



ST. MARGARET'S  
SCHOOL | *for girls*

**OVER A CENTURY  
OF EXCELLENCE**





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# *Over a Century*

Among the idyllic scenery of Victoria, British Columbia, St. Margaret's School is an independent, all-girls school dedicated to providing a learning environment tailored to the needs of girls, and has done so for over 100 years. In addition to serving their local Vic-

toria area, the school also houses both local and international boarding students.

Speaking on the history of the school, Jennifer van Hardenburg, Communications Director at St Margaret's, says "The school was





# of Excellence

founded in 1908 by a pair of sisters, Edith and Isabel Fenwick. It was all started just from a dream to provide learning opportunities that really address the needs of girls."

"These two sisters perished shortly after

founding the school, in the sinking of the SS Iroquois," says van Hardenburg, but their friend and co-founder [Margaret Barton] took the lead at that point as the first head mistress of the school. She definitely shared their original vision, and that's something we







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continue to honour today, just to give each girl as much individual attention as possible."

After the tragedy, Barton lead the charge and finished construction on a new facility capable of handling more students and staff. In 1912, one year after the passing of the Fenwick sisters, St Margaret's School and their students moved into their new home. Spending close to 60 years at The Fort Street Campus before moving to their current Lake Hill area location.

"We've been at our current site since the '70s," van Hardenburg explains. "We purchased 22

acres of beautiful, pastoral land that's become our campus. We're nestled away, when you arrive on our campus you're greeted by these huge old trees, great west coast architecture, and views of nearby mountains."

"We have four residence houses on site," she continues, "and classrooms are spread out between five main buildings, in addition to smaller off-shoots that support specific aspects of our programs. We've got an outdoor classroom in the woods that serves our early learning program, which is nature-based. We also have a variety of outdoor facilities like tennis courts and a soccer pitch."



St Margaret's School also boasts several specialized facilities such as their modern athletics centre which includes two gyms, as well as a stage for performances. In addition, the campus is equipped with a Culinary Arts Centre, which also utilizes food grown in the school's greenhouse.

One of the most recent addition to the school's facilities was the Junior School in 2006. The Junior School houses more specialized rooms focused on arts, sciences and student support, as well as St Margaret's Early Learning Centre.

## THE ST MARGARET'S COMMUNITY

Creating a strong community bond within the school is a key aspect of St. Margaret's, bringing together boarding students, local students, as well as the staff. The benefits extend beyond social development alone, and harkens back to the school's dedication to how girls learn most effectively.

"We have 350 students," says van Hardenburg. "129 of those are boarders who live with us on campus for the school year, and 221 of those are day students from our local area."







"We pride ourselves that every girl is known here," she continues. "Even I, as Communications Coordinator, know most girls by name. That's one of the unique aspects of having such a small, tight-knit community. And girls really benefit from that, it plays into what we know about how girls learn best. They do thrive in these social and supportive environments."

That tight-knit community truly starts with their staff, and maintaining the personalized attention which makes St. Margaret's School



a premier environment for girls of all ages to learn.

"We have over 100 staff," van Hardenburg says. "So we maintain an 8 to 1 ratio of students to teaching staff. Our staff, who have received training, are constantly focused on the needs of girls as learners."

The centerpiece of St. Margaret's program is focused on developing leadership and instilling confidence in each girl. The supportive environment of the school provides a place









where girls can take on new challenges and new roles, discover who they are, as well as prepare them for the world at large. The school is also recognized for its rigorous academic program, having high testing results within the STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math).

"One of the things about our program that's unique is that we focus a lot on developing girls voices," van Hardenburg explains. "Leadership is a huge part of our program, it's actually a class that's part of our curriculum. It's personal leadership, organizational skills, presentation skills, working on collab-

oration as well as individually-led projects."

"That extends out to challenges to organize their peers in community service," she continues "Girls here get very used to the idea of standing up, leading their peers, taking the microphone. Our girls are responsible for leading assemblies. They develop their own sense of identity, their own opinions and confidence in their opinions and voicing them strongly."

As a school focused on the STEM fields, technology is a thoroughly ingrained aspect of St. Margaret's curriculum. Starting with



early education all the way to Grade 12, students have access to a range of devices.

"Instead of teaching technology and communications as separate subject areas, which they also are, technology is definitely integrated into all classrooms, at all levels," says van Hardenburg. "Even our early learning classroom has a smart board, using multi-media to help deliver the curriculum. That graduates up to laptop and tablet programs as soon as they hit elementary level."

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Fundamental in the school's mission is empowering girls to take charge in their lives and giving them the tools needed to succeed in life, and their careers. In the coming years, St. Margaret's will be striving to emphasise health with a new Wellness Centre and expanding programs, teaching girls how to take care of themselves as well as their environment.

"The next five years are going to be about a





renewed focus on the whole girl, so wellness initiatives are going to be huge," van Hardenburg says. "

"One of the things we're most focused on at the moment is our wellness program, and caring for environment is a huge part of that. Raising girls who are global citizens, with an outlook that embraces their responsibility to something bigger than themselves. Starting with that individual level, the ability to take care of oneself."

says. "I want us to be internationally renowned as a centre for girls learning and leadership. Locally, we're a little bit hidden away on our beautiful campus, which is one of our big strengths, but at times it can make it easy for people to forget about us but here we are with over 100 years of teaching excellence."

"I want us to be at the forefront of peoples' minds," van Hardenburg concludes.



Looking towards the future of St Margaret's School, van Hardenburg says the goal is to elevate the school's reputation for excellence on a global scale, and cement themselves as the prominent choice for all-girls boarding schools.

"We're already internationally known," she







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