

ABOUT AVE MARIA COLLEGE

- A Catholic day school, in the Franciscan tradition, catering for girls from year 7-12.
- Has a large campus surrounded by gardens in Aberfeldie in Melbourne's north-west.
- Strives to educate young women to develop the courage to excel, the confidence to thrive and the compassion to love.

MADDISON SAYS ...

I had Mrs Pappas (Papassarantopoulos) as my homeroom teacher in year 7 and for maths in year 10 and this year (11).

I do really like maths. Especially this year, everything you learn, you can apply to real life. At the moment, we're doing financial maths and that's something that, when I'm older, I'll need to know about for my everyday life. It's just good to know about it in general, too.

Maths challenges you and you really have to think outside the square to find the answers that you're looking for.

I struggled with maths in year 8 and 9, so when I got into year 10 I was afraid to answer questions.

Mrs Pappas has really taught me about persistence and to always keep trying, especially if I don't understand a question. Even if it's explained to me and I still don't understand it, I'm not afraid to keep asking and keep trying.

She's taught me to be organised – have everything ready for class so you're managing your time well and getting as much work done in class as possible.

As a class, we feel really supported by Mrs Pappas to do well.

My other favourite subjects are health and psychology and English. I love health because I want to be a maternal health nurse when I finish school here at Ave Maria.

I did my work experience at the Mercy Hospital in Heidelberg and that just really opened my eyes to what it's like working in a hospital and working with babies.

I got to work in different departments following the nurses around – like in the birthing suites or prenatal.

No one in my family works in health so I'll be the first. I've looked at going to La Trobe University and doing the maternal health course there.

I play netball with the school, so I guess that's another reason I like health. I'm always training and playing games and I have a part-time job as a swimming instructor.

We're starting our netball again next term. We train for a couple of weeks and then we play in a round-robin tournament with other schools. If you lose, you get knocked out. We've been into the grand finals for a few years so we're hoping to do well this year. ●



(MICHAEL RAYNER)

Jenny Papassarantopoulos is a passionate maths and English teacher at Ave Maria College who teaches young women to have confidence in their mathematical abilities. Her student, Maddison Cottle, has come to love the subject, finding that persistence and hard work have helped improve her knowledge of numbers. ●

MELISSA HEAGNEY
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JENNY SAYS ...

I've been with Ave Maria since 2010 and I've been in the Catholic school system for 23 years. I started out with a co-ed school and since then I've worked at three Catholic girls' schools. I teach maths and English. For the most part, I teach maths.

I really like maths' application to real life. I love the beauty in mathematics ... there's a lot of logic that's applied and it's all around us. Whether it be art or music or architecture or anything like that, its relevance in this world is really important and I like to think I get that across to the girls.

I love working at girls' schools because it's such a wonderful environment for them to learn. Being surrounded by supportive girls (their fellow students) means they feel more confident to ask questions. It takes away their fear of being seen as someone who needs a bit of help. I think there's a different dynamic in the classroom when you have the boys there.

With students like Maddison, it's about building confidence as well as knowledge. Maddison has definitely built her confidence and has persisted through the past year and, also, she's not afraid to have a go. If she's not across something, then she'll ask. That's really, really, important.

She's become a very good maths student, too. When I see the girls like Maddison improve, it's wonderful. I think it's paramount in my work.

Girls [in general] lack confidence in mathematics and we work to ensure they have the support they need to excel. When they start to improve and gain confidence for me, that's so rewarding. At Ave Maria, we've introduced science, technology maths and design subjects at year 9 because we realise the girls need to be not only confident, but creative thinkers and innovators, which they'll need for their future careers.

I support students like Maddison in a number of ways. Apart from offering my time when they need it, we have a program called Absolute Maximum, which is a help session. This year it's being run after school. It's open to all students and they can come and seek some help with their maths.

I think it's also important for maths teachers, myself included, that we are available for students whenever they need it.

I teach a year 11 (maths) methods class that is quite intense. Sometimes the girls don't have the time in class to sit down and do the work, so sometimes they need the help outside the classroom. ●