**February 2014**

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<th>Sun</th>
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**Welcome Kinder students!**

Morning tea for new parents

NRL Anti bullying presentation Yrs 1-6

Mass 8.30am

Regional Swimming Carnival

K-2 Swimming Opening School

Mass 6pm, Parent information evening & social gathering

Helen - CSO

PUPIL FREE DAY

Staff Development

Helen - CSO

Schools Clean Up Day

Mass 6.00pm

**And God blesses each one of us ...**

We are blessed with the gift of life and God’s unlimited gifts to us ...

We are blessed as we return the smile of a child ...

We are blessed by the wise words of an older person who is our friend ...

We are blessed by having caring family members and good friends who support us.
Welcome to the 2014 school year. A special welcome to all our new children and their families. We are thrilled that you have chosen St Joseph’s School to help you in the education of your children. We thank God for the safe return of all our school community. We are very pleased that after this holiday there are no broken bones or other major injuries. Welcome back to the Tomy family (Fiona Year 1) who have recently returned from a holiday in India to see the family. We also wish ex students Patrick and Michael Gilbey (sons of Sally) our best wishes for their “gap year” in England this year working in boarding schools.

Our new students to St Joseph’s in 2014 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Olivia (Yr 3) and William (K) Collins</td>
<td>Melissa and Leo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seth Pepper (Yr 1)</td>
<td>Katie and Greg</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patrick Wong (Yr 2)</td>
<td>Lucy and Mike</td>
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<td>Grace Booth (K)</td>
<td>Sarah and Brion</td>
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<td>Nate Brown (K)</td>
<td>Jade and Jeremy</td>
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<td>Matilda Cronin</td>
<td>Maxine and Matthew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sam Grady</td>
<td>Heidi and Murray</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Hagley</td>
<td>Sally and Michael</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellie Holland</td>
<td>Kim and Peter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Levi Hourn</td>
<td>Natalie and Steven</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aidan Hunt</td>
<td>Leanne and Steven</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Luke</td>
<td>Peta and Andrew</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Patterson</td>
<td>De and Robert</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claudia Patterson</td>
<td>Sharee and Graeme</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rhianna Smith</td>
<td>Lisa and Paul</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bethany Wightman</td>
<td>Fiona and James</td>
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Goals for 2014
As we start the new school year it is a great idea to sharpen our focus on those things we want most to achieve. For 2014, St Joseph’s school has two main goals.

1. To break open the school Vision Statement, so that every member of our school community really understands what we are about and works to achieve it.

   *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.*

“A Community of Catholic Faith”
Our school vision statement starts with these words. Have we ever really reflected on them? What does it mean to be a community of Catholic faith? At St Joseph’s we are a group of people, students, parents, staff and parishioners who share a special relationship with each other which is inspired and guided by the teachings of Jesus Christ and the traditions of the Catholic Church. Our school was built 131 years ago with the vision, hard work and finances of the parishioners of St Anne’s Catholic Parish under the authority of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland. 130 years ago, the Sisters of St Joseph, founded by Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, took on the role of educators at our school. It was Mary MacKillop’s vision to bring education especially to the poor and needy children in remote areas of Australia. Merriwa was certainly remote in those days, without the convenience of modern transportation. This role continued into the 1990s. While we no longer have teaching sisters at our school, we have a very special relationship with Sr Mary and Sr Brigid. Fr John Tobin is our Parish Priest. Fr John celebrates special Masses throughout the year with us. The Opening school Mass on the evening of Thursday 13th February will be the first of these for the school year.

2. “Keep the main thing, the main thing”
This is our curriculum mantra. What is the main curriculum focus for us this year?

Improvement in Literacy and Numeracy learning. We have been working very hard for a couple of
years through the National Partnership program to develop Literacy skills and now we are using the powerful skills we acquired during this process to continue the great work and realise the results for which we are aiming. The school is setting aside considerable funding to support this goal. We are also being supported in the Infants grades by the SAP government funding. The teachers are very careful to ensure that there is very little disruption to the Literacy and Numeracy block each day. “Prime Time” in the day is dedicated to these subject areas. The whole school begins its Literacy block at 9am and its Numeracy block at 12 noon. We would appreciate all parents ensuring their children are at school on time, every time, and that appointments that are necessary in the school day be made for afternoon sessions rather than in this “Prime Time”. Remember “Keep the main thing, the main thing”.

**Australia Day was again celebrated in great style in Merriwa.** Thank you to the wonderful families who were able to join us at the civic celebrations in Merriwa. Our school did a fantastic job of leading the National Anthem (see last week’s Ringer). The ambassador, Mr Matt Hall was a great inspiration to the children and the adults alike. I was particularly inspired by his comments that “luck” in most cases is really the result of hard work – there is no chance or luck involved. He said that our so called “Lucky country” of Australia is the result of all the hard work that those who lived here before us put into it. If we want to keep it lucky we need to continue the hard work. Likewise, I often get comments about how lucky I am to work in such great little school. St Joseph’s is a great little school certainly, but luck consists of the hard work all those who came before us put into the school community and all the hard work we continue to afford this wonderful school and its community. These newsletter pages are constantly filled with examples of the “luck/hard work” happening here.

**The inaugural Holiday Community Day** at St Joseph’s was a resounding success with 35 children coming to school during the holidays to work with the teachers, who also came during their holidays. Together the children and their teachers decided on classroom themes, made classroom displays, arranged desks, shared lunch and all the while built relationships with each other. I wonder if it is “luck” that has brought a calm, respectful atmosphere to all our classrooms this week, or is it the result of hard work, such as this, during the holidays?

**Our new kinders started school** yesterday and what a confident start to the year they have had. Last week they each completed their Best Start assessment with Mrs Kerr so that she can tailor their learning according to their needs. This week they have been into the full swing of learning. The new mums and dads enjoyed morning tea on the first day provided by the Year One parents. This was very much appreciated by all the parents.

**The teachers have all started the school year** off in a very well organised way and are very much enjoying teaching from the new English curriculum. You will learn more about this as the year progresses. Teachers will have information about the topics being studied in all KLA’s this year and their classroom expectations ready to hand to you at the Parent Information Sessions on the 13th February. Please mark this on your calendar.

**New carpet has replaced the old** in the administration building including the Stage 3 classroom. What a difference the more serviceable dark colour makes. Thank you to all the staff (and many of their husbands) who spent several days of their holidays unpacking the rooms in admin and setting up again in readiness for the start of the year. We are “lucky” to have such great staff.

**Working Bees** have been wonderful opportunities for us to enjoy the company of other parents while getting things done around the school. On Sunday we had 45 parents, children and staff members working together to beautify our grounds again in readiness for the school year. Thank you one and all for generously giving your time and energy. “Thank you” also to the band of mums, dads and grandparents who so generously gave up their time on the last day of school to clean our desks. We are all so grateful for your hard work.

**Despite the very dry conditions** the “Green” (the lawn area in front of the library, Kinder and 1/2 and 3/4 classrooms) is looking magnificent, especially with the addition of two potted orange trees gifted by the Year 6 class of 2013. The special area on the Green has been further enhanced by the
the beautiful outdoor clock gifted by the Year 6 class of 2012. Coincidently the seat in the centre was gifted by the Year 6 class of 2009. It is lovely to remember our ex-students this way. Perhaps the Year 6 class of 2007 could pray for some extra rain to fill the rain gauge in their gifted weather station!!

A job opportunity has arisen at St Joseph’s for 2014. If you would like to work at our wonderful school as a learning support assistant, and you are a person who likes working with children, please look at the position advertised on the Catholic School’s website: http://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/employment/positions-vacant. Applications close this Friday and the start date is as soon as possible.

Our Opening School Mass will be celebrated on Thursday 13th February at 6 pm. A very warm invitation is extended to all parents, grandparents and friends to join the teachers and students, as we ask for God’s blessings on our new school year. The students will have roles to play at the Mass. After Mass all the new students to the school in 2014 will join together to plant a tree. This is a lovely tradition that we have had for 6 years now. We watch the trees grow as we witness the students’ growth and development at school. Following the tree planting there will be open classroom time (Parent Information Sessions) where parents can wander through the classrooms, collect handouts and talk to the teachers. At 7.30 pm there will be a social BBQ organised by the Parents and Friends Association. We look forward to this being a very special occasion for the whole school community.

Have a wonderful week!

Helen Whale

It is important to encourage children to read every day! The more reading practice we get, the better their comprehension! The only way to improve reading and comprehension skills is to practise! This is why we provide students of St Joseph’s with the opportunity to participate in the annual St Joseph’s Merriwa Summer Book Blitz!

Thank you to Jock Grady, Amy Redgate, Darcy Moore, Emily Ninness, Jemma Grady, Gaby Nicholls, Eliza Peebles and Clancy Moore for participating in our 2013/2014 Summer Book Blitz.

It was interesting and inspiring to read and respond to the comments the children had posted about the books they had been reading in the holidays. Many of the posts made the teachers want to start reading the same books.

We hope that other children will take up this opportunity in the next summer holidays!

Thanks

Tanya Ninness
Learning Support Teacher
Learning Support News

Special Needs Information Day & Expo

Come along and hear Catholic Schools Office representatives speak about support available for children enrolled in our Catholic schools.

Also on the day
A variety of expo displays will be operating, providing information and support to families.

Morning tea & light lunch provided.

February
St James’ Primary School
Kotara South
10am - 1pm
25

March
St James’ Primary School
Muswellbrook
10am - 1pm
18

March
St Joseph’s Primary School
Taree
10am - 1pm
25

2014 Info days

The Special Needs Information Day & Expo is provided free of charge!

Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

R.S.V.P. (For catering)
Cath Garrett-Jones
Parent Liaison and Resource Officer
P 4979 1303
E cath.garrett-jones@mn.catholic.edu.au
Throughout the year there are a number of opportunities for the students of St Joseph’s to be actively involved in their faith development. Parents are encouraged to be part of this process. Here are some of the ways you can be part of your child's faith education.

- Attend the Monday liturgy and assembly held in the MacKillop Room at 2:40pm. The liturgy focusses on the Sunday reading and allows the message of the Gospel to be discussed and interpreted so it becomes relevant in the student's life and the adults present as well. We also sing a song which reflects this message. This liturgical celebration is then concluded with an award giving ceremony which acknowledges a variety of good things that happen at St Joseph’s. You are very welcome to attend.

- Use the student diaries provided to complete the religious activities each week for homework as directed by the class teacher. Also spend some time looking through the diaries as they also contain some good parenting tips as well as containing prayers and reflections. These are a great way to communicate with the class teacher as well.

- Be aware of any special celebrations which are coming up and attend where possible- some days to look at for are - Opening School Mass, Mothers’ Day, Fathers’ Day, Grandparents’ Day, Commissioning Mass for our school leaders, Vinnies Day, Mission Day plus occasions where classes attend Friday 12pm Mass.

- Ask your child what they are learning about in Religion lessons. If you have something to share please bring it in. For example if your child is looking at the bible and your family has a very special bible please bring it in.

- Each class has a sacred space or prayer table. This is a space which should be alive and reflect the learning which is occurring in the classroom. Students are encouraged to bring in things to place on these special places.

Anne Marie Peebles  
Religious Education Coordinator

You are invited to join us for a special event...  

Andrew Chinn Concert

On Tuesday 25 February, Australian religious songwriter and singer, Andrew Chinn, will be visiting our school to share his songs with our children. Andrew’s songs, such as “These Hands”, “Rainbow” and “Together As One” are used in classrooms and liturgies around Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada.

Parents, friends and parishioners are warmly invited to be a part of the celebration of faith and fun. There is no charge for adults.

The concert will take place in St Anne’s Church, at 9.50am.

We look forward to seeing you there!
AWARDS

Congratulations to the following award winners.

K
Peter Hagley – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee
Sam Grady – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee
Bethany Wightman – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee

1/2
Darcy Taaffe – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Jack Shannon – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.

3/4
Jorji Taaffe – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Patrick McLaren – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Tia Magner – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Patrick Magner – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Jock Grady – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.

5/6
Clancy Moore – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Darcy Moore – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
John Magner – for his fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Lauren Redgate – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Eliza Peebles – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Emily Ninness – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.
Jemma Grady – for her fantastic assistance at the School Working Bee.

Principal’s Awards:
Ty Riley: for coming back to school with a very positive attitude to his leadership role and to his final year of Primary school learning.

Happy Birthday to the following members of our school community who have recently or will be celebrating their birthday in the next two weeks...
**Uniform Room**

This year the uniform room will be open on Tuesday mornings from 8.50 to 9.10. Should you require uniforms and are unable to come along in that timeframe, please feel free to contact me either on my mobile 0487761253 or email newry521@bigpond.com and I can organise to have your order ready for your collection at the front office.

Just a reminder that we have quality second hand items in the uniform room available for $5. These funds go directly back to the P & F therefore back to help the students.

The winter uniform orders will be sent out towards the end of Term 1 so that the students can return to school in Term 2 wearing their winter uniform.

Regards
Leanne Hunt
Uniform Co-ordinator