

EDUCATION

A new way to focus on microscopic marvels

Michelle Etheridge



St Bernadette's School students Irenaeus, Manseerat and Logeshwari have been testing and experimenting with microscopes that clip on to iPads and smart phones. PICTURE: AAP/KERYN STEVENS

ARACHNIDS, ear hair and plants are all coming under the microscope at St Bernadette's School, as students test out new technology developed just across the road.

A recent field trip gave students at the St Marys school an insider's view on technologies being perfected at Flinders University's New Venture Institute in Clovelly Park, including microscopes that connect to iPads and smartphones.

Principal Gary Pascoe says students are using the microscopes to take a more detailed look at the world around them.

"We've dug up sand, bark and leaves and looked inside our ears and discovered that everyone has hairy ears," Mr Pascoe says.

"It's about exploring the world and what it looks like."

Students in Years 4 and 5 have been using the microscopes as part of maths classes, considering aspects such as parallel lines and shapes, while younger children have used them to take a closer look at nature.

"They've just taken to it like a duck to water," Mr Pascoe says.

"It's made them realise that iPads can be used for all sorts of other things rather than playing games or looking things up on a website."

After testing out the technology, produced by PhoneLabs, the school bought 20 microscopes to use on campus.

Having access to the innovation precinct is a coup for the school, Mr Pascoe says, giving the students an insight into the hard work that goes into developing a product.

Manseerat, 10, of Mitchell Park, says the students have looked at leaves, fabrics and animal skin – one of her classmates even saw a spider up close.

“We had to write about whether things had symmetry in them and different kinds of lines and curves,” Manseerat says.