



St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa

PARENT HANDBOOK



2016

EMPOWERING AND CHALLENGING STUDENTS
TO BECOME LIFELONG LEARNERS

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*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.*



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

While Religious Education lessons form a part of each day, Christianity is a way of loving and therefore should influence every aspect of our school life. We strive to deepen the child's understanding and knowledge of the Catholic Faith, as well as developing a climate that will help children grow in their faith relationship with Christ.

Religious Education becomes meaningful when young people relate their study to real life situations. At St Joseph's Religious Education certainly takes on this dimension. It also endeavours to help the students develop Christian attitudes and values which they will try to live out in the family, school and the local community.

Liturgical celebrations are an intrinsic component of the Religious Education program. School liturgies are celebrated each Monday afternoon at 2.40 pm. Mass is celebrated on special feast days throughout the year. Parents and family friends are always most welcome and actively encouraged to join all class and school religious celebrations. Preparation for the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation is family based and supported by parish and school programs.

HISTORY OF ST JOSEPH'S

St. Joseph's Catholic School, Merriwa, was founded in 1883 when the Catholic people of the district agreed to contribute ten pounds per month to employ a teacher. Miss E. Cooper (some records state "Cook") was offered the position.

By March of 1884 the number of students had increased, requiring a second teacher.

On 5th January, 1885, three Sisters of St. Joseph took up residence in Merriwa. They were the first Foundation formed from Lochinvar, which had come into existence only two years earlier in 1883.

School records go back to 1886 (unfortunately the first records of 1885 have been lost.) The total enrolment was 77, 39 girls and 38 boys. On 25th November, 1928, Bishop Dwyer blessed the new school in Marquet Street. On 31st January, 1954, Bishop Toohey blessed the new infants classroom and on 19th January, 1961, blessed the new school building of three classrooms. Secondary classes operated at St Joseph's Merriwa from the early 1950's to 1968. For 125 years St Joseph's Catholic School has offered quality Catholic Education to the children of the Merriwa district.

OUR SCHOOL TODAY

The Sisters of St Joseph are no longer teaching at the school, however the school retains close ties with the St Anne's Catholic Parish. Current enrolment is 66 students K-6. The staff includes a Principal, five teachers, a Learning Support Teacher, two Learning Support Assistants, a Teacher-Librarian, Library Assistant and a Clerical Assistant.

St Joseph's is very well resourced in terms of equipment and support personnel. Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music provides individual tuition in guitar, piano, violin, drums, clarinet, trumpet and trombone on a user pays basis.

A Special Education Adviser and a Registered Psychologist are available to assist the school in assessing and addressing individual students needs.

St Joseph's is also supported by an enthusiastic Parents & Friends Association, which is keen to provide funds that assist St Joseph's in providing up-to-date learning facilities for their children.

CURRICULUM

Key Learning Areas

Today's school curriculum reflects the changing needs of society. The curriculum today is organised into outcomes. An Outcome is the knowledge, skills or understanding that children are to achieve.

The curriculum is organised into **Key Learning Areas**. They are:

- Religious Education
- English
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Human Society and it's Environment (HSIE)
- Creative Arts (CA)
- Personal Development/Health/Physical Education (PD/H/PE)

The curriculum is presented to children from Years 1 to 6 over a two-year cycle known as a stage. This approach acknowledges individual learning styles and differences. Therefore the curriculum is structured not in year levels but in a stage:

Early Stage 1	Kindergarten
Stage 1	Yr 1 and Yr 2
Stage 2	Yr 3 and Yr 4
Stage 3	Yr 5 and Yr 6

The school plans, teaches and assesses children's outcomes in Stages as recommended by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES).

Information and Learning Technologies are vital tools in the learning process. Electronic Smartboards are located in each classroom and provide a valuable interactive learning experience. Children have access to computers at school for research purposes as well as multimedia presentations. Video conferencing facilities allow students to bring the world into their learning.

St Joseph's has recently adopted the Professional Learning Communities model. This allows the staff to meet regularly to share expertise and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and to identify the key areas that are needed to enable ALL students to achieve at a high level.

Classrooms are designed to maximise open spaces that allow and encourage student collaboration. A real sense of community, sharing resources, learning spaces and ideas is fostered.

In 2016, the Kindergarten and Stage 1 classes are combined to form one infant class. This allows students to learn in different ways and at their own levels while being taught by a collaborative team of teachers.

Assessment and Reporting

Assessment & reporting at St Joseph's is considered critical in the educational process, as it provides relevant and useful information for teachers, students and parents about the learning that occurs over a period of time.

Detailed progress reports outlining your child's learning and achievements are sent home twice a year - at the end of term 2 and towards the end of term 4.

Both formal and informal Parent-Teacher interviews can be arranged at any time during the year.

DAILY TIMETABLE

8:30am	Supervision commences
9.00 - 11.15am	Morning classes
11.15 - 12.00	Lunch / Daily PE
12.00 - 1.30pm	Middle Session
1.30 - 2.00pm	Recess
2.00 - 3:00pm	Afternoon Session
3.00pm	Afternoon Assembly

Sport

Children are provided with the opportunity to learn a number of sports. It is important to the child's total development to participate as fully as possible in the program provided.

All children participate in swimming lessons during the summer. An extensive PE program ensures that each student is proficient in the skills required to participate in a number of sports. School carnivals are organised for swimming, athletics, cross-country and netball. Children are given the opportunity to participate and represent their school in a variety of competitive sports including Horse Sports.

A note must be given to the class teacher if a child is not able to participate for a good reason. Such non-participation should be kept to a minimum for the sake of the child's health and well-being.

The school sports day is Wednesday. Children are required to wear their sport uniform on this day.

Library

The school has a well-stocked, computerised library from which the children may borrow each week. We ask that all children have a library bag to protect their books. There is borrowing each **Wednesday** and you are encouraged to show an interest in the books that your child borrows. Children participate in formal library lessons each Wednesday.

Ashton Scholastic **Book Club** operates within the school, providing families with the opportunity to purchase books and encourage reading at home.

Two **Book Fairs** are held throughout the year giving students, parents and friends the opportunity to purchase quality books at very reasonable prices. Commission earned through the sale of the books provides valuable new resources for our library and classrooms.

Homework

Homework is given to reinforce concepts learnt at school. Specific homework details are issued at the Parent Information Night at the commencement of the new year. Parent involvement and participation in homework activities is encouraged. Students have the best opportunity for success when prior learning is practised at home.

Newsletter

A school newsletter is sent home with the eldest in the family each fortnight or distributed via email, the school webpage and the Skoolbag App. You are asked to read it very carefully as it is a vital means of communication between the school and the home. Other notes may be sent home as the need arises. Please check your child's bag each day. Spare notes are always kept in the office if you misplace or do not receive one.

Absence Notes

If a child is away from school through illness, or any other reason, the school must be notified. The roll is a legal document and without formal notification explaining your child's absence the computer defaults to 'ABSENCE UNEXPLAINED' after seven days and this becomes part of your child's official record. Parents are requested to phone the school or contact the school via the Skoolbag app to notify the class teacher if you know your child will be absent from school. Pre-planned absences must be applied for through the principal.

Late Arrival/Early Departure Book

Parents/guardians are required to sign their child in or out of school if they are arriving late or leaving early for any reason. A book is kept in the school office for this purpose. This is a legal requirement and also ensures a correct record is kept of your child's attendance at school.

Buses

Buses service our school from Sandy Hollow, Giants Creek, Cassilis, Willow Tree/Mountain Station Rds, Idaville Rd and Cullingral/Ringwood Rds. All buses are operated by Cowans Bus Service. All infants children are eligible for a bus pass. Primary children must reside further than 1.6km radius from the school to be eligible. If you travel more than 1.6km to the nearest bus stop please enquire at the office about a transport subsidy. Children are expected to obey the instructions of the driver at all times and conduct themselves in a safe manner on the bus. Continued misbehaviour will result in the loss of the bus pass.

Change of Routine

Parents are requested to inform the school if a change of routine occurs regarding their child's transport arrangements, mode of travel to and from school or supervision arrangements.

Discipline

Parental support in dealing with discipline issues is of utmost importance. Parents' own experiences of school reflect significantly upon the child's perception of school. Parental support is required in dealing with matters of misbehaviour. By showing a united and supportive front the child will be clear in what is expected. Often if a parent is called to school it is to work through a problem and discuss the best way of dealing with the issue at hand. If necessary counselling is available.

Canteen

Canteen operates every Wednesday on a voluntary basis thanks to the generosity of Parents and Friends. Canteen order forms with prices are sent home each month. Orders are to come back to school each Tuesday.

Excursions

Each year class and whole school excursions are planned for children attending St Joseph's. Excursions play an important role in extending the classroom experience in a tangible and meaningful way. Written permission will be sought at the time of excursions. Each year the Stage 3 class (5-6) attends an overnight excursion which is a wonderful experience for the whole group.

Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music

The Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music offers lessons in guitar, violin and piano at school. These lessons are an 'extra' and are taken during school time with a private teacher. If you would like your child to take lessons please contact the office or the Conservatorium on 6541 4888.

Special Assemblies

Weekly assemblies are held each Monday afternoon to celebrate Liturgy and the children's achievements throughout the week. All parents and friends are welcome.



Parents & Friends Association

St Joseph's P&F welcomes new members. The support of the P&F is integral to the efficient running of the school. The P&F is a fundraising body as well as a social and educational arm of the school community. The P&F has responsibility for the running of several committees within the school. Parental participation on these committees is actively encouraged. Meetings are held at 4.30 on the 2nd Monday of each month in the MacKillop Room or as determined by the committee. Notice is given via the school newsletter and Skoolbag app prior to the meeting advising of the agenda.

Parental Involvement

Parental involvement is encouraged and welcomed in many school activities. Parents are always welcome in the classroom to assist with literacy and numeracy programs and other class activities. There are also many other opportunities for parents to be involved in other aspects of the school such as the library, book fairs, sporting events and canteen.

Home-School Liaison

The education of each child is a joint responsibility that is greatly enhanced by maximum cooperation of all involved. The staff of St Joseph's is aware of its responsibility and endeavours to foster a meaningful and helpful liaison with the parents of each child.

Therefore parents and carers are:

- encouraged to attend parent-teacher meetings to meet their child's teacher and be familiar with class/school policy, procedures and programmes and discuss their child's progress
- Encouraged to make an appointment to see the teacher whenever they feel it is necessary—outside class times
- Invited and encouraged to join in celebrations of class/school liturgies, concerts, special events and sports days
- Requested to join the Sacramental programs and personal development programs where the teachers assist them in their roles as the first educators of their children
- Encouraged to come along to the monthly meetings of the P&F and support organised activities
- Requested to read regular newsletters and other communications from the school to remain informed of activities and policies
- Encouraged to communicate anything that may be helpful in understanding and caring for their child. They will be assured that confidential matters remain that way.

Permission Notes

Permission notes signed by a parent are required in the following circumstances:

- go on a school excursion out of Merriwa
- when out of uniform
- when absent from school
- when arriving late or leaving early—the person dropping off or collecting the child must sign the 'late arrival/early departure book' which is located in the office foyer

School Banking

We have school banking available each Thursday. Banking is conducted through the Catholic Development Fund which offers a range of savings and investment products. School Banking is a great way of teaching your child good saving and budgeting habits.

Health

Children who are unwell should not be sent to school. If your child has been ill with an infectious disease, the child should not return to school until fully recovered. Such infectious diseases have recommended periods of withdrawal. Children with certain skin diseases may return to school once appropriate treatment has been obtained.

Children seeking enrolment must supply a vaccination certificate from the doctor, which will be photocopied and returned to you.

Visitor/Volunteer Sign In Register

All persons visiting or volunteering at the school for any reason are requested to report to the school office and sign the register. It is a legal requirement that we keep a record of all persons on the school grounds. This also assists us with evacuation procedures.

All school volunteers must provide evidence of a Working with Children check. Details are available at the office.

SCHOOL FEES

School fees are integral to the operation of Catholic Schools. A percentage of school fees is paid to the Catholic Schools Office to supplement Federal and State Government Grants. The remainder of fees is retained at the school to meet recurrent costs. Fees are billed over the first three terms and an account is forwarded at the beginning of each term. Prompt payment upon receipt is much appreciated. Provision is available for weekly, fortnightly or monthly payment by direct debit.

School fees are set by the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle each year. Fees for 2016 are listed below:

Tuition Fees

A family discount applies dependent on the number of children attending Maitland-Newcastle diocesan schools. Fees for children in Kinder to Year 6 for 2016 are as follows:

1 Child	\$ 1152.00
2 Children	\$1036.80 each
3 Children	\$ 921.60 each

Concessions can be granted to families who hold a Health Care Card or are experiencing financial hardship. If at any stage you need to discuss fees please contact the Principal. All arrangements will be kept confidential. No child will ever be excluded from St Joseph's Merriwa because of genuine financial concerns.

Resource Fee

A Resource Fee is charged along with the tuition fee for each of the first three terms. This fee covers all the consumable materials your child will need during the year (pens, pencils, exercise books, photocopying etc). This fee also incorporates the levies previously charged for sport, technology and text books. The 2016 Resource Fee is \$240.00 per child per annum

Diocesan Family School Building Levy

The Diocesan Family School Building Levy is a diocesan charge (per family) and is collected by the school at which the eldest student in the family attends. The income from the levy contributes to the capital and maintenance costs of the facilities. Catholic Schools collect the DFSBL because there is a gap between the recurrent grants/school fees receive and the cost of capital to provide appropriate facilities in Catholic Schools. The 2016 DFSBL is \$672 per year, charged over the first three terms with other fees.

SCHOOL UNIFORM

The school uniform policy sets out the correct school uniform that should be worn at all times. If for any reason your child is unable to wear the correct uniform, a note of explanation is required.

St Joseph's P&F operates a uniform shop at the school where uniforms are available at reasonable prices—see separate uniform booklet provided by the P&F.

Sunsafe Procedures

The school hat is a compulsory part of the uniform for summer and winter and we have a '**No Hat—Play in the Shade**' Policy. Children will wear hats to protect their face, neck and ears whenever outside. This hat may be purchased from the P&F's uniform shop.

Non-compulsory Extras

Green and gold taslon jackets may be worn over sloppy joe or bomber jackets. These jackets are meant to be worn **outside only**. This jacket is suitable for the very cold days that are sometimes experienced.

School bags and library/swimming bags are also available from the school uniform shop.

Children's sunglasses are also available and children are welcomed and encouraged to wear these outside, especially during summer.

Accessories

Ribbons, bands and combs in school colour only (bottle green) may be worn. Jewellery is not to be worn with the uniform (girls may wear a signet ring and one pair of plain earrings or studs).

Special Plea

Please ensure all clothing articles are clearly labelled with your child's full name. Initials only can be confusing.

St Joseph's Merriwa School Uniform

Girls

<i>Summer Full Uniform</i>	Summer dress Green socks & black leather shoes
<i>Summer Sports Uniform</i>	Sports shirt Green netball skirt Green socks & sports shoes
<i>Winter Full Uniform</i>	Green long sleeve shirt School tie Green slacks & green socks, <i>or</i> Green long box pleat skirt & stockings Black leather shoes Green v-neck jumper, bomber jacket and/or vest optional. Green & gold school jacket optional for outdoor activities.
<i>Winter Sports Uniform</i>	Same as for summer but green tracksuit can also be worn.

Boys

<i>Summer Full Uniform</i>	Short sleeve green shirt Green shorts Green socks & black leather shoes
<i>Summer Sports Uniform</i>	Sports shirt Sports shorts Green socks & sports shoes
<i>Winter Full Uniform</i>	Long sleeve green shirt School tie Green trousers Green socks & black leather shoes Green v-neck jumper, bomber jacket and/or vest optional. Green & gold school jacket optional for outdoor activities.
<i>Winter Sports Uniform</i>	Same as for summer but green tracksuit can also be worn.

All students are to wear our school's slouch hat.

CHILD PROTECTION

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle are committed to providing safe environments for students. Whilst we have a legal obligation to protect children, this commitment is central to our Catholic beliefs. At St Joseph's Primary School we believe that all children have a right to a safe environment which is free from any form of abuse or harm. At St Joseph's relationships between adults and children are governed by trust and Gospel values.

Schools in NSW are required to meet the statutory obligations of legislation relating to child protection. Schools in this diocese are required to uphold the policies and guidelines set out by the Catholic Schools Office.

This legislation includes:

- ◆ NSW Ombudsman's Act 1974
- ◆ The NSW Ombudsman Practice Update 2013
- ◆ The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act, 1998
- ◆ Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012

Catholic Schools Office documents include:

- ◆ Child Protection – Reporting Concerns for Children or People with a Disability
- ◆ Child Protection Code of Professional Standards for Catholic School Employees

Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act

This legislation establishes a shared responsibility for the protection of children. Teachers have a legal responsibility to report a child or young person who is at risk of significant harm. This means that staff at St

Joseph's Primary School Merriwa are required by law to make a report to the Department of Family and Community Services when they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm from abuse or neglect. This includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse; exposure to domestic/family violence; concerns for a child or young person who is a danger to themselves or others; and issues of neglect e.g. inability of the parents to provide appropriate medical care for the child or young person, inability to provide necessary food or shelter, or educational neglect such as significant habitual absence.

Child Protection and Volunteers

Being a volunteer in a school is an important task. St Joseph's Primary School would not be able to function as well as we do without the contribution made by the myriad of volunteers who so generously give of their time and expertise. Unfortunately, history has shown us that some adults put themselves in situations where they can use their positions of trust and power to harm children. This history has resulted in legislation in NSW which aims to protect children from abuse.

The legislation that applies specifically to volunteers includes:

- ◆ Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012
- ◆ NSW Ombudsman Act 1974

Child Protection (Working with Children) Act

This applies to people who are employed or engaged (or who are seeking to be employed or engaged) in child-related work in NSW

- as a paid employee;
- as a self-employed person or as a contractor or subcontractor;

as a volunteer;

as a person undertaking practical training as part of an educational or vocational course (other than as a student undertaking work experience);

as a minister, priest, rabbi, mufti or other religious leader or spiritual officer of a religion or other member of a religious organisation.

You can obtain a Working with Children Check by visiting www.newcheck.kids.nsw.gov.au and filling in your information; then presenting to the Roads and Maritime Service with the application number generated from the website. Checks for paid employees cost \$80; volunteer roles are free. You will be issued with a Working with children Check number that lasts for 5 years. You **MUST** issue this number to your employer so that they can verify it.

The following roles are exempt from a Working with Children Check

- administrative, clerical or maintenance work, or other ancillary work, that does not ordinarily involve contact with children for extended periods;
- Work with minimal direct contact or unsupervised contact with children for no more than 5 days in a calendar year;
- volunteering by a parent of a close relative of the child (except where the work is part of a formal mentoring program or involves intimate personal care of children with a disability)
- visiting speakers, adjudicator, performer, assessor or other similar visitor if it is a one off occasion and is carried out in the presence of one or more adult.
- People under the age of 18.

In the instance of these exemptions persons are required to complete a Volunteer Declaration and identity check prior to commencing as a volunteer. Declarations are available from the school office.

Volunteers not willing to provide a Volunteer Declaration are not permitted to undertake any duties in the school.

NSW Ombudsman Act 1974

This Act guides the Catholic Schools Office and school's response when a child protection allegation has been made against employees. It applies to paid and unpaid employees (volunteers) in schools.

The Act requires the school to notify allegations that constitute sexual offences, misconduct, assault, ill-treatment, neglect and behaviour that causes psychological harm to children to Zimmerman Services, the diocesan prevention and Response team (PaRT).

Once the allegation is received by PaRT it is reported to the Ombudsman's Office; they then conduct an investigation into the allegation. The investigation gathers facts relevant to the allegation and arrives at a finding at its conclusion. The process of investigation provides the employee with an opportunity to respond to the allegation and have the response heard. All evidence is considered before a decision is made in regard to the finding.

Further information about this process is available from Zimmerman Services on 4979 1390.





CONTINUING EDUCATION IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Continuing access to Catholic Education, from Kindergarten to Year 12, is available to children who have attended St Joseph's Primary, Merriwa.

A bus travels daily to St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen and this service is run by the Catholic Education Office. This travel is free and has proved enormously successful. **Catholic students who have attended St Joseph's Primary, Merriwa, or another Catholic feeder primary school, are given priority enrolment at St Joseph's High School, Aberdeen.**

St Joseph's High School is a very highly regarded secondary college with an enviable reputation for delivering quality education and access to a wide range of elective subjects. St Joseph's Aberdeen has a proven record of academic excellence, with a large proportion of senior students attending university. Students have also regularly achieved results that place them in the top of the state.

VISION STATEMENT



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where the uniqueness of each child
will be nurtured and valued.
Where students will be
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We will achieve this vision by:

- Working together with students, families, parishioners and members of the wider community.
- Providing ongoing opportunities for students to understand and embrace the teachings of Christ and the traditions of the Catholic Church.
- Ensuring that Gospel values support all school policies and procedures.
- Providing a meaningful and inclusive learning program which caters for the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, social and physical dimensions of all students.
- Recognising and celebrating all that is good in our school, family, community, country and the world.
- Teaching students by example to become problem solvers and forward thinkers.
- Demonstrating an appreciation of our environment and our responsibility for its preservation.

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