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 2012. The school community of St Joseph’s is very proud of the achievements made in 2012 and commend to you this report as testimony to the wonderful educational institution that it is.

St Joseph’s Primary School is a small, rural Catholic school situated in the Upper Hunter town of Merriwa. Its mission is to be a community of Catholic faith where the uniqueness of each child is nurtured and valued; where students are empowered and challenged to become lifelong learners with optimism and hope for the future. The school achieves its mission by working together with students, families, parishioners and members of the wider community to provide a holistic education to all students. Gospel values support all school policies and procedures. Students are taught by example to become problem solvers and forward thinkers and to demonstrate an appreciation of our environment and our responsibility for its preservation.

Strong programs in each Key Learning Area are delivered to all students. The school is currently engaged in the National Partnerships (Low SES) program. This program has been designed at St Joseph’s to enhance the capacity of its teaching staff to lift the educational standards of its students in Literacy at present and Numeracy in the coming year. A highly structured combination of professional development opportunities, access to quality teaching resources and experiences as well as an increased emphasis on parent engagement has been developed to increase student readiness for and engagement in learning. Curriculum differentiation ensures that the needs of all students at all levels are catered for adequately.

The school’s environmental stewardship programs highlight the respect it has for the earth and our responsibility to care for it.

In word and action, our goal is to live out Jesus’ commandment to ‘Love One Another’. Participation in Senior citizens events, program of visitation to the local aged care facility and hospital as well as active participation in community commemorative services and celebrations ensure the students develop a sense of belonging to and responsibility for their local community as citizens.

The school underwent the School Evaluation and Development process in 2012. It was greatly affirmed by the parent community and the Catholic Schools Office for the quality of service provided.

P and F

2012 was a very successful year for St Joseph’s Merriwa Parents & Friends Association.

Fundraising for the year was bolstered by the holding of our inaugural Junior Camp Draft which was a huge success and far exceeded our expectations. We plan to make this an annual event with 2013’s draft already taking shape. The day was a great display of teamwork as our parents and their many friends and students worked together to man the events, stalls and activities. The school spirit was very evident for the local and wider community to see.

Street stalls were highly beneficial to our fundraising activities, as was the B.B.Q for the Festival of the Fleeces, on the long weekend in June. The cleaning of the Aberdeen bus still remains one of our biggest fundraisers and without the support of our wonderful families this would not be able to continue.

The P & F also gave a helping hand in organising various other events around our school, such as the Mothers and Fathers Day stalls and especially working bees to help keep and maintain the school in its pristine condition.

All of these events help to raise much needed funds which are used to provide the school with resources needed to teach our children. Purchases for the year included furniture for the Year 5/6 room, chairs for the Mary MacKillop room, air conditioning for the 5/6 room, playground equipment upgrade, PM Benchmarking kit as well as wages for the gardensman and cleaner and the purchase of gifts for presentation night which we proudly donate each year.

Max McNaught

P & F President 2012
**Student Leaders/SRC**

During 2012 the school leadership role was once again shared amongst all of Year 6. The leaders were each given a portfolio. Each leader was assisted by two year 5 students. The portfolios included Sport and Recreation, Health and Safety, Religion, Public Relations and Communications, Student Welfare and the Environment. These roles were very well administered by the leaders and their assistants.

At the Opening School Mass, we the leaders of the school, presented our Leadership speeches to the wider school community. These highlighted the skills we had to be effective leaders and to complete our portfolios. We were presented with school leaders’ badges that we had been waiting six years for. These badges made us easily recognisable as school leaders – we also looked very smart when we represented our school in the community.

We attended a leadership day in Lochinvar. This was a fantastic day, where the leaders joined in with other school leaders from the Diocese and participated in many games where we developed lots of skills to become great leaders in our school community. This day was very useful and fun.

On Shrove (Pancake) Tuesday, we prepared and cooked pikelets for the annual Pancake Tuesday fundraiser. We also had other fundraisers to support the school. On ANZAC day we represented our school community. Two leaders lay the wreath to remember our fallen diggers. We also remembered the fallen diggers on Remembrance Day. On the last day of Term 3, we, with the help from the year 5 students, led the annual Mission Day activities. On this day we learned about victims of poverty throughout the world. All the money raised from this day was sent to Catholic Mission who then sent the money to people who have fallen victim to poverty.

Throughout the year, we participated in an orientation program for our 2013 Kindergarten students to help them get through the transition from preschool to the school environment. We also had a buddy in Kindergarten 2012 who we helped throughout the year.

We attended the End of Year Mass to celebrate our successful year of being School Leaders and the completion of primary school. Afterwards, we met to enjoy the Year 6 Dinner with our parents and the school staff, where we reflected on the wonderful year. Then, after the lovely dinner, we presented our Year 6 present - an outdoor clock for the school.

**Religious Dimension and Culture of School Life**

**Catholic Identity**

St. Joseph’s 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 two religious living in close proximity to the school are closely involved in school activities and community affairs.

The close proximity of the school to the convent and the church help in visually reinforcing the school’s Catholic identity. 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 Monday assembly. Both students and teachers play an active role in these Liturgies. The parents are always welcome to attend.

The school’s Vision and Mission statements clearly articulate the role the school assumes 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.
Respect for the traditional owners of this land is fostered through regular acknowledgement and the celebration of NAIDOC week and other events as they arise.

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

A positive relationship between the school and Parish continues to be a high priority at St Joseph’s school. We work closely with our Parish Priest and he is always a very welcomed member of our school community.

The Sacramental program is parish based and involves three staff members, the Sisters of St. Joseph and other 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 the year we had a Parish/School dinner where parents, staff and parish members gathered together to share a meal. This was a wonderful community event and a great night was had by all.

During Catholic Schools Week students and teachers prepared displays for the main street to highlight the Catholic identity of our school.

Mass was celebrated by the school community on several occasions throughout the year including Opening School Mass and the End of School Mass, as well as a well-attended Grandparents Mass. On other occasions classes have attended the regular Friday Mass and other significant feast days.

Copies of the school newsletter were placed in the church to ensure that parishioners had access to what was happening within the school.

The Mothers and Fathers day breakfast, liturgy and activities were very well attended by parents.

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

The school supports the annual winter and Christmas appeals for the local St. Vincent de Paul Society.

At school working bees, assistance is given to general tidying up of the Church grounds.

**Teaching of Religion**

Religion lessons at St. Joseph’s follow the curriculum set by the Maitland – Newcastle 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 for accreditation. 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. Monday Liturgy of the Word is prepared by the Stage 3 children with teacher assistance and celebrated by the whole school. This Liturgy of the Word follows the Church liturgical calendar.

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 staff joined with other members of the Upper Hunter schools to spend a spiritual day with Mary Kenyon. The REC attended a religious retreat at the Marist retreat centre in Mittagong.

A Lenten program was conducted by staff, for staff and community members from the Parish as well as other community members. 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. Visits to the Gummun Place Hostel for the Aged and the Merriwa Hospital are also included as well as caroling at the town Christmas Party.

**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 continue to witness the values of Jesus Christ in all interactions with each other and to provide a learning environment where learning is permeated by Gospel values. These values include 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 continue to be an important aspect of the school. This highlights the respect we have for creation and our responsibility to care for it. These include our vegie patch, chooks, composting, solar energy, worm farm and gardens.

Compassion and service are displayed in the service projects the students have participated in with the elderly and sick in the wider community. This service includes visits to the aged care facility and the hospital, as well as fundraising for the poorer members of our local and wider community. Being a responsible citizen is encouraged through participation in ANZAC ceremonies, Remembrance Day services, Australia Day events, Senior Citizen events, Richard Cootes visit- from Mission Australia, NAIDOC activities, Clean up Australia Day and National Tree Day.

**Policies**

**Enrolment Policy**

St Joseph’s 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**

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 through 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. Counselling services were obtained through the CSO school counsellor who visited the school on a fortnightly basis.

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

Discipline at St Joseph’s is supported by the Behavioural Support Policy which is aligned to the Restorative Justice philosophy. This 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.

The school commenced the establishment and implementation of the Positive Behaviour Framework across all grades in the school. This framework is designed to enable children to engage with their learning more effectively by being taught the skills to be ready to learn. School wide systems are in place to ensure consistency of expectations and consequences for not meeting the expectations.

The school 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 on the school website and from the school upon request.

**Complaints and Grievances**

The Complaints and Grievances Procedure and Policy was developed by the teachers, parents and other school community members 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 2003 (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 can be found on the school website.

**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 and Learning Support assistant, encourage all students in this pursuit.

Children were 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 Upper Hunter Science Discovery Day. Our children excelled in bridge building and learned a great deal about catapults, electricity and hovercrafts.

The Newcastle Herald competition was again a learning highlight as the children honed their writing skills in a relevant and realistic way.

Public Speaking was 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 again strengthened by this experience.

The senior class put their public speaking skills to great use in the Regional Debating Competition.

**Performance in National Testing**

The teaching staff at St Joseph’s have prioritised the teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy over the next 4 years. The school is being supported in this pursuit by the National Partnerships program. Our aim is to see the progression of all students to higher bands.
### NAPLAN Program 2012 - Year 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 6 and Above</th>
<th>St Josephs Primary School Merriwa</th>
<th>National Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
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<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>12.4%</td>
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### NAPLAN Program 2012 - Year 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band 6 and Above</th>
<th>St Josephs Primary School Merriwa</th>
<th>National Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Punctuation</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Cultural Achievements

Music was a major highlight on the cultural agenda in 2012. Many students took the opportunity to learn an instrument at school, through the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music. A large number of our students attended the three day Kia-Ora Music Camp held in Scone in March. This Music camp offered the students experience with all musical instruments offered as well as concert band, choir, dance, song writing. The whole school was entertained later in the year by the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music string quartet which toured the Upper Hunter.

The School performance of “Bully Bull Ring” was a great success with all students from grades K – 6 taking an acting role. The play focussed on strategies for changing the bullying culture by developing resilience, organisation, getting along, persistence and confidence. All students’ performance skills improved greatly over the term and certainly performing for a large audience on the night brought out the best acting and singing to date.

The local community’s “Little Sprouts Day” was a great opportunity for the students to celebrate literacy.

Singing for the Senior Citizens and at the local Aged care facility and Hospital was a great opportunity for the students to practice their singing skills and at the same time demonstrate their care for all members of the community.

### Sporting Achievements

St Joseph’s Primary School is extremely proud of the high participation in sport and the many sporting achievements gained by individual students and school teams in 2012. St Joseph’s students participated in swimming, cross country, athletics, netball and horse sports. A carnival was held for all these sports using our own or local council facilities. All students from Kindergarten to Year 6 were given the opportunity to excel at their age level. In addition, our students had 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 Swimming carnival. We also sent students to the Regional Athletics carnival. A team of St Joseph’s runners competed at the Diocesan Cross Country in Lochinvar. From these carnivals several students were selected to represent the region at diocesan level.
Participation in Horse Sport Events is an area which is growing rapidly at this school. In 2012, our team grew to 16 regular riders. These riders competed at 3 carnivals with great success.

St Joseph’s Merriwa hosted the inaugural St Joseph’s School Junior Campdraft. This was a great success and afforded our children the opportunity to compete and display their riding skills to the wider community.

Other Highlights for 2012

St Joseph’s was very proud to have won the Upper Hunter Shire Australia Day Award for Environmental Achievement. This award acknowledged the work the school has done to reduce our carbon footprint. The installation of Solar Panels, policies to encourage reduced use of power, water and paper, as well as our efforts at worm farming, composting, chook raising and vegetable gardening are all examples given to demonstrate our stewardship of creation.

Staff

Staff Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifications and 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>8</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) 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. (b) Of these which are New Scheme Teachers.</td>
<td>(b) 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Learning Undertaken

Professional learning is a high priority at St Joseph’s. We believe that improving the quality of the teacher will have significant flow on effects for the students. Teachers engaged in professional development on the following:-


Teacher Attendance

The average teacher attendance rate for this school is 99%.

Teacher Retention

The teacher retention rate from 2011 to 2012 was 100%.

This figure is the result of 1 temporary position being reclaimed by the teacher who was on leave in the previous year, 1 temporary position became a full time permanent position and was filled by the merit selection process the remaining temporary position was refilled at the end of the year as per the merit selection process.
Enrolments

Enrolments 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scholastic Year</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Attendance Rate %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinder</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>93.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>95.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>95.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>94.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>94.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>92.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>93.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>94.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Student Attendance

The average student attendance rate for students at this school during 2012 was 94%.

School Priorities

Achievement of School Priorities

This year saw a very focussed program of teacher improvement in the area of teaching Literacy. With this focus came the introduction and implementation of the Positive Behaviour framework to ensure student readiness to learn. Coupled with this was the implementation of a new database to track student achievement. This has enabled learning support to be more reliably targeted. Additional school funding has enabled a learning support assistant to work with students on individual reading programs and this has seen good results.

Facilities

Each of the four classrooms and the library is equipped with air conditioning, an electronic interactive whiteboard, and a number of fixed computers. A mobile bank of laptop computers is shared by the four classrooms on a needs basis.

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

A beautiful enclosed outdoor learning area is used for assemblies, meetings and most importantly as an area to conduct daily fitness and gross-motor programs.

The canteen facility adjoins the outdoor learning area and is operated by the Parents and Friends Association and staffed by volunteer parents and grandparents.

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 on which the children play 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.

The school generates energy through the use of solar panels.

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

Anecdotal feedback from SEVDEV surveys 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.

"My children love to go to school to the point when if they are sick they’ll try to hide it so they can still go. I’m very happy with the school."

"We are lucky to have a school this great on our doorstep."

"My child feels very much part of the school community. My child is building skills which I am sure will be important for the rest of life. Because of this sense of belonging my child is comfortable to express feelings, strives to do the best, is respected and has a great relationship with teachers and students."

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. The financial support given to the school by local business houses through Parents and Friends fund raisers highlights the high regard the community has for this school.

Strong parent participation in the many extracurricular events such as the inaugural junior campdraft and sporting event, the Parish-school Dinner and the working bees throughout the year, as well as Grandparent’s Day, Mother’s and Father’s day activities is great witness to the sense of community within the school.

Financial Information

The following graphs represent the income and expenditure for St Joseph’s Primary School, Merriwa for the school year ending 31 January 2013 as aggregated from the annual returns to the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Science and Training.
Concluding Statement

2012 was a very rewarding year for the school community of St Joseph’s Merriwa. We have witnessed great learning among the students as well as the teachers. The contribution of the Federal Government through National Partnership funding has significantly improved the ability of the school to raise the Literacy standards of the students. 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 for the ongoing support for 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 access the school website at http://www.merriwa.catholic.edu.au/ or contact:

**Mrs Helen Whale**  
Principal  
St Joseph’s Primary School  
Marquet Street  
MERRIWA NSW 2329  
(02) 6548-2035

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