ST JOSEPH’S PRIMARY SCHOOL
MERRIWA

ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT 2009

MARQUET STREET
MERRIWA NSW 2329
PHONE:02 6548 2035
FAX:02 6548 2782

admin@merriwa.catholic.edu.au
http://merriwa.catholic.edu.au/
Messages from Key School Bodies

Principal
It is with great pleasure that I present the St. Joseph’s Primary School Merriwa Annual School Report for 2009. The school community of St Joseph’s is very proud of the achievements we have made in 2009 and commend to you this report as testimony to the wonderful educational institution that it is.

St. Joseph’s is a co-educational primary school located within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

It is situated in the small rural town of Merriwa and has an enrolment of 41 students.

As a Catholic school, St. Joseph’s Merriwa contributes to the Church’s mission to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. Jesus said he came that we may have life and have it to the full. St. Joseph’s School offers an educational foundation for life to the full, through the development of the whole person - academically as well as spiritually, socially, physically and emotionally. We are proud of the commitment of the entire school community to this mission.

The community focus of the St Joseph’s Primary school was formally recognised through the Diocesan of Maitland-Newcastle ‘Monsignor Coolahan Award’ for Community 2009.

There has been a continued effort in the area of environmental education at the school and this has been rewarded through the Tidy Towns program where our school’s efforts were highly commended.

Copies of this report may be obtained from the school office or accessed electronically on the school website.

P & F
St Joseph’s Merriwa school truly shone in 2009 with new state of the art classrooms, spacious administration areas and magnificent landscaping, fully operational. And the best news, thanks to the Federal government, by next year, the school will have even more facilities, including exciting new play equipment, an enclosed activity area, interconnecting covered walkways, a refurbished canteen and much more. It is amazing that only a few years ago, the St Joseph’s Merriwa Parents and Friends Association drew up a wish list for the school including all of these items. Well its prayers have truly been answered due in part to generous government grants and the excellent support of the Maitland-Newcastle Catholic Schools Office team.

The P&F made a special effort in ‘09 to impress upon the school community that the association was not all about fundraising. Each meeting, “cheese and nibbles” were shared and teachers ran some parent education sessions on mathematics and curriculum updates. An affordable family-friendly Bush Dance social evening was held with live music, subsidised by $250.

The P&F worked diligently all year to raise funds for the school, also assisting with projects and keeping the canteen, uniform room, bus cleaning and street stalls running as usual. Every family in the school pitched in somewhere, supporting working bees at the school, attending meetings, working at fundraisers, cleaning the bus, assisting in the canteen, donating afternoon teas, cooking for street stalls and at barbeques, including parents, students, grandparents, siblings, ex-students and friends. The 2009 fundraising profit totalled $10,000, raised via street stalls, the Mother’s Day Luncheon, Netball Gala Day and our bus cleaning contract. The list of donation achievements for the school in 2009 was impressive: turf & earthworks $4145; sporting equipment $350; garden plants, fertiliser & soil $300; school flyers $550; student school badges $775; plus a sandpit cover; parent resource materials; student trophies & prizes; cleaning and maintenance costs.

The St. Joseph’s P&F is truly blessed with a wonderful school community, talented, caring staff, the commitment of Fr Des and the St Joseph sisters, the support of St Anne’s parish, special children and a great bunch of parents and friends. This community spirit was recognised and rewarded by the granting of the Monsignor Coolahan award for Community. Well done everyone!!

Maria Cameron
President

Student Leaders/SRC
During 2009 the school leadership role was once again shared amongst all 6 of the Year 6 students. The six leaders undertook a variety of leadership activities. These included: leading morning assembly, prayer and flag raising; operating the sports shed; serving in the canteen and organising tabloid sport activities for daily PE.

At the Opening School Mass we presented Leadership speeches to the wider school community. These highlighted the skills we need to be effective leaders within our school. We were presented with badges so that we were easily recognised as school leaders – we also looked very smart when we represented our school in the community.

In May the Year 6 leaders attended a leadership day in Newcastle. This day was an enjoyable day, where the leaders joined in with many games where the focus was on developing good leadership skills.

Year 6 leaders prepared and cooked pikelets for their annual Pancake Tuesday fundraiser.

Throughout the year the leaders took turns in looking after the chooks and veggie gardens, part of our environmental education program. They organised groups with the younger children, to help them...
understand the importance of looking after animals and plants.

On ANZAC Day the school participated in the Community March and Year 6 leaders laid a wreath in memory of fallen diggers. We also participated in a Remembrance Day service with Merriwa Central School – bringing the two schools together for a march down the street to the local cenotaph.

On the last day of Term 3, Year 6 organised the annual Mission Day – where all students went down to the Merriwa river with buckets which they filled up then carried back to school. The purpose of this activity was for us to be able to see how far the poor people have to carry water just so they can have a drink. The funds raised went to Caritas Australia to assist children living in Zambia.

We participated in an orientation program for our 2010 Kindergarten students to help them become comfortable in our school environment. We also had a buddy in Kindergarten 2009 to welcome them to the school and ensure they settled in easily to school routines.

At the End of Year Mass we celebrated our successful completion of Primary School and then went on to enjoy a lovely dinner with our parents and the school staff. After we shared in this meal we presented our gift to the school – a park seat for all of our community members to sit and enjoy our beautifully improved school gardens.

**Religious Dimension and Culture of School Life**

**Catholic Identity**

St Joseph’s Catholic School is part of the St Anne’s Catholic Parish, Merriwa. The school was established by the Parish in 1883, paying the wages of a lay teacher. The Sisters of St Joseph arrived in 1885 to continue the provision of Catholic education.

The Sisters of St Joseph continue to maintain a presence in the community as Pastoral Care workers. The three religious living in close proximity to the school are closely involved in school activities and community affairs.

The school’s close proximity to the convent and the church help in visually reinforcing the Catholic identity of the school. There are many other aspects that affirm this identity.

Religious symbols, both traditional and contemporary, in the form of statues, crucifixes, candles and sacred spaces adorn the school grounds and the classrooms. Class and school prayer is a valued part of each day and the children experience formal as well as informal prayer opportunities daily. A well prepared Liturgy of the Word is celebrated at each Thursday assembly. Both students and teachers play an active role in these Liturgies. The parents are always welcome to attend. Throughout the year there are numerous opportunities for the children to celebrate the Mass in St Anne’s Church.

The school Vision and Mission statements clearly articulate our role as a community of Catholic faith. This vision underpins all school policies and procedures. The community of St Joseph’s School Merriwa believes that Jesus came that we “may have life. Life in all its fullness” Jn 10. We see it as our mission to help this become a reality for the students whom we serve.

**The School as part of Parish and Diocesan Life**

A positive relationship between the school and Parish continues to be a high priority. We work closely with our parish priest and he is a regular visitor in the school grounds.

The Sacramental program is parish based and involves three staff members, the sisters of St Joseph and parent volunteers. The sacramental program is supported by the school curriculum and the parish team is in close communication with the class teachers of the students involved.

During Catholic Schools Week parents, staff and parish members gathered together to share a meal. Many people attended this evening and everyone had a wonderful night.

Mass was celebrated by the school community on several occasions throughout the year including Opening School Mass and the Final School Mass of the Year. Some of these were celebrated on weekdays and others at the regular Parish weekend Mass. In 2009, there was the opportunity for all students and teachers to celebrate Mass with all the Upper Hunter Regional School communities for Catholic Schools Week at St Joseph’s school in Aberdeen. The staff enjoyed the Called to Serve Mass at the Cathedral at the start of the year and the leaders and school principal participated in the annual Catholic Schools Week Mass with representatives from all Diocesan schools.

Copies of the school newsletter were placed in the church to ensure that parishioners had access to what was happening within the school. A parishioner supplied cakes each week to be raffled off on canteen day to help raise funds for the school.

Students performed at the St. Joseph’s Mothers Day Lunch, held in a local hall for all members of the community. The hall had been decorated with drawings and writings about mothers. A Father’s day liturgy and breakfast was very well attended by parents.

We were blessed this year with a visit from Bishop Michael Malone. The students and staff enjoyed spending time with Bishop Michael and showing him our beautiful school.
Traditionally, St Joseph’s school community from Denman, join with us to celebrate St Joseph’s Day. We alternate the venue. In 2009, we joined the Denman community for a combined Cross Country Carnival. We celebrated lunch together and concluded the day with a liturgy celebrating the special identities of each school named in honour of St Joseph.

The Principal is an ex-officio member of the Parish Council and attends meetings as appropriate.

Teaching of Religion

Religion lessons at St Joseph’s follow the curriculum set down by our Diocese. All class teachers are responsible for the teaching of Religious Education in their respective classes and are formally accredited to teach Religious Education or are in the process of satisfying the academic requirements needed to apply for accreditation. St Joseph’s school implements the Diocesan K-12 Religion Syllabus. Religion lessons are held each day. Each class has a structured lesson that develops the knowledge and understandings of our Catholic faith. Class and school liturgical, sacramental and prayer celebrations form an important aspect of the Religious Education curriculum. Thursday Liturgy of the Word is conducted by the Stage 3 children and celebrated by the whole school. Wherever possible, Catholic perspectives are integrated into all Key Learning Areas.

Retreats and Faith Development Programs

Prayer and Reflection opportunities begin all meetings and gatherings. Each year one professional development day is set aside for the teachers to join together in learning more about their spirituality or the teaching of Religious Education. This year we invited staff from St Joseph’s Denman to participate in a spiritual retreat facilitated by Jim Quillman.

A Lenten program was run for staff and community members from the Parish. This was an optional experience which many staff and parish members attended.

Daily prayer was experienced in classrooms, all of which have a sacred space and prayer focus. Many opportunities were made available for spontaneous prayer as well as formal prayer. The newsletter each fortnight has a reflection/prayer for the parents and staff to enjoy.

Service to the wider community is an important aspect of our faith development. As such, Mission Day is a major event on the yearly calendar. Regular visits to the Gummun Place Hostel for the Aged and the Merriwa Hospital are also included.

Values (including Social Justice Initiatives)

Our school motto “Actions Not Words” captures the spirit of our school and is a constant reminder of the importance to continually witness to the values of Jesus Christ in all interactions with each other and to provide a learning environment where learning is permeated by Gospel values. The values highlighted in the 2008 Values Forum were built on throughout the course of this year. These values are Respect, Responsibility, Service, Compassion, Honesty, Justice, Integrity, Resilience and Achievement. In word and action, our goal is to live out the great law of “Love One Another.”

Environmental stewardship programs embarked on by the school this year highlight the respect we have for God’s creation and our responsibility to care for it.

Compassion and service are displayed in the service projects the students have participated in with the elderly and sick in the wider community as well as with Caritas and Catholic Mission, Cancer Council through Relay for Life, as well as St Vincent de Paul. This involvement ensures that the children are aware of social justice issues in the local and wider communities.

Enrolment

Enrolment Policy

St. Joseph’s Primary School Merriwa follows the guidelines provided by the Catholic Schools Office Policy Enrolment (Amended 2008). The Policy has been devised to accommodate, as far as is possible, the needs of families seeking a Catholic education. In situations where enrolments have to be restricted because of limitations on capacity, preference may need to be given to children of Catholic families, as defined in the Policy. Implementation of the Policy is via our local school Enrolment Committee which has discretionary authority in keeping with Diocesan guidelines. Copies of the Policy are available from the school, or from the Catholic Schools Office website (cf end of Report). Parents concerned about school fees should ensure they make contact with the school. Diocesan provisions (including standard discounts for those with a Health Card) exist to help in this area, and the Principal can also exercise discretion where genuine need exists.

Student Welfare

No change.

Student welfare at St Joseph’s Merriwa is based on the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy. The School’s Vision statement underlies all policies and practices within the school:

St Joseph’s Primary School Merriwa:
A community of Catholic faith
where the uniqueness of each child
will be nurtured and valued.
Where students will be
empowered and challenged
to become
lifelong learners with
optimism and
hope for the future.
Student welfare is supported at St Joseph’s Anti-Bullying policy as well as its Behavioural Support and Special Needs Policies. These policies outline the rights and responsibilities of students as well as procedures followed for inappropriate behaviour. Family support can be provided through the “Seasons” programme as most teachers are trained companions.

Copies of these policies are available from the school upon request.

**Discipline**

No Change

Discipline at St Joseph’s is supported by our Behavioural Support Policy which is aligned to the Restorative Justice philosophy. The policy provides a framework for building relationships and managing behaviour. The policy aims to promote Gospel values, develop self-esteem, encourage responsibility, protect rights and model respectful behaviour.

This policy is supported by our Procedural Fairness Policy which is based on the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy of 2002. This outlines procedures for suspension and expulsion, if this is being considered.

Copies of these policies are available from the school upon request.

**Complaints & Grievances**

No change.

The school community developed a Complaints and Grievances Procedure Document in 2007. This is an open and transparent policy relating to complaints or grievances. Many of the concerns of parents are dealt with at the class teacher level. More serious concerns are dealt with by the Principal. The Principal in conjunction with the Child Protection Unit at the Catholic Schools Office deals with those issues that come under the jurisdiction of the Child Protection Legislation. To ensure that Procedural Fairness is demonstrated, St Joseph’s has its own Procedural Fairness Policy based on the CSO Policy on Pastoral Care 2002 (p13) particularly if suspension or expulsion is being considered. The school also refers to the CSO Complaints Management Policy 2006. A copy of the school’s policy is available from the school upon request.

**Student Achievements**

**Academic Achievements**

In our quest to empower and challenge students to become lifelong learners, we offer our students a vast range of learning opportunities. The teachers, with the assistance of the Learning Support teacher, assist all students in this pursuit.

Children are encouraged to participate in a range of competitions such as the University of NSW - ICAS and Newcastle Permanent Maths Competitions.

The senior class participated in the Murder Under the Microscope programme which encouraged the development of skills in Science and Technology as well as HSIE. The Science skills were further enriched through participation in the Upper Hunter Science Discovery Day. Our children combined forces with the students from Merriwa Central School to power a train using fan force and constructing a catapult and a bridge. The Newcastle Herald competition was again a learning highlight as the children honed their writing skills in a relevant and realistic way. Their journalism this year gained them a first prize for the editorial section and highly commended for the overall newspaper.

Public Speaking was again a major focus across the grades as each child participated in a whole school public speaking competition. The winners at school level went on to compete against all the other Catholic schools’ winners in a regional competition. The skills of our St Joseph’s children were aptly rewarded with our children winning two out of four stage divisions.

The senior class went on to put the skills to great use in the Regional Debating Competition.

**Cultural Achievements**

Music was a major highlight on the cultural agenda in 2009. We saw an increase in numbers of students taking the opportunity to learn an instrument through the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music. In term 3, 2009, with the financial assistance of our school and a very generous Parents and Friends Association, we were able to offer violin lesson to all students in Grade 3, 4, 5 and 6. The children loved this experience, especially those who have not had the opportunity to learn an instrument before. Twelve of our students attended the three day Kia-Ora Music Camp held in Scone. Experiences with all musical instruments were offered as well as concert band, percussion, choir, dance and clowning skills. The opportunity to perform in front of a very large audience on the final evening will not be forgotten by these students nor their proud teachers.

The Australia Day Awards at the commencement of the year saw the St Joseph’s school community recognised for its environmental excellence. The environmental education opportunities enjoyed by the students over the past 2 years also inspired the local council to nominate St Joseph’s school for a Tidy Towns Sustainable Communities Award. We were highly commended for our recycling, water harvesting, energy conservation, tree planting and gardening efforts. The whole school community has been involved in these efforts as well as local businesses through sponsorship. The school was also able to fund a “Kitchen Garden” project through the financial assistance of an NRMA community grant. The introduction of chooks into the school community added a new dimension to our environmental work. Recycling of food and garden scraps now goes in three directions – the worm farm, the compost bin and the chooks. The
children enjoyed adding fresh vegetables and eggs to their ‘crunch and sip’ break and to their canteen menus.

All children had the opportunity to perform in the Annual school Concert which enabled them to showcase their drama, singing and dancing skills.

**Sporting Achievements**

St. Joseph’s is extremely proud of the high participation in sport and the many sporting achievements gained by individual students and school teams in 2009. St. Joseph’s has a strong tradition in swimming, cross country, athletics, netball and horse sports. A carnival is held for all these sports using our own or local council facilities. All students from Kindergarten are given the opportunity to excel at their age level. Medals are distributed for the best results in each age group. In addition, our students have opportunities to try out for places on Regional teams in a variety of sports. A team of St. Joseph’s swimmers was selected to compete in the Regional carnival at Muswellbrook, one student went on to compete at the Diocesan carnival at New Lambton and then onto the Polding carnival at Homebush. We also sent students to the Regional athletics carnival at Scone. Three students represented the region at the Diocesan athletics carnival at Glendale and these three also went on to represent at the Polding carnival held in Glendale. A team of St. Joseph’s runners competed at the Diocesan Cross Country in Lochinvar.

**Performance in Statewide Tests**

To give the best opportunity to our students to succeed in their work, all children from Year 3 to Year 6 are enrolled in the NAPLAN Program. The NAPLAN Program in 2009 included tests in reading, spelling, grammar and punctuation, and writing and numeracy. In each area, the National Performance percentage is the average result for all students in the sample countries. These results are used to compare performance in Australia with that of a number of other countries. As a result of the NAPLAN Program, students are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and teachers are able to plan their teaching accordingly.

**Staff**

**Staff Qualifications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications &amp; Experience</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Teachers with teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR).</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Teachers with qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised by NOOSR but lacking formal teaching qualifications</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.(a) Teachers not having qualifications as described in I or II above but having relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context</td>
<td>(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. (b) of these which are New Scheme Teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Learning Undertaken**

Professional learning undertaken by the staff of St Joseph’s in 2010 included but was not limited to Literacy training in Narrative writing, Jolly Grammar, Literacy planning, Lexia Training; Special Education training in Cool and Friendly Behaviour Management, Non Violent Crisis management; Child Protection Training; Programming, Assessing and Reporting strategies; Creative Arts development; Liturgical Music; as well as Primary Principal Development Days, Religious Education coordinator development days, Librarian and Library Assistant development days and Information Technology development sessions. Opportunities were also taken by staff to attend the IEU Environmental Conference, How2Web2course, First Aid courses, Asthma, anaphylaxis and Emergency Care training, Bronze Medallion courses and Austswim training.

**Teacher Attendance**

The average teacher attendance rate for this school is 98%.

**Teacher Retention**

The teacher retention rate from 2003 to 2009 was 100%.
### Enrolments

**Actual Enrolments 2009**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholastic Year</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
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<td>Year 5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
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**Roll Class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roll Class</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K/1/2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Student Attendance (Primary)

The average student attendance rate for students at this school during 2009 was 94%.

### School Priorities

#### Achievement of School Priorities

The enrichment of Mathematics learning was a major priority for 2009. The purchase of teaching resources for mainstream as well as enrichment education and professional development opportunities for staff enabled this to become a reality. Teachers also presented Maths lessons for parents so that they can assist their children at home as well.

Environmental education was another priority which has reaped results for the school. Participation in VegWatch and Waterwatch programmes as well as Murder Under the Microscope, have provided the students with rich learning experiences. The establishment of four vegetable gardens, a composting system, worm farms, chook pen, as well as the maintenance of the herb garden and the tree planting programme has provided all children with valuable hands on learning experiences.

Science has been further enriched by participation in the Upper Hunter Science Discovery Day and Questacon Science Circus visit.

Helping students become more active has also been a focus this year. Students have been encouraged to be active through the National ‘Walk to School Day’ and the daily PE program ‘Kids on Walk about’. Children were offered the opportunity to participate in a combined schools football team with the local public school, and also hosted a regional small schools netball gala day.

### Facilities

Each classroom is equipped with air conditioning, an electronic interactive whiteboard, a ceiling mounted data projector and a number of fixed computers. A mobile bank of 12 laptops computers is shared by the three classrooms on a needs basis.

All classrooms and the library open onto spacious verandahs which enclose a shady lawn area ideal for outdoor learning activities.

The library is very well stocked and offers a wonderful retreat for students at lunch time as well as weekly library lessons.

The school has a canteen facility which is operated by the Parents and Friends Association and staffed by volunteer parents and grandparents. The canteen opens one day a week.

The school grounds consist of large playing fields, a shaded play gym, as well as a shaded sandpit area, an outdoor chess area and handball courts. There is a paved assembly area.

A water harvesting system enables us to maintain lawns for the children to play on and to support the growth of the many new trees planted each year to provide shade for the children and to reduce erosion in the playing fields. The extensive gardens planted and maintained by the school community add an aesthetic dimension to the grounds.

School Maintenance is determined in consultation with the CSO facilities team.

### Community Satisfaction

Anecdotal feedback, recent survey results and parent participation has enabled community satisfaction to be gauged. There is a strong community atmosphere at the school which is valued by teachers, students and parents alike. The teachers have been described as motivated and dedicated. The high teacher to student ratio is very much appreciated by the school community. The quality of education is well regarded by the parents. The friendly atmosphere is a credit to the entire school community. The student community is very happy with the quality of teaching, the resources and facilities available to them in the school.

Communication within the school community continues to be a priority this year and parents have expressed their satisfaction with this.

Comments in a recent performance review include:

- “My children and I are proud to be at St Joseph’s”,
- “We feel privileged that our child attends such a great school”,
- “We are pleased with how our children’s education is progressing within this loving community”,
- “children are content and happy at school and learning is improving greatly”
The school was the recipient of the prestigious “Monsignor Coolahan award for Community” for the 2009 school year. This award recognises the wonderful commitment the school has to its community and the community to its school. There is indeed community satisfaction.

Financial Information
The following graphs represent the income and expenditure for St Joseph’s Primary School, Merriwa for the school year ending 31 January 2010 as aggregated from the annual returns to the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training.

Concluding Statement
2009 was a very rewarding year for the school community of St Joseph’s Merriwa. Not only were we the very happy recipients of three major awards for community and the environment and an award for writing and public speaking but we also witnessed real learning from all the students at our school.

We are educating children to value their community and to take a responsible position within it. Our service activities enabled the students to do this.

The students are very well supported by their teachers, parents and members of the wider community. Thank you one and all.

Thank you to the staff from the Catholic Schools Office and Parish Priest, Father Des Harrigan for the ongoing support you provide us in our efforts to provide quality education to our students.

Report Access and Publication
This report is available to members of the school and wider communities. Copies will be supplied to the Catholic Schools Office, The Board of Studies, The Parents and Friends Association, the Parish Priest and to all parents.

Copies of this school’s Annual School Report are available to the general public. Persons wishing to access a copy of the report should contact:

Mrs Helen Whale
St Joseph’s Primary School
Marquet St
Merriwa NSW Australia
Phone: 0265 482 035

For further information relating to the Diocesan Policy please refer to: http://mn.catholic.edu.au