seen the introduction of a more rigorous curriculum, positive behaviour management, more specialist teachers and extra-curricular activities.

"What has not changed in my time here are the strong values of the school, such as truthfulness and respect for one another. The enthusiasm for learning and attentive atmosphere in the classrooms are also remarkable."



LORNA TRAVIS SPICER

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

Lorna was a teacher at our sister school, St James, London, before she emigrated to join Ficino in 2007.

She is passionate about education at all ages and is herself a lifelong learner. In 2021, we welcomed Lorna back as Deputy Principal after she left to have her own family.

While she champions high academic standards, she finds the transformative experiences are often found in the children's everyday experiences at Ficino School, where the standard of care is very high.

Lorna is proud of how our school takes wellbeing seriously, nurturing every aspect of the child and attending to problems large and small with equanimity and kindness. The character of each child is strengthened by challenging their habits and giving them time to reflect and practise self-mastery. For Ficino School students, knowing their teacher wants the best for them means conversations become productive exchanges and the children's world expands.

Lorna believes this combination of tending to both the heart and mind of each child is what makes Ficino School unique.

meet our senior teachers

“

We sent both of our children to Ficino through to Year 8, and were delighted with the well-rounded education they received. We couldn't have asked for more.”

Matt Currie, Ficino parent



RACHEL SETTERS

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
AND HEAD OF PE

Rachel has taught Physical Education at Ficino School for over a decade and has held the role of Assistant Principal

for the past 6 years.

She began her teaching career in Auckland in 1999 before moving to the UK to take up a position as Head of PE in a London school.

As an accomplished sportsperson, Rachel has represented the North Island at a national level in athletics. In addition, she has played premier grade netball and represented the University of Auckland in basketball.

Rachel is the coordinator for all trips and events and for the teams that represent the school in sports or who enter club level sports competitions.

She is keen to give all children a solid skill base in physical activities so that they can enjoy being part of a team or pursue their individual sports goals as part of a healthy lifestyle.



JULIA HONG

JUNIOR SYNDICATE
LEADER

Julia appreciates Ficino School's holistic approach to education, where the focus is on the whole child rather than only academic achievement.

She loves seeing the growth and the progress that her students make and believes that everyone is a learner in her class, including herself.

She particularly enjoys teaching Science as she learns new things in this ever-evolving subject area. Seeing the students' curiosity and hearing their questions ensures that each lesson is unique.

As part of the learning experience, Julia incorporates hands-on activities that focus on her students' interests. Not only does this keep them engaged, it also makes the lessons fun.

“

Ficino has its exceptional warmth and character – like a family. We didn't feel that at other schools.”

Alvin Maharaj, Ficino parent



ASHLEY GEDDIS

SENIOR SYNDICATE LEADER

Ashley began her teaching career in 1997 and has experience in both the New Zealand public school system and in the Canadian

independent school system.

As a person dedicated to Ficino School's ethos and success, Ashley has always worked at maintaining strong relationships with pupils, parents and colleagues.

While her professional interest lies in teaching P4C (Philosophy for Children), Ashley encourages her students to be active participants in their own educational journeys.

She continually works to provide students with skills and challenging standards, at the same time promoting creativity and flexibility. In her classroom, students are encouraged to show leadership and independence of thought.

mindfulness and philosophy

Our motto “Rejoice in the present” guides our students to attend to what is in front of them, and to enjoy the clarity of mind and efficiency which naturally follows. In today’s busy world, the ability to direct one’s attention in this way is a valuable life skill.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PHILOSOPHY?



Put in its simplest terms, philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is the thirst for knowledge and truth that all children are born with.

Ficino School aims to foster this passion for inquiry. We are not affiliated with any particular religion. Instead, our students study the great traditions of the world, seeking to discover the common ground in all. They explore and establish universal principles for a healthy, happy and rewarding life.

MINDFULNESS AT SCHOOL

Being in the present moment – The children are encouraged to develop their power of attention. This is to take care – truly focusing on the task at hand – pen to paper, hand to instrument, listening to the person in front of them. The ability to work like this greatly improves the way children learn, and their efficiency while working.

The Pause – At the beginning and end of each activity, led by their teacher, the children briefly close their eyes and fall still. They listen to the sounds around them, pay attention to their senses, and are simply in the moment for a few seconds. This gentle exercise refocuses and re-energises both students and teachers for whatever lies ahead.

our approach

care and respect

Children at Ficino School take care of each other. Courtesy, respect and good manners are part of everyday life here – from students holding doors open for others, to ensuring their peers have food on their plate at lunch time.

Visitors frequently comment on the positive way children behave towards each other, as well as towards adults.

Outside of interactions at school, children are given a sense of caring for the wider community through various fundraising events, such as Christmas donations to the City Mission and other charitable initiatives chosen by the students.

our teaching philosophy

Ficino School has a close-knit staff including class teachers, specialist subject teachers, and assistants.

We aim to foster strong relationships between families and their class teacher, with both parents and teachers working together to help the children reach their potential.

Our teachers endeavour to present good material in a simple, attractive and systematic way. This means the teacher leads the class's learning while being alert to the interests, needs and capacities of the individuals.

Our teaching approach fosters self-discipline in our students; that essential life skill of being able to ignore distractions and focus on the work at hand.



our curriculum

Ficino School has a unique curriculum designed to nourish the body, mind and spirit.

It incorporates aspects of the Cambridge Primary Programme (for English, Mathematics and Science), the New Zealand Curriculum, and specialist programmes from our sister schools around the world. Together, these provide breadth and depth to the children's learning.

PRIMARY SCHOOL, (YEARS 0-6) - At this stage, our curriculum reflects the obvious and natural needs of the young child. To develop the whole child, the students sing fine music; meet great literature; practise mental agility in mathematics; learn about great people in history; discover the awe and wonder in science and learn to read, speak and write with sincerity and efficiency.

INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL, (YEARS 7-8) - For our senior students, the curriculum is increasingly taught by subject specialists. They develop an enthusiasm for learning and a thirst for knowledge, which provides excellent preparation for secondary school. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and have ample opportunity to discover their leadership potential.

“

I really appreciate the support of everyone at Ficino. Many parents told me I would see the changes in our daughter in only a few weeks, and I have. It has been such an amazing experience for us.”

Ficino parent



academic subjects

ENGLISH

Children are taught to read using the Cambridge 'Jolly Phonics' system, a fun and child-centred approach to teaching literacy. It offers a multi-sensory and well-rounded way of learning phonics through stories, actions, and songs.

GRAMMAR – We provide a thorough grounding in English grammar. Children begin by learning the parts of speech, and the different types of sentences. By the time they reach the senior end of the school, they have an excellent understanding of the laws of the language, with a good grasp of grammatical analysis, syntax and punctuation. This leads to greater clarity of expression and understanding.



HANDWRITING – This begins with the basic 'round hand' in Year 1. By Year 3, children begin to learn cursive script. They are encouraged to enjoy the beauty and proportion of well-formed letters and to write with fluency. High standards of presentation are encouraged through all year groups.

SPELLING – All year groups take part in regular spelling lessons. There is an emphasis on repetition, aural and oral exercises and games, and dictation. We also utilise written exercises using words in context which develops students' spelling skills, and students' progress is reviewed regularly.

WRITTEN EXPRESSION – Creative writing is taught systematically. Learning to express ideas and observations in writing begins with simple sentences, develops into fuller accounts and matures over the years with the support of grammar and the inspiration of good quality literature. From the earliest age, our students are exposed to classical literature such as Shakespeare as well as myths, legends and stories from the Bible and other traditions. This greatly enriches their use and understanding of language.

LANGUAGE STUDIES

SANSKRIT – This is one of the oldest classical languages, and a specialty of our school. It has a wonderful system of sound and grammar, which gives the child an excellent base for the study of any language. Children love its order and beauty, and through its sound, develop clear enunciation of English. They become articulate and confident speakers.

Practice of Sanskrit in Year 1 is oral, with the written script being introduced in Year 2. From then on students begin to learn its grammatical structure, translate and formulate their own sentences and explore an extensive range of rich Sanskrit literature.

In addition to Sanskrit, children also have the option to study French, led by a specialist French teacher (after school). CONTINUED

nurturing the mind



“

My daughter has gone from a shy little girl, who found it really hard to interact with her peers, to one who has gone on to win speech competitions in Years 2 and 3.”

Ruta Ioni, Ficino parent



nurturing the mind



academic subjects

CONTINUED

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics forms the basis of all scientific knowledge and trains the mind to operate clearly and systematically. Our students begin learning their multiplication tables in Year 1 and take to them easily. The basic rules of mathematical calculation are taught in an efficient and lively way. The emphasis at Ficino School is on delight in the magic of numbers and the development of a strong base in numeracy. The Cambridge curriculum is followed at all year levels in the school. The *Busy Ants* programme is used in the junior school while senior students use *MathsMate*.

Extension students are taught in ability-based groups within each class. Extension mathematics classes are also

provided regularly for those who are mastering their year group's curriculum. An important part of the school's mathematics programme is the study of geometry.

The curriculum has been developed especially for the school and aids the students' appreciation of accuracy, proportion and beauty.

All students have the opportunity to enter the Australian Mathematics Competition, in which Ficino performs exceptionally well. Selected students also compete in local Mathex competitions.



SCIENCE

Our programme, which is based on the Cambridge Science curriculum, is designed to inspire a sense of awe and wonder in our students about the natural world.

As they seek to understand and scientifically explain the phenomena around them, students will develop the

knowledge and skills they require to access and excel in science. Modules that underpin biology, chemistry and physics knowledge are complemented by topics such as sustainability and the environment.

In the senior years, students also take part in off-site technology orientated trips and enter regional science and engineering problem-solving competitions.

GEOGRAPHY

Our senior students (Years 7-8) study geography, including topics such as weathering and erosion, river systems, world biomes, population and settlement, natural hazards, tourism, mapping skills and LDC (less developed) and MDC (more developed) countries.

Relevant local topics are introduced at specific times such as the Olympic Games and national elections.

HISTORY, MYTH AND CULTURE

Ficino School's unique history, myth and culture (HMC) syllabus goes far beyond most primary and intermediate social studies programmes. Through exploration of great civilisations, their social histories, art, myths and legends our students develop as informed, confident and responsible citizens. They gain the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in local and global societies. They discover how individuals, communities, kingdoms and nations have influenced large populations through creative endeavour, responsibility and the rule of law.

Every year, students also study aspects of New Zealand history and the development of our national identity, including the arrival of Māori, our early colonial history and the Treaty of Waitangi.

EDUCATION OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

EOTC (Education Outside the Classroom) is a key part of the New Zealand curriculum. It offers children the opportunity to take part in off-site activities that give them practical life experience connected to the topics they are learning in the classroom.

Ficino School has an especially rich and diverse EOTC programme that runs throughout the year. Not only is it important for students to get hands-on learning, but they also grow essential skills in personal development, resilience and teamwork.

“

The entire framework of the school is different and, in my opinion, truly amazing. Our daughter is more confident and happier than she has ever been and is doing so well academically.”

Ficino parent



nurturing the body

“

Those first 8 school years are very important and formative. With a good foundation, children can gain enormously and get the qualities and self esteem to get the most out of high school and life beyond. For new parents considering Ficino, we have no hesitation in recommending that the investment is worth it.”

Ficino parent



physical education

Beginning with play, children love physical activity. Ficino School provides a full and balanced programme. A wide variety of daily physical activity gives children the opportunity to continually develop their skills. Our programme encourages and reinforces character building qualities such as self-discipline, respect for others, honesty, fair play, competition, teamwork and leadership.

All PE lessons are taken by specialist PE teachers. Lessons include large and small ball skills, athletics, gymnastics, adventure education, and a variety of team sports. Students visit the local pools for swimming lessons with experienced independent instructors, leading to a swimming gala in Term 4 for Years 3-8.

From the age of 5 children are introduced to team games where they learn teamwork and sportsmanship. There are competitive matches within the school and against other schools. In addition, daily games, gymnastics, cross country running and challenging field trips ensure that boys and girls stay fit and competitively motivated. High quality local venues are used for a wide range of specialist instruction including basketball, orienteering, badminton and table tennis.

HOCKEY – The Ficino School hockey teams compete very strongly and successfully each season. We have boys and girls mixed teams across all age groups.

NETBALL – We have netball teams to cater for all year groups, boys and girls in the winter season (and in summer when there is sufficient demand).

BASKETBALL – Our mixed basketball team includes students from Years 6-8 and competes with other central zone schools.

ATHLETICS DAY – Athletics Day is held at Mt Smart Stadium. All children take part, competing within their own year groups, where they are encouraged to strive for their personal best.

CROSS COUNTRY – Our annual cross-country races are normally held on Mt Eden, which offers a good course for all age groups and excellent viewing for spectators.



meals at school

We strongly believe a healthy, balanced diet is central to good learning. All of our students' food is provided by the school, including morning tea. Meals are freshly prepared every day in our kitchen from seasonal, vegetarian ingredients. We serve one hot dish, as well as salads, bread, spreads and fruit.

Mealtimes are about more than just food at Ficino School. All children sit down and eat lunch together with their teachers. Sitting at tables with mixed age groups, students are taught to serve and care for one another, rather than just helping themselves. They practise their table manners and learn to use cutlery appropriately, while also learning to engage in good conversation.





the arts

Children engage in a comprehensive arts curriculum that encompasses music, dance, drama and visual mediums. Children explore these subjects through investigation, interpretation and communication.

VISUAL ART aims to inspire students with a love of creating, sharing and observing art in its finest sense. Children are encouraged to learn about and discuss the works of the great masters of the Renaissance period through to more contemporary artists. Real life drawing from the observation of objects and the use of good photographic references, rather than just imagination, trains students to see accurately.



nurturing the heart

The children are also encouraged to open their eyes to the design, colour, form, rhythm, texture, balance and pattern in the world around them. Over the course of the curriculum, they will practise a variety of 2D and 3D experiences and techniques.

MUSIC is a powerful expression of the heart of Ficino School. As such, all children learn to sing, doing so three times a week from Year 1. Both auditioned and open choirs have grown in popularity and reputation, as students across the school meet weekly to take part in practices and prepare for regional competitions and festivals.

Our students are introduced to musical notation and the elements of music theory, and encouraged to play musical instruments, both individually and in an ensemble.


Public performance both in and out of school allows children to share their musical experiences. Our itinerant music teachers teach a range of instruments from Year 2 upwards including: piano, violin, flute, recorder, trumpet, voice and guitar/ukulele.

DRAMA – The children perform several plays throughout their time at Ficino School. These are taken from ancient Sanskrit texts, Greek mythology, and stories by influential writers.

SHAKESPEARE PLAY – Students' dramatic training culminates in Year 7 with a Shakespeare play. All students participate and this is an opportunity for them to enrich the school community with their engaging performances.

The discipline required to learn lines, rehearse and work together to present the annual Shakespeare play builds character and emotional maturity, as well as teaching the students teamwork, tolerance and empathy.

THE RENAISSANCE TRIP – As part of their studies, Year 8 students participate in a three-week trip to Italy and England. This trip provides students with the opportunity to connect with the impressive works of the Renaissance and gain a sense of the great capacity of human beings. It is an awe-inspiring and heart-opening experience for all involved, and children return with a maturity about them that builds on what they've developed in their time at Ficino.

A group of children in blue school uniforms are standing in a library. In the foreground, two boys are looking at each other; one is smiling. Behind them, several girls are also in uniform. Bookshelves filled with books are visible in the background.

philosophy, scripture and religious studies

The study of philosophical traditions, scriptures and religions is highly regarded because it presents students with a set of ideas and practices that have shaped our world.

Through shared enquiry students come to respectfully understand the influence of religions and beliefs on individuals, cultures, and nations. Whilst engaging critically and reflecting on their own life experiences, students are encouraged to question meaning, purpose and truth, enabling them to develop their own ideas, values and identity: essential skills for their future as global citizens.

MEDITATION – Older students are also offered an opportunity to meditate. Following consultation with parents, Ficino School facilitates an introduction to word or mantra-based meditation. Students who do not wish to meditate in this way may use other simple mindfulness practices provided by the school.

nurturing the spirit

“

For me, the values of Ficino are a comfort in a very busy world. I love the philosophy aspect... there's just a lovely calmness and routine”

Emma Cavanagh, Ficino parent

A group of school children in blue and white uniforms are gathered around a globe in a classroom. A girl in the foreground is pointing at the globe, while others look on with interest. The globe is a standard classroom model with a wooden meridian.

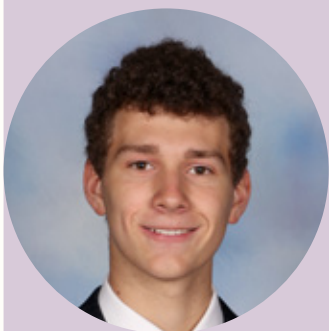
your child's future

We are frequently asked where graduates go when they leave the school, and how they get on in the larger secondary school environment.

Our students are valued in the best independent and state secondary schools, with recent graduates currently attending St Kentigern College, Kings College, Mt Albert Grammar School, Epsom Girls Grammar, St Cuthberts, Auckland Grammar and ACG Parnell.

Graduating families often stay in contact with Ficino School.

Feedback over the last few years confirms that our students perform at a high level academically, participate enthusiastically and confidently in lessons and other extracurricular activities and make good friendships in the larger environment of secondary school.



NICHOLAS CLARKE

UNDERGRADUATE BACHELOR OF LAWS,
UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

RECIPIENT OF THE MAYNE WETHERELL PRIZE
FOR TOP MARKS IN YEAR 1 LAW, 2024

My early education at Ficino School
has really set me up on my journey
so far.

I studied in the top stream at Auckland Grammar
School and am currently in my second year of
Law at The University of Auckland. Not only was
I well-prepared, but I feel I gained an academic
edge with the focused teacher input and
assistance I received at Ficino.

The fact that Ficino had timetabled exams in
the senior years was so helpful. Exams are now
routine and manageable in an environment
where the stakes are even higher.

Ficino not only set me up academically,
but it also encouraged me to pursue my
sporting passion for hockey.



SRYANA SUKHDEV

DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, UNIVERSITY
OF AUCKLAND

My love for science began at
Ficino School, where hands-on
experiments sparked my curiosity
and problem-solving skills.

Now, as a PhD student at the University of
Auckland, I focus on improving stroke recovery.
Our research shows that nitrite can protect the
brain by boosting blood flow and preventing
damage after reperfusion.

This non-invasive treatment could
expand the therapeutic window and
pave the way for future clinical trials to
improve stroke care in New Zealand.



TRISTAN PANG

UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND: BSC (MATHS
& PHYSICS), BSC HONS (PURE MATHS)

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD: MSC (MATHEMATICS
& FOUNDATIONS OF COMPUTER SCIENCE)

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH: MSC
(COMPUTATIONAL APPLIED MATHEMATICS)

Following some time as a PhD researcher at
Universiteit Leiden in the Netherlands, I'm now
back at the University of Oxford pursuing a PhD
in Oceanography funded by the UK government.
My research uses mathematics to model the
overturning circulation of the Southern Ocean.

Ficino was an important foundation
for my academic journey and the
calm and reflective environment
really shaped the way I approach
study and life.

I still draw on the practice of the “Pause”;
in an increasingly fast-paced world, that
early grounding in mindfulness continues
to be invaluable.



KAYUR PATEL FCA

DIRECTOR, GEN AI & EMERGING TECH AT PWC
ENROLLED BARRISTER AND SOLICITOR

I began as a foundation pupil in 1997 and took on the role of Head Boy in Year 8.

What I remember most about Ficino School are its values and culture, and particularly the kindness of my teachers. As a member of the Board of Trustees, I continue to be involved with the school.

To me, Ficino School represents the best of primary and intermediate education. The importance it places on values, discipline and good learning cannot be overstated. In my view, the more things change, the more important the values and philosophies that Ficino represents have become.



PETER SERGEANT

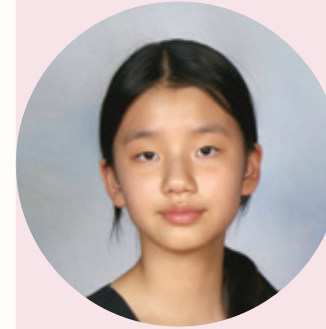
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

What makes Ficino stand out is its incredible teachers. They're not just great at what they do – they genuinely care about their students.

Their support goes beyond the classroom, and their enthusiasm for celebrating every student's success, past and present, creates a strong, lifelong bond with the school.

The strong culture of inter-year engagement – fostered through house meetings, shared lunchtimes, and even rainy-day play – continues to be one of Ficino's greatest strengths.

The opportunity for younger students to connect with senior students was key in building an inclusive and supportive community.



ZOEY ZHAO


CURRENTLY ATTENDING DIOCESAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Before joining Dio in Year 9, I knew I wanted to take leadership roles and contribute to many events and clubs.

I've been part of the Community Service Council and the School Council. This year I was accepted into St Cecilia Singers, Dio's top choir. I am also a school librarian and I'm working towards my Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award.

Ficino played a huge role in helping me develop the confidence and skills to take these opportunities.

The strong academic foundation, focus on building character and leadership opportunities prepared me for the transition to a different school. I felt prepared to take challenges and step out of my comfort zone to try new things. Ficino taught me how to keep going, stay curious, and aim high in all things.

A photograph of a group of students in blue uniforms. The central figure is a young woman with dark hair, shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is wearing a blue blazer over a white collared shirt. Her blazer is adorned with several colorful pins, including a red one with a fleur-de-lis, a green one with a circular emblem, and a gold one with a fleur-de-lis. Other students in similar uniforms are visible in the background, slightly out of focus. The text 'M I N D' is overlaid in white, spaced-out capital letters above her head.

M I N D

B O D Y

H E A R T

S P I R I T



FICINO
SCHOOL

Ficino School

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