



**STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

# **OUR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY**

**SECONDARY SCHOOL - GYMNASIUM**

**PURPOSE - VISION - RESPONSIBILITY - EMPOWERMENT - COMMUNITY**

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# Why **Stella** International School?

We help provide orientation to students and their families in a complex world, delivering world class education and supporting students' personal formation in a spirit of Christian fellowship.



## OUR MISSION

In a world characterised by many people's search for orientation and meaning, we believe that one of the urgent purposes of education is to enable people to develop a vision for their lives, to 'dream big', and to achieve audacious targets. We seek to fulfil this purpose by bringing together students, parents and teachers who are attracted to Christian values and who wish to form a community of learners with us.

The mission of our school is to empower young people to take ownership of their lives and responsibility for others, drawing strength and inspiration from a Christian vision, and, working closely with their families, to enable them to achieve their personal, academic and career aims.

We want to shine forth as a committed school community with a clear vision that builds on a solid and inviolable Christian foundation, a community that gives its members an excellent education, offers them a supportive space to develop their characters, and nurtures their leadership skills.

**"As the headteacher of Stella International School it is my passion to contribute to an education that empowers students to be able and willing to take ownership of their lives and responsibility for others."**

Mag. Elisabeth Dlugopolsky, Principal

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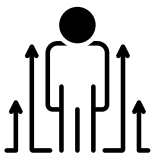
# Five Pillars of our Educational Philosophy



STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



**Academic excellence: Delivering an in-depth education for mature, well-rounded personalities**



**Personal development and leadership education: students learning to lead themselves and others**



**Internationalism and cosmopolitanism: shaping future global citizens**



**Partnership with parents and carers: working hand in hand for our young people's wellbeing**



**Christian values: living in personal relationship with God**

Delivering an in-depth education for mature, well-rounded personalities



# Academic excellence



## STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**Our curriculum emphasises modern foreign languages (MFL), with a particular focus on English.**

We believe that a thorough and well-rounded education cannot dispense with knowledge of our cultural treasures and their continued relevance to our times. To this end, we ensure that our students acquire an in-depth cultural knowledge and are exposed to high-quality literature, visual arts and music, all of which help sharpen their faculties of critical judgement and creative thinking.

We encourage our students to become or remain avid readers, particularly of literature and fiction.

Academic excellence and the constant pursuit of improvement are two of the crucial values that encompass all areas of our school life. We see ourselves as a community of learners guided by international, evidence-based education research.

We strive to provide our students with ever better opportunities to learn by engaging our staff in Continuous Professional Development throughout their time with us.



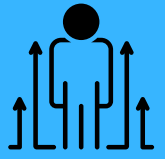
**"Students thrive best in a caring and engaging environment which encourages them to aim high and realise their potential. We value effort and performance. We encourage our students in their pursuit of excellence, and we celebrate their achievements accordingly."**

Dr. Heidi Burkhart, President

Students learning to lead themselves and others



# Personal development and leadership education



## STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**Character development and the acquisition of leadership skills for every student form the core of our educational philosophy. We believe in empowering students to be able and willing to take ownership of their lives and responsibility for others.**

We are a **Leader in Me®** school. Our students learn to take on roles of responsibility, set and achieve objectives, treat others with respect and fairness, listen empathetically and actively, and communicate their ideas and points of view effectively and confidently. We teach them the importance of being in tune with their physical and psychological wellbeing and help them to acquire healthy attitudes and habits in relation to lifestyle, physical exercise, friendships, sensible use of technology, and related issues.

Our **Community Volunteering Service Programme** gives our students valuable practical experience of roles of responsibility while encouraging them to 'give back' to their society and respond practically to the needs of others.

Through our **Mentoring Programme** each student at our school has their own personal mentor, a teacher or another member of the school's staff who has received training in student mentoring and who provides support to them in all matters of their learning and personal development.

**Note: We will describe these programmes in greater detail at the end of this document, as they relate to the core status of character development in our educational philosophy.**

### Our programmes

- 1. Leader in Me: rising to responsibility**
- 2. Community Volunteering Service Programme: actively seeking to serve others**
- 3. Mentoring: growing towards our full potential**

A  
**Leader in Me™**  
School





Shaping future global citizens



# Internationalism and cosmopolitanism



## STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**We are aware that we are preparing our students for life in an interconnected 21st century world, with complex and entangled links extending across and beyond national and cultural boundaries.**

Firmly rooted in our own tradition, we value the wealth of different cultures across the globe and we believe we have much to learn from exploring and appreciating them. We maintain partnerships with schools outside Austria and support our students in undertaking intercultural exchange.

We recognise the immense importance of English as the world's international lingua franca by teaching various curricular subjects partly in English and drawing on the support of teaching assistants whose first language is English. During our regular 'English Weeks', the whole school engages in projects entirely conducted in English.

Our students demonstrate their progress in English language proficiency by taking **Cambridge Assessment English tests**, which cover listening, reading, speaking and writing skills.

We aim to enable our students to obtain at least a certificate of proficiency at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the end of their final year at our school. This certificate, officially recognised by 20,000 universities, employers and governments around the world, gives our students significant advantages in entry to higher education and in their future careers, including potential international mobility.



**Cambridge Assessment  
English**

Authorised Exam Centre



Working hand in hand for our young people's wellbeing



## Partnership with parents



### STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**Parents are their children's first and most important educators. International education research has emphatically confirmed that parental involvement in children's learning at home and in school significantly improves learning outcomes.**

We value our partnership with parents or carers who entrust their children to our care and work closely with them to encourage our students to grow as people and develop character strengths.

Our approach keeps the lines of communication between parents and our school continuously open, enabling responsive conversations around students' development and needs.

We affirm, advise and support our parents as they in turn support their children, and reflect continuously with them on how we can ensure our children grow and thrive on all developmental levels.

Regular parent-teacher meetings help identify possible areas for improvement, viewing them as opportunities for the student's personal and educational growth. We offer parents an ongoing programme of seminars, talks and events around issues of education and parenting.

We involve parents in various areas of school life, inviting them to share their professional expertise or skills and to run activities with the purpose of broadening students' horizons.



Living in personal relationship with God



## Christian values



### STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

**Drawing on our firm belief that the development of a balanced personality includes attention to the spiritual dimension of life, we nurture our students in developing a personal relationship with God.**

Stella International School follows a Catholic Christian values program inspired by the teachings of St. Josemaria Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei ([www.opusdei.at](http://www.opusdei.at)).

In line with the established Christian traditions of our country, we follow the liturgical year of the Catholic church, marking its principal liturgical seasons and festivals, and hold Catholic services and other Christian celebrations.

In religious instruction, our students obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the Christian faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

While respecting students' personal freedom and individual backgrounds, we invite them to live an actively Christian life. However, we welcome students from all faiths who value what the Stella International School can offer them.

Our pastor and religion teacher is Dr. Christian Spalek, rector of one of the oldest churches in Vienna, St. Peter's Church, in Vienna's first district.





## How we teach character

# Personality development at Stella

Character development is at the heart of our educational mission. We base our work in this area on three programmes that centre on tried-and-tested approaches:

- 1. Leader in Me: rising to responsibility**
- 2. Community Volunteering Service Programme: actively seeking to serve others**
- 3. Mentoring: growing towards our full potential**



# Rising to responsibility

## Leader in Me® programme

**The Leader in Me® programme is a whole-school process that empowers students with leadership and life skills to thrive in the 21st century.**

The programme helps students learn to become responsible for themselves, take on roles with responsibility for others and develop leadership qualities. It is currently used in around 5,000 schools in over 50 countries. Its basis is the 'Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' as compiled by Stephen R. Covey, the author of one of the world's most influential books on personality development and leadership.

Leader in me starts with the paradigm: every child has unique strengths and talents that they can use to lead. This paradigm allows the staff and community to encourage the development of the whole child.



We work closely with the Franklin Covey Education Division ([www.leaderinme.org/about-franklincovey-education](http://www.leaderinme.org/about-franklincovey-education)) and have embarked upon a process of certification, giving us access to numerous resources and materials for leadership education and character development that have proved their value in use in other settings.

The Leader in Me programme teaches leadership principles; creates a leadership culture; and aligns academic systems into existing programs, curricula, and traditions. In the Stella International School it serves as a foundational operating system, improving relationships, transforming culture, and intrinsically motivating staff and students.

Schools implement the Leader in Me principles in all school subjects. In addition to this, each class commits at least one hour per week to a lesson whose explicit topic are the 7 Habits and their acquisition. Throughout the school year, our students take on roles of responsibility and leadership in various projects within and beyond the Community Volunteering Service Programme.

The Leader in Me programme has the aim of helping students acquire attitudes and form habits that support successful personal and academic growth on the basis of seven key principles as follows:

**Habit 1: Be Proactive: own your life**

**Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind: a personal vision**

**Habit 3: Put First Things First: self-management**

**Habit 4: Think Win-Win: a mindset for strong and respectful interpersonal relationships**

**Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, then to Be Understood: communicating positively**

**Habit 6: Synergize: creative cooperation**

**Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw: leading a balanced and healthy life**



# Leader in Me® programme

## Principles we teach at Stella School

### Habit 1: Be Proactive: own your life

- Initiative, personal responsibility, decision-making

I am responsible for my own life. I am willing to take on responsibility for myself and others. I take the initiative in setting the direction of my life. I make choices that are good for my actions, attitudes and mood. I don't blame others for my mistakes.

### Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind: a personal vision

- Set targets and create a vision

I have a vision for my future. I do things that make sense. I plan ahead and set myself targets. I know where I want to go and direct my steps accordingly. I make good use of time so I can achieve my aims, and reflect on achieving them. I am an important part of my class and I help create a positive atmosphere in the group.

### Habit 3: Put First Things First: self-management

- Setting appropriate priorities, being organised, planning, time-management

I set priorities. I dedicate my time first to those activities that are most important right now. I say a firm 'no' to things that I know I shouldn't do (now). I make a plan and follow it. I do one thing at a time, and organise my time well.

### Habit 4: Think Win-Win: a mindset for strong and respectful interpersonal relationships

- Respect, fairness, resolving situations to the benefit of all involved

When I want something, I think about what others need. I respect the wishes of others. When conflict arises, I try to find solutions that both sides can agree to.

### Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, then to Be Understood: communicating positively

- Attentive and empathetic listening, clear and confident communication

I listen attentively when other people talk about their ideas or feelings. I try to empathise with them and see things from their point of view. I listen to others without interrupting them. I confidently put forward my own ideas. I look others in the eye when speaking to them.

### Habit 6: Synergize: creative cooperation

- Problem-solving skills, creativity, openness to new ideas, teamwork

I value other people's strengths and learn from them. I try to get along with everyone, including those who are different from me. I work effectively and cooperatively in groups. I watch other people solve problems and learn from them. I know that if we work together, we can arrive at better solutions than if we work by ourselves. I see my work as service to others.

### Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw: leading a balanced and healthy life

- Physical and psychological wellbeing, social skills, finding joy in life, emotional stability, motivation to learn

I take care of my body by eating healthily, exercising, and getting enough sleep. I make sure to spend time with my family and friends. I cultivate genuine and good friendships. I take care of the spiritual dimension of my life. I see all sorts of situations in my life – not just in school – as opportunities to learn and grow. I use my time to help others in a meaningful way and to support their personal growth.

## Actively seeking to serve others

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# Community Volunteering Service Programme

We help our students to support and serve our society and other people, particularly those in need, by involving them in our Community Volunteering Service Programme.

We believe that active involvement in the life of a society and community and service to others are essential expressions of a mature personality.

Our Community Volunteering Service Programme offers our young people the opportunity to plan, implement, and run projects and services in accordance with their age and abilities. It enables students both to put their own ideas into practice and to contribute their part to larger group projects inspired by the curriculum and supervised by adults.

At the conclusion of a project, students reflect on their experience, its impact on the community, and its influence on their personal growth.



The Community Volunteering Service Programme enables our students to discover their strengths and their potential, face and overcome new challenges, learn how to plan and launch initiatives, practise working in teams, display perseverance, and reflect on the ethical dimension of their actions. Students become aware of gifts they may not have known they had, using them to make a small contribution to the overall improvement of society and often exceeding their previous expectations of themselves.



# Growing towards our full potential

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## Mentoring

Each student at Stella International School has their own personal mentor, a teacher or another member of the school's staff who has received training in student mentoring and who provides support to them in all matters of their learning and personal development.

In regular one-to-one meetings, held in an atmosphere of fellowship and trust, students reflect on their progress to date and work with their mentor to set themselves targets that relate to their learning in and outside of school. The mentor also communicates with the student's parents.



**"Through Leader in Me, our community volunteering service and our mentoring programme, we offer our students a personalised education which helps them to achieve their goals and become able to live a fulfilled life, to love and to lead."**

Mag. Evelyn Kropfreiter  
Lighthouse Team Coordinator



# STELLA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



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