Original school building and War Memorial Library.
Brisbane Grammar School is Brisbane’s oldest secondary boys school and one of Australia’s most highly regarded educational institutions.

Standing high on the crest of Gregory Terrace, the School is nestled in a green belt, looking over Roma Street Parklands to Brisbane City to the south, and to the north is flanked by its ovals, tennis courts and the expansive Victoria Park Golf Course.

While the physical environment of the School has changed and evolved throughout its history of over 140 years, the School remains true to its highest ideal – to produce well-rounded, thoughtful and contributing global citizens.

Founded in 1868, the School moved from its original Roma Street site to its present location in 1881, where Sir Charles Lilley, then Chief Justice of Queensland and a lifelong advocate of education in the early days of the Queensland colony, laid the foundation stone. His name resonates still in the prestigious academic medals endowed by him in 1869, and with the naming of the School’s 21st century teaching and learning complex, The Lilley Centre, opened on 26 February 2010. The impressive Lilley legacy to the School and the State now spans three centuries.

Reflected in The Lilley Centre’s towering glass window is the magnificent neo-Gothic Great Hall and adjacent classrooms which first housed the School at its new site. This era was presided over by the School’s second Headmaster, Mr Reginald Roe, and it was during his 33 year term from 1876 to 1909 that Brisbane Grammar clearly established itself as the leading school in Queensland.
During this time, BGS boys won numerous entrance scholarships to prestigious universities including Sydney, Melbourne, Edinburgh and Oxford. Today, virtually all of our students continue on to tertiary study at major universities in the courses of their choice. Every year, a significant number of these gain scholarships to Australian and international universities.

Under Headmaster Roe, the first recipient of a Queensland Rhodes Scholarship was a Brisbane Grammar School Old Boy and since then a further twenty-three Rhodes Scholarships have been awarded to former students of the School.

The panel awarding Rhodes Scholarships is ‘charged to seek excellence in qualities of mind and in qualities of person which, in combination, offer the promise of effective service to the world in the decades ahead’. These qualities of all-roundedness and good character, along with scholastic achievement, have been the cornerstones of a Grammar education throughout the School’s history.

In 1964, the Chairman of Trustees of Brisbane Grammar School, Dr Hirschfeld, himself a Rhodes Scholar, wrote: ‘Kindness, consideration for others, a knowledge of the world, its geography and its peoples and their beliefs, a faith in the future and a belief in service to others are the armaments that this school endeavours to provide for the boys who will be citizens of the future, as it did for those who made this state what it is today.’
The Great Hall's northern stained glass window.
The Great Hall remains the spiritual heart of Brisbane Grammar School, with many of the School’s finest traditions and values preserved within its walls and under the towering arches of its rooftop.

The two magnificent stained glass windows, commissioned in 1879, reflect the ideals of the School with portraits of explorers, soldiers, statesmen, and men of literature and science, inspiring the boys ‘to emulate their noble deeds’.

Beneath the northern window is the T.J. Byrnes Honour Board recognising academic achievement, all-roundedness and athleticism, while the values of community, service and sacrifice are preserved on numerous other honour boards dedicated to those who served their school, their local community in times of need, and their country in times of war.

It is perhaps in this building, surrounded by examples of greatness and great sacrifice, where the sentiments of the School’s motto, *Nil Sine Labore* – nothing without effort – are most poignantly demonstrated.

Boys are symbolically invited to embrace the School’s traditions by entering through the Great Hall’s grand cedar doors on their first day in Year 8. Significantly, on their last day at school in Year 12 following their Valedictory Assembly, they are farewelled through these same doors as they step confidently towards their future.

While the School celebrates these rich traditions, it also has a proud history of looking forward with the aim of providing the best programs and facilities to support the boys’ learning.
Mr Frederick Bousfield, who succeeded Mr Roe as Headmaster, strongly believed that the School should initiate and embrace constructive change, as well as maintain its links with the past. When scientific achievements began to revolutionise the early 1900s, Mr Bousfield was quick to act, determined that the School should have the finest laboratory facilities in the country.

These ‘state-of-the-art’ science facilities were opened in 1912, in what was a first for a Queensland school. The School has continued to anticipate educational needs over the decades, leading the way in curriculum and facility development as well as in teaching practice.

In 1968, Brisbane Grammar opened its library and language laboratory. BGS’ tradition of world languages education, which has seen French, German and Latin taught at the School since it first opened, continues today with all students taking a compulsory foreign language, now including Chinese and Japanese, up to Year 10. The participation rate in senior years is over 30 per cent, significantly higher than the Australian average of around 14 per cent.

In 2010, the ‘old library’ was converted into dedicated Middle School flexible learning spaces, with music, science and technology capabilities, while the new library was accommodated in The Lilley Centre – one of the most important academic buildings in the School’s history.

In opening The Lilley Centre, the 11th Headmaster of Brisbane Grammar School, Mr Brian Short, said: ‘The Lilley Centre is at the heart of our response to the needs of the 21st century learner – whether that learner is a student or a teacher. This learning centre will provide both the human resources and the innovative physical and technological environments that together promote the collaborative, global, real world learning that develops effective 21st century learners and citizens.’

The Lilley Centre represents a very exciting chapter in the continuing Brisbane Grammar story – an impressive record of commitment to learning, innovation and endeavour, spanning more than 140 years.
The academic life of the School provides a rich, diverse learning environment in which lifelong learning is cherished and every student can explore his talents and is encouraged to achieve his personal best.

In 2003, the School deliberately focused on the important transition from a primary school environment to the more independent learning demands of secondary schooling with the opening of the Brisbane Grammar Middle School.

Our Middle School has the advantage of its own distinct precinct within the campus. This allows for both separation from and integration with the remainder of the school community and the use of whole school facilities.

The Middle School curriculum is engaging, rigorous and stimulating and is delivered by specialist Middle School teachers who are passionate about the education of boys at this important stage of their intellectual, physical and emotional development.

From Years 9 to 12, students undertake a uniquely balanced course which guarantees they range both widely and deeply over the major fields of disciplinary knowledge. All students study English and Mathematics through to Year 12, while Science and Language studies are compulsory to Year 10. The School traditionally enjoys continuing strong enrolments in the sciences through to Year 12, although to ensure a balance of disciplines, at least one humanities subject must be studied. We believe this approach provides the boys with a broad suite of understandings about their world and prepares them well for their future.
Brisbane Grammar School is a leader in the use of information technologies to enhance learning. Our most recent advancement has been to implement a one to one mobile computing program which commenced in 2010. Every student in Years 8 to 12 will have his own individual tablet PC, opening up new and exciting ways of teaching and learning and providing students with skills vital to negotiating life and work in the 21st century.

Beyond new technologies and subject offerings, a critical component of a Brisbane Grammar education is our emphasis on the development of each student’s intellect and complex reasoning processes.

Brisbane Grammar was one of the first Australian schools to adopt the learning frameworks, Dimensions of Learning (in 1997) and Habits of Mind (in 2003), which focus on the acquisition of higher order thinking skills, intelligent behaviours and the development of self-directed, reflective and aware learners.

Underpinning the School’s programs and facilities are the dedicated staff members who guide and assist the boys of Brisbane Grammar, including teachers and support personnel. Some of the country’s finest scholars have taught at the School and it continues to be renowned for attracting talented teachers and for nurturing their talents. Extensive professional development opportunities enable all staff to remain at the forefront of educational practices, to deliver to the boys the best preparation for their future.
While providing an enduring academic foundation and a love of learning are at the heart of a Brisbane Grammar education, equally important is the creation of a safe, nurturing and supportive environment for students during their time with us.

The care of our students is managed formally through our Student Welfare Program and a unique Head of Year system whereby the Head of Year 8 commences the journey with his or her year group and stays with them through to the end of Year 12. This allows for a greater understanding of and closer connections with the boys and their families.

Permeating everything we do are the School’s values – endeavour, learning, respect, leadership and community – and the upholding of these values in the classroom, the school grounds and on the playing fields is integral to the care and welfare of every member of the school community.

Students must also understand what it means to care for themselves and others: to be resilient, tolerant, emotionally robust and socially prepared for the challenges that exist beyond the school gates; to be good citizens, motivated by a strong sense of moral purpose, ethics and values; and to build meaningful relationships within their local neighbourhoods while also developing the skills and understandings to participate in the global community.

For many years, the School has provided international exchanges opportunities, including a sister-school agreement with Seifu Gakuen in Osaka, Japan, of over 30 years – the longest such agreement in Australia.

More recently, the School has facilitated significant global leadership experiences at student leadership summits and forums in China, Singapore and India; further developed exchange programs with France, Germany and the United States of America; as well as introduced virtual collaborative educational experiences with students in the USA, India and South Korea. It is through this global networking that boys learn more about themselves, their peers and the world in which they live, while also developing important leadership skills – both in relation to their own decision making around life issues and in projects to serve others.
The Outdoor Education Program in action at Peppermint Hill, Lake Moogerah.
Grammar boys regularly participate in hands-on voluntary work both locally and internationally, including environmental and service learning projects, contributing to and connecting with others from different backgrounds and circumstances. Through these connections, the boys not only develop important cultural and social understandings, they also learn more about themselves.

As part of our charter to develop well-rounded young men, Brisbane Grammar’s outdoor education program provides valuable and unforgettable experiences for all students and is an integral part of the Student Welfare program.

The School has its own outdoor education facility at Pepperina Hill on the shores of Lake Moogerah, about 90 minutes drive from the School. Here, boys are not only challenged to develop their physical skills – canoeing, climbing, hiking and orienteering – but importantly they develop life skills in leadership, decision making, personal responsibility and relationships, having lots of fun along the way. Pepperina Hill is an exciting and adventurous environment, where friendships are cemented and lifetime memories are made.

Grammar’s Extracurricular Program also plays an important role in providing the balanced education which has always underpinned the School’s philosophy. Providing a rich array of experiences across the arts, sport and diverse clubs and activities, the program caters for the talents and interests of every boy. It also aims to ensure that all boys, from those who want to ‘have a go’, right through to those with considerable skills and elite aspirations, are provided with appropriate opportunities, instruction and guidance.
The Arts – music, drama and visual arts – continue to invigorate the life of the School, and foster participation, enjoyment and excellence. The vibrant cultural life of the School is a testament to the value placed on developing well-rounded students, who enjoy contributing to their school and the wider community.

Around 40 percent of Middle School students learn a musical instrument, and the School has developed a well deserved reputation for both its fine performance and compositional standards at all age levels. The School’s concert program has expanded over the years to include off-campus performances in Brisbane as well as interstate and international music tours.

In drama, there are plenty of opportunities for students to shine on stage or to develop their behind-the-scenes expertise in the technical aspects of theatre – including direction, sound, lighting and multimedia.

Through the School’s art program, students explore all aspects of the visual arts from photography and digital media to the more traditional art forms of painting and print making.

Visiting artists, musicians and industry professionals as well as theatre and gallery excursions contribute significantly to the students’ skills, knowledge and appreciation of their studies of the creative arts.

In the Middle School, the annual Celebration of the Arts provides a wonderful opportunity for the School’s younger artists and musicians to publicly present their work in a vibrant community atmosphere.

It is through the Arts that the School’s collaborative relationship with Brisbane Girls Grammar School is most evident with dramatic productions and choral performances showcasing the benefits of these shared experiences. Regular collaborative opportunities also occur in the academic arena.
From its earliest days, the notion of ‘healthy athleticism’ has been a key principle of the development of the ‘whole man’ at Brisbane Grammar School. Headmaster Roe wished to develop ‘vigorous manliness’ in his students and for every boy to feel pride in his physical development.

Today, physical development and movement skills are still seen as a vitally important part of a boy’s growth – in both mind and body.

The School’s Athletic Development Program aims to develop and advance these athletic qualities progressively through all year levels, creating a platform for lifelong involvement in physical activity and sport. The aim is to encourage boys to enjoy these experiences and realise the rewards and opportunities they can offer.

Beyond the physical benefits of sporting activities, participation in an organised sport at Brisbane Grammar School is equally about commitment to a discipline and the discipline to commit to a team and to each team mate; it is a lesson in winning with humility and accepting defeat with grace; it is about testing boundaries, sometimes accepting limits, but always striving for personal bests. Perhaps foremost, the memories of donning the ‘light dark blue’ with pride are among the most cherished.
All students are encouraged to participate in the wide range of sports played at the School – including basketball, cricket, cross country, football, gymnastics, rowing, rugby, sailing, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. They have access to magnificent facilities including the expansive Northgate Playing Fields, officially opened in 1997, and the Indoor Sports Centre, opened in 2000.

Grammar’s sporting teams are fiercely competitive in the Greater Public Schools (GPS) competition (Years 8-12) and the Combined Independent Colleges (CIC) competition for the younger grades, as well as in non-GPS sports such as AFL, fencing and water polo.

Within the Extracurricular Program, the School also operates numerous clubs and extension activities which cater for diverse interests including astronomy, chess, debating, public speaking, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme, computers, reading, business, intellectual debate and Christian fellowship.
To this day, the School continues its long tradition of welcoming boarders, which started in 1886 when the first boarders took up residence in the old ‘School House’ (now the Roe Building), built during Headmaster Roe’s tenure.

Harlin House, built in 1972 and named after founding Headmaster Thomas Harlin, is the current home for the boarders who come from all over Queensland, interstate and overseas. The House offers a diverse and stimulating social environment. With numbers capped at 135 across Years 7 to 12, every boy has a real opportunity, under the guidance of the Housemasters and Housemother, to establish lasting friendships, effective routines and organisational skills – essentially to find ‘his place’ in our residential community.

Boys who live in Harlin House, located in the heart of the campus, enjoy after hours access to the School’s facilities including The Lilley Centre, the Music Building, the Indoor Sports Centre and other recreational areas. In addition, the School’s convenient fringe CBD location has many advantages, offering close proximity to major bus and rail transport hubs and direct access to Brisbane’s domestic and international airports which is both convenient and reassuring. Also there is easy access to many of Brisbane’s and South East Queensland’s recreational areas, and major cultural, sporting and performance venues. The boys are able to take full advantage of these opportunities within the extensive weekday and weekend supervised activities program which provides them with a wonderful array of shared enriching experiences.
Old Boys' Reunion.
At Brisbane Grammar School, we understand the vital role of parents and families in the total educational experience of their children. Communication between school and home is key to developing positive and productive relationships between teachers, parents and students.

The Parents and Friends’ Association provides a range of opportunities for members of the School community to enjoy a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

The School enjoys an active alumni program, which dates back to the formation of the Old Boys’ Association in 1898. Today, the Association continues to foster lifelong friendships, community and camaraderie, as well as making an important contribution to the School.

As former students continue to connect with each other around the world, stories of their successes as thoughtful and contributing members of their communities regularly make their way back to the School through this extraordinary global network. As a school, we take heart that we were privileged to provide our Old Boys with an education that has best served their futures.

The big challenge in the 21st century for schools is to not just keep pace with change, but to anticipate and respond to change with vision, innovation and enthusiasm. At Grammar, we are committed to meeting this challenge positively, with determination, thoughtfulness and courage, while at the same time holding dear the values and traditions which have guided the School’s successful education of generations of boys.

Brisbane Grammar invites you to share in its vision, innovation and enthusiasm – as we look back to the past with pride and look forward to an ever-changing future with optimism, excitement and energy.