

Principal defends Steiner program

By Pinar Gencturk

FOOTSCRAY City Primary School principal Win Warren has defended its Steiner program and said students involved performed well academically.

"In the 2006 achievement improvement monitor [AIM], which compares students' academic performance statewide, our school did particularly well," she said. "We were above the state mean for the year 5 class in reading, writing, numbers and maths.

"We were well above the like-school group [other schools with the same socio-economic and language-other-than-English background], and our spelling was pretty much state mean."

The school made headlines recently with the launch of an independent review by the

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Department of Education of the Steiner program.

Critics have attacked the Steiner approach for not teaching children to read and write until they are seven and have also questioned its spiritual basis.

The review has prompted debate on whether Steiner-style teaching should be offered at state schools or only at private schools.

Ms Warren said parents could choose the Steiner program or mainstream classes.

"A small group of people believe Steiner shouldn't be in a public school . . . they think parents shouldn't have a choice.

"We offer two distinct streams and if parents choose Steiner, we make sure they understand the program and its implications."

A Department of Education and Early Childhood Development spokesman said if a school wished to offer a Steiner stream, it was required to meet the department's strict curriculum requirements. The current review into Footscray City Primary aimed to ensure the school kept to these requirements.

"I have been here for three years and think it's a great school with a great community of parents who are passionate about the school," Ms Warren said.