



A school where kids direct their own learning is tapping into huge demand from parents looking for more flexibility for their kids.

**EDUCATION**

## New school has parents turning off mainstream education

by David Alexander

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A NEW independent school has started up north of Brisbane to meet a growing demand for more flexible learning than is possible in mainstream education.

Pinnacle Academic College began operating this week in Kallangur and already has 160 students enrolled.

The school is non religious and follows the national curriculum, but is much more flexible with its teaching arrangements, offering families a mix of on-campus learning and distance education.

"The COVID-19 situation has seen a change in the on-campus and distance education scene," Pinnacle Academic College principal and founder Michelle Hornery said.

"Many families, after being forced to teach their children at home, see a distinct change in the way their children learn and decided to continue to keep their children at home and investigate other more flexible options.

"Many of the enrolments at Pinnacle Academic College in 2020 are from the mainstream school community looking for a change that better suits their family."

For now, the school offers classes for Prep to Year 6, but Ms Hornery is hoping to expand and add Years 7-10 by the start of next year.

Kimberly Hopkins, who has two children at the school, said several families who had been home schooling, or "un schooling", decided to send their children to Pinnacle.

"It's a small community based school which is what we are looking for," she said.

"For them to have varying ages in a small group was also a strong appeal. I feel it's important when children are in a group that they have the older ones to look to and to lead the younger ones."



Pinnacle Academic College students Beth Bartolo, Hadley Gothard and Estella Hopkins with principal Michelle Hornery and staff member Michelle Feather and teacher Katie Chapman.  
Picture: David Alexander

Ms Hopkins said she was previously un schooling her children, an approach where children learn through life, with lessons based on what they are interested in.

"Then this school opened up and it just fitted what we were looking for as a part time school."

Students studying on-campus have peer tutoring opportunities and the ability to direct their own learning with weekly task lists needing to be checked off.

Teachers also work with the students to ensure the appropriate Australian Curriculum Descriptors are met.

The school's distance education program begins a standardised program created from the Australian Curriculum, then is tailored to the individual student through input from parents, the student and experienced distance education teachers.

"This allows the complete flexibility that these families need to ensure their child's needs are best met socially, emotionally and educationally," Ms Hornery said,

The school also has a strong focus on performing arts and once a week, students meet with specialised teaching artists to teach a Performing Arts and Languages program.

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