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## Feature Teacher

### Valda Rubio



Teaching was not Miss Valda's first career choice and after graduating from RMIT, she worked in the textile design department at Sportscraft, then later as a freelance designer.

Her first position was for one term at Lilydale Heights teaching Food Technology, a challenging and most interesting experience for a first time Art teacher. Her second and most recent teaching position was at Lilydale High School where she was also a VCE Coordinator.

Miss Valda's interests are closely related to her work as an Art teacher. Her travels have taken her across the world in pursuit of knowledge about artists such as Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera and Georgia O'Keeffe.

Miss Valda's most recent travels have taken her to Paris where she spent time at the Louvre looking at artwork of her favourite French painters; Manet, Delacroix, Renoir, Velasquez and Millet. Her enthusiasm for 'Picasso and the Masters' exhibition, was dampened only slightly by a freezing two hour wait in falling snow outside the Grand Palais.

As Miss Valda is now more established

and settled at VISS she has really enjoyed and admired the progress that students of all grades have made in Art.

"I am absolutely delighted to have been given the opportunity to teach at VISS. One of my most treasured experiences will always be teaching the students of the Junior School. The enthusiasm and energy of the Grade Fours and Fives was boundless!"

It is not just the enthusiasm of the younger students that Miss Valda has experienced; the feedback from Middle and Senior School students is that Art is actually quite enjoyable! Their beautiful and creative talents are on display all around the school.

### Darren Gibbons



Darren Gibbons is currently a Grade 5 teacher and learning leader of the Grade 4/5 team. He was recruited from Clairvaux Catholic Primary School in Geelong, Victoria where he was the Curriculum Coordinator. He has been at VISS since it opened in September 2007. His wife Gerardine is the Manager of the Early Learning Centre while their children Billy (Grade 2) and Cailin (Grade 4) are also members of the VISS community.

Darren studied at Deakin University where he gained his Diploma of Teaching. He has also received a Graduate Diploma of Religious Education from The Australian Catholic University, a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Studies of Asia from the Victoria University of Technology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Studies (Student Welfare) from Melbourne University. He hopes to complete his Masters in Welfare next year.

Darren has enjoyed teaching in a number of different settings over a 20 year career. His first teaching position was in a secondary school in country Victoria. He also taught in London for 3 years before returning to Australia and teaching in Alice Springs, central Australia. It was there where he met his wife Gerardine. Their passion for teaching in an international school began in 1996 when they both traveled to China to work at the Yew Chung International school in Shanghai. They stayed in Shanghai for 4 years before they returned to the 'Surf Coast' in Victoria to start a family.

Darren enjoys travelling and has travelled extensively in China, India, South – East Asia, Europe and Africa.

Darren has enjoyed his time in Sharjah and is appreciative of the excellent education his children have received as well the opportunity to work with and learn from the dedicated staff at VISS.

## From the Principal

\*This is the last Newsletter for the 2008/2009 school year. Please check the following notes elsewhere in the Newsletter:

- End of school year - students not required at school on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July.
- Purchasing of booklist requirements and uniforms.
- Student start dates for 2009/2010.
- Welcome Gordon Pratt, Interim Executive Principal.

\*This Newsletter is also my last as the Foundation Principal of the Victoria International School of Sharjah. I take this opportunity to thank all students, parents and staff for their friendship and support as we have worked together to create this wonderful School. While my role as Foundation Principal or "development director" has come to an end I leave VISS with genuine mixed feelings. There are many things about VISS of which we should be immensely proud. VISS is already a good School and is destined to be a great School. Delays in provision of facilities and infrastructure have limited our capacity to fully deliver the school programs. However the feedback on the quality of teaching and the constructive learning relationships developed has been outstanding. I thank all teachers for their dedication to

the School and working with students to become their very best.

In particular I sincerely thank the Principal Team of Jan Senior (Junior School), Noel Creece (Middle School), and Craig Lamshed (Senior School) for their tireless efforts and wonderful support. I wish all associated with the School a safe, happy and refreshing holiday break. Further I wish the School the greatest success for many years to come.

Yours in Learning,

**Rob Blachford**  
Foundation Principal  
Victoria International School of Sharjah  
2007-2009

### End of School Year

While many schools have already concluded programs for the year, VISS is scheduled to conduct classes to the end of the school year. We have however had a number of requests for an earlier finish and many families have already indicated they will be leaving early for the summer holiday break. As a consequence it has been resolved that classes will finish on Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> July. Students will not be required to attend School on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

### Welcome Gordon Pratt

Mr Gordon Pratt, currently Principal of Brighton Primary School in Victoria, has accepted an appointment as the Interim Executive Principal of VISS. Mr Pratt will replace Foundation Principal Rob Blachford who departs at the end of this term.

Mr Pratt is an experienced Principal who has led a high profile school for the past

## Farewell Mr Rob

The Principals, on behalf of the staff and the VISS community extend a warm thank you and deep appreciation to Mr Rob Blachford, Foundation Principal of the Victoria International School of Sharjah, for the enormous contribution he has made to the establishment of the School.

Mr Rob commenced his work at the School, beginning in a shed on site and then in an office at Al Taawun Mall when the school was just a building site.

His foresight, leadership and diplomatic skills have been invaluable in enabling VISS to be a leading UAE school within two years of the School's establishment.

Rob and his wife Janine, have also regularly extended their hospitality to all new Victorian teachers and their families helping them settle into Sharjah.

Thank you Rob!

**Jan Senior, Noel Creece & Craig Lamshed**  
Principal Team

8 years. He arrives in Sharjah at the start of August and is looking forward to working with the teachers, students and parents on the next stage of the VISS journey.

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## Junior School News

### Through the Window of the Junior School and ELC

On Thursday we were delighted to see so many parents come to the School for our Celebration of Learning day. Watching the performances reminded us that the children love being at school and that they have shown amazing growth in knowledge and self confidence throughout the year. Their smiling faces and excitement during the performances made us proud of this success.

As the year draws to a close it is wonderful to see the respect the students have developed for each other and their teachers, with many firm friendships established. These positive relationships are a reflection of the nurturing and caring environment at VISS.

I would like to thank our dedicated Junior School and Early Learning Centre teams who help make our school run smoothly. I would particularly like to thank the Learning Leaders Ms Sally, Ms Joanne and Mr Darren and the ELC Manager Ms Gerardine for the special support they provide for the children, staff and parents. Thank you also to Ms May, Ms Kim and Ms Tanya at Junior School Reception and Ms Ojenie and Mr Adrian at ELC

Reception, who have given amazing support to children, staff and parents throughout the year.

In every school in the world there are staff changes at the end of the year and so we sadly farewell the following staff from the Junior School and ELC

- Ms Gerardine, ELC Manager
- Mr Darren, Grade 5 teacher and Learning Leader in Grades Four and Five
- Mr Tim, Grade 1 teacher
- Mr Kevin, Music teacher

We thank them all for their contribution to VISS and we wish them well in the future.

Thank you to all parents who have supported the teachers and the students in the learning program and we look forward to working with you in the new academic year. Our best wishes go to those students and families leaving the School.

As we begin the holiday season, we wish everyone a safe and restful holiday break. We look forward to another special year of learning in 2009-10.

**Jan Senior**  
Principal Junior School

### Booklist and Uniform Purchases

Parents are urged to organize payments and collection of booklists and uniforms well in advance of the start of the next school year if at all possible.

The store for uniform and booklist supplies will be open from 16<sup>th</sup> August (8:00am till 6:00 pm). The store is temporarily located in the drama room adjacent to the Senior School offices.

Step 1: Complete the booklist order form (as sent home with students or collected from office)

Step 2: Submit the booklist at the School Store

Step 3: Receive invoice for booklist items

Step 4: Select uniform items required (maximum of 3 items will be bagged and labelled for later collection.)

Step 5: Receive invoice for uniform purchases

Step 6: Visit Finance Offices and pay tuition fees, uniform invoice and booklist invoices. Receive receipts for above.

Step 7: Return to the store and present receipts. Receive uniform purchases (previously bagged), receive selected Booklist items (most will be distributed to students in classes).

## Middle School News

As the 2008-09 academic year draws to a close we asked students to reflect upon the year. Here are some of their responses.

**The best thing I've done at VISS this year was** - having the confidence to give a presentation in front of the class, achieving my goals, learning with new teachers, making skeletons in Science, working on the Celebration of Learning in Term 1, the field trip to the Somaya Hotel for Economics, making new friends, being the editor of the Grade 9 newspaper, being part of the Rock Challenge, having a positive attitude and being open minded.

**I really enjoyed learning** – about Economics in The Real Game and purifying sewage in Science, a new language (French), how to make a newspaper, about food in technology, cooking biscuits, about persuasive writing, how to work in a team, about the human body in Science and landforms in Humanities, about the real world, how to use Blogger and making a movie in Science about the Black Death.

**Something that really challenged me was** – using a sewing machine, learning a new language, making a movie about Christopher Columbus, the Rock Challenge, inter-school football, Shakespeare,

negative numbers, trying to finish all my projects on time, reading books.

We asked students what they were most proud of this year. Their responses included – reading more, my Eiffel Tower painting being put on display, improving my reading and having access to lots of good books, being part of the SRC, making new friends, my organization, writing our newspaper, gaining self confidence, improving my English and Maths, making a pencil case. I read my first book.

The students' responses show the wide range of learning activities in which they have been involved. As you all know, at VISS, we value excellence in all learning, within each discipline together with the essential personal and social skills. It is rewarding to hear the students detail their achievements in all of these areas with pride.

As we finish our learning for the year there are many people to thank for making our first year in our Middle School building a success including three teachers who will be leaving us to return to Australia. Our sincere thanks to Ms Carlene who was the first Australian teacher to arrive at VISS in 2007, Ms Eng, an outstanding Maths teacher and Ms Rebecca who will be missed by our students for her energy and enthusiasm.

There are many people who made a

contribution. Finally it is important to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of your child's teachers and of course our Middle School Principal, Mr. Noel.

We wish everyone a wonderful summer holiday.

**Vivienne Foley**  
Leading Teacher –  
Program Implementation

### Dates for Your Diary

**\*Wednesday July 1st** -  
Last Day of 2008-2009 school year.

Following are dates for the start of the 2009/2010 school year

**\*Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August - Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August** -  
Uniform and Booklist Stores open (8:00 am - 6:00 pm Sunday-Thursday)

**\*Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August** -  
Students in Grades 11, 12 & 13 resumes classes.

**\*Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August** -  
Students in Grades ELC/KG to Grade 10 resume.  
Orientation Day -Students attend for orientation session- individual students to be notified of attendance times.

**\*Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August** -  
Normal classes in full operation.