St Mary’s Catholic Primary School, Toukley

Parent Handbook

Vision Statement

“Empowered by the Spirit, we at St Mary’s live, learn and grow as disciples of Jesus in a nurturing Catholic Community.”
SCHOOL PRAYER

Watch over us all at St Mary’s today as we work and play.

Thank you for our school and all the gifts you give us each day.

Strengthen our faith in you as we grow and learn.

Help us to love and care for others as you do, and become the person you call us to be.

May we always be, Children of Faith, Love and Understanding

Amen
GENERAL ORGANISATIONAL PROCEDURES

SCHOOL TIMES

8.30am  Supervision of children on the TOP playground commences
8.55am  Warning Buzzer – children go to toilet and line up in class grid
9.00am  Whole School Prayer
         Children go to class – Roll Call/notes/lunch orders etc
9.00am  SESSION ONE
10.00am FRUIT BREAK
11.00am RECESS
11.25am SESSION TWO
1.00pm  LUNCH
1.55pm  SESSION THREE
3.15pm  Classes dismissed
3.30pm  Supervision ends
ABSENCES AND ATTENDANCE
Parents are requested to phone the school office before 9:30am to notify of an absence. This helps us to ensure the safety of your child. A written note from the parents explaining the absence must still be sent in. Absentee notes are kept as a legal requirement.

LATE ARRIVAL/EARLY DEPARTURE
Children need a late note from the office if arriving after 9.15 am. Parents picking up children early must sign them out at the office. Appointments should be made outside of school hours where possible.

ASSEMBLY
This is held once a week on Monday after lunch (2.00pm). It is held in the undercroft area below the Year 6 classrooms. The student parliament helps organise and run the assembly each week.
Order of assembly:

- Sacred Space - Explanation of the theme by class rostered on.
- Weekly Class Awards and Stargazer Awards
- Principal/Student Parliament/Other Teachers – Messages
- National Anthem

Once a year each Grade will perform a special assembly to share and showcase their learning. Parents are invited to attend these assemblies.

BUDDY SYSTEM
To help the Kinder children settle into the school community, we have a Buddy System for Kindergarten and Year 6. Each Year 6 child is given a Kinder child to look after to be a special friend to for the next 12 months. They are there to help the Kindy children on the playground and on their buses. It also enables the Year 6 children to develop a responsible attitude towards the newest members of our school.

CANTEEN
Canteen operates each day except Tuesday. Lunch orders should be placed in a paper bag with the child’s name, class and lunch order written clearly on the bag with the money enclosed. Class lunch crates are sent to the Canteen by 9.15am and collected just before the lunch bell.

No child is permitted in the Canteen.

Canteen Days:
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
Canteen Times:
Recess 11.00am – 11.20am
Lunch 1.00pm – 1.50pm
**CODE OF CONDUCT**
Positive behaviours are encouraged.

The School CODE OF CONDUCT asks that children abide by the following:

- **S** Share fun
- **T** Think safe, act safe
- **A** Act responsibly
- **R** Respect all that God has made
- **S** Speak with kindness

Minor incidents are dealt with by the teacher supervising at the time (classroom and playground).
Serious breaches of this code, including violence or victimisation are to be referred to the AP or Principal.

St Mary’s Catholic School’s Behaviour Management Code does not permit the corporal punishment of students attending the school by school or non-school persons including parents. “Corporal Punishment is defined by the Bill (Education Reform – School Discipline Bill) as the application of force in order to correct the student, but does not include the application of force only because of action taken to prevent personal injury to, or damage to or the destruction of property to any person, including the student.”

**COLLECTION OF MONIES**
All money (school fees, book fees, sport, excursions, notes etc) will be collected by the class teacher and sent to the Office in the class bags between 9.15 and 9.30am.
Please ensure money is in an envelope labelled with child’s name, class, amount and reason.
Any matters pertaining to the P & F can also be sent via the Office bags.
Alternatively, parents can make payments by coming to the office in person between 8.50am and 3 pm.

**COUNSELLING SERVICE**
St Mary’s Catholic School is very fortunate in having access to a School Counsellor.
To access this service parents complete a confidential request for Counselling form which is sent to the Catholic Schools Office. Once processed the School Counsellor will contact the parent to discuss how they can be of assistance. They are also a great source of knowledge regarding other community services.
The counselling service provides a confidential environment where students can talk about difficulties they face. The Counsellor helps students develop problem-solving and coping strategies that can be used to deal with difficult situations and help them get back on track when things aren’t going so well.
Please contact the school office if you wish to find out more about this service.

**LITURGIES**
Children participate in regular school and class liturgies and parents are warmly invited to attend.
Liturgies and parish happenings are promoted with parents in the term calendar and weekly newsletter.
LOST PROPERTY
Parents are asked to clearly label their child’s clothing – jumpers, hats etc. Lost items of clothing will be put in a large plastic container near the uniform shop next to the undercroft area below the Year 6 classrooms for collection. Distribution of lost property is carried out at the end of each month. Anything not named or claimed will then be sent to the clothing pool.

MEDICATION
Teachers are not permitted to dispense medication to children. Any necessary medication will be administered via the School Office but only after relevant medical forms have been completed by the parent/carer and doctor. Administration of Medication Forms are available from the school office. Medications need to be in their original containers, clearly labelled.

All sick and injured children are to be referred to the first aid officer in the office.

MOBILE PHONES
Children are discouraged from bringing mobile phones to school but if they must bring them, the phones are to be left at the school office in the morning before assembly and only collected after children have been dismissed from class at 3:15pm.

PARENTS COLLECTING CHILDREN
No child is permitted to leave the playground unaccompanied. Please walk onto the top playground to collect your child.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS
Students are expected to wear the correct uniform at all times. School hats are compulsory. If, for some reason, a child needs to be “out of uniform”, a note from the child’s parent is requested.

Girl’s Summer: Green and white checked dress, white fold down socks, black leather school shoes, green school cap/hat.

Girl’s Winter: Bottle green and white tunic, white long sleeved blouse with Peter Pan collar and the tie made out of the same fabric as the uniform, white fold down socks or bottle green tights and black leather school shoes. A v-necked school crested sloppy joe or bottle green jumper, bottle green school crested parka.

Sport (Unisex): Bottle green and gold school shorts, bottle green and gold sports shirt with school emblem, sandals and white socks, green school hat/cap. School bottle green and gold tracksuit during the colder months.

Boy’s Summer: Bottle green polo with school emblem, grey shorts (stubbies), grey school socks with green/gold stripes, black leather school shoes (not joggers), green cap/hat.

Boy’s Winter: Long grey trousers, long sleeved white shirt, v-necked school crested sloppy joe or bottle green jumper, bottle green school crested parka, green and gold striped tie, black leather school shoes, school socks, green school cap/hat.

SCHOOL UNIFORM SHOP
The uniform shop operates next to the undercroft area below the Year 6 classrooms on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 8.30 – 9.10 am. Please contact the Office for other details.
SELF EMPLOYED PEOPLE WORKING ON SCHOOL PREMISES
All self-employed contractors and external service providers, including, tutors, coaches and other peripatetic workers who are engaged directly by the school to work with students will need to apply to the Commission for Children and Young People for a ‘Certificate for Self-Employed People’ to demonstrate that they are suitable to work with children. These credentials must be sighted and verified by the school prior to engaging self-employed persons to provide a service in schools.

SPORT & PE
Children wear their Sports Uniform on their respective days. A specialist teacher is employed to teach PE skills. Children will be told which day to wear their Sports uniform.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT DAYS
In addition to the first day (Teachers Day) of each school year, four (4) days annually are set aside for Staff Development Programs. There are no classes on these days.

VALUABLE ITEMS AND EXPENSIVE TOYS
Students are not to bring such items to school.

VOLUNTEER HELPERS
Volunteers assisting in schools or with school activities are required to complete a Volunteer/Student Worker Declaration which is retained at the school and entered onto a database. School staff should ensure that volunteers engaged to provide a service in the school environment have completed the declaration and receive appropriate induction regarding what is expected of them in their management of students.

COMMUNICATION

NEWSLETTER
This is the school’s main line of communication with the home and includes items of interest and coming school events. Newsletters are distributed to the eldest child in the family on a weekly basis. The newsletter is also available online.

PARENT / TEACHER EVENINGS
Information Evenings will be conducted when appropriate to inform parents about Curriculum matters, School Policy and new initiatives.

PARENT / TEACHER INTERVIEWS
Interviews are offered twice a year. They can also be arranged whenever the need arises. These interviews are to take place outside of teaching time.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES
Diocesan Policy states that members of staff with a complaint about a student should first raise the issue with the principal.
If you are a parent with a complaint about a student other than your own you should raise it with your child’s class teacher.
If you are a parent with a complaint about a member of staff the issue should first be discussed with the relevant teacher or the principal.


**CHILD PROTECTION: COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT**

St Mary’s Catholic School is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for both students and staff. All staff in our school are expected to strive to work together to create a culture and environment characterised by mutual respect, justice and life-giving relationships.

However where a member of staff, a student, a parent or any other member of the wider school community is concerned about something happening at school, they have a right to make a complaint. The Diocesan Schools Complaints Handling Policy sets out procedures to resolve such concerns while upholding the dignity of each person involved.

Staff have a responsibility to be aware of school and system expectations as to appropriate practice, conduct and performance. Concerns regarding employee performance are managed in accordance with the Diocesan Schools Policy for Addressing Employee Performance and Disciplinary Matters. A copy of this policy is available in the Principal’s Office.

Staff should also be mindful of the procedures that are followed in relation to managing allegations of a child protection nature made against persons working in child-related employment. Any complaints or concerns about an employee’s alleged inappropriate behaviour toward any child or young person are handled differently from general complaints in the school environment. There are very specific legal obligations which must be fulfilled when responding to allegations of a child protection nature against employees. These procedures are set out in the Child Protection Resource Manual. Staff are required to inform the Principal of any such concerns.

The Principal is then required to contact the child protection team at the Catholic Schools Office to determine whether or not the complaint involves an allegation of ‘reportable conduct’ (and therefore must be reported to the NSW Ombudsman) and advice regarding how the complaint must be handled to ensure legal compliance.

In addition to the above requirement, staff are also required to inform the Principal of any inappropriate conduct by a staff member toward a student of which they become aware. Staff must also inform the Principal of any matters involving their own conduct which may be considered to be an allegation of reportable conduct or a conviction for an offence involving reportable conduct.

**REPORTING TO PARENTS**

School Reports are sent home to parents twice a year.

**SCHOOL WEB PAGE**

This is updated at regular intervals. It supports children’s learning with links to numerous quality children’s websites, to myclasses and, for parents, the weekly newsletter and school calendar.
PARENTS AS PARTNERS

COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS FROM OUR PARENTS

Empowered by the Spirit, we at St Mary’s live, learn and grow as disciples of Jesus in a nurturing Catholic community.

We can contribute positively to the pursuit of our school’s vision and the success of our children when we do the following:

Support the Catholic ethos of our school by:
- Participating in school/weekend masses
- Learning the school prayer
- Modelling respect and reverence during school prayer and masses
- Supporting the sacramental programs
- Leading by example catholic values at home
- Being families of hope and being positive about our faith
- Fostering the prayer life of your child
- Teaching them the importance of trusting relationships where the innate dignity of the individual is valued
- Being positive, hope-filled people who value the differences in others

Support our school and become actively involved in the life of the school by:
- Participating in school Masses, functions etc
- Volunteering to help at school functions and activities, e.g. carnivals, discos, reading, fundraisers, canteen
- Involvement in the P&F
- Ensuring my child wears the correct uniform
- Positively promoting St Mary’s in the school and wider community
- Being an advocate for our school
- Welcoming new families and introducing new parents to our group of friends
- Attending representative events, e.g. Sporting occasions
- Supporting wider school community events, e.g. Anzac Day

Make learning a priority with our child by:
- Allocating time for homework within our family
- Engaging in conversation about daily learning and classroom activities
- Encouraging and positive reinforcement of successes and efforts
- Establishing reading patterns at home
- Expecting your child’s best
- Ensuring attendance is regular
- Being involved as a parent/family in as many school activities as possible
- Encouraging a balance between after-school leisure commitments (e.g. dance, sport) and after-school learning commitments (e.g. homework)
- Devoting special attention to areas of difficulty for your child
- Letting your child see you continuing to learn
Help our children become responsible and resilient members of the school community by:

- Teaching our children to accept responsibility for their own behaviour (owning their behaviour)
- Actively encouraging children through positive feedback and praise
- Allowing them to make mistakes and accept appropriate consequences
- Modelling responsible and resilient behaviour as parents
- Setting clear rules/boundaries at home
- Children and parents understanding and supporting school rules
- Practising independent skills
- Teaching positive self talk
- Respecting and accepting others differences
- Teaching strategies to deal with change
- Demonstrating respect, kindness and cooperation in our interactions with others and expecting our children to do the same

Become informed of school happenings by:

- Talking (actively discussing) with and listening to my child
- Reading all correspondence/newsletters
- Participating in parent information sessions (and, where possible, morning/weekly assemblies)
- Talking with other parents/class parents
- Attending P&F Meetings
- Participating in parent/teacher interviews
- Responding promptly to correspondence

Engage in open and timely communication with the school by:

- Participating in parent teacher meetings/interviews
- Participating in information nights
- Approaching the classroom teacher (make appointment) as the first point of call to discuss any concerns
- Advising the teacher of any absences, special circumstances at home, needs of my child
- Acknowledging, valuing and respecting the professional feedback provided by the school

Being proactive in asking questions, expressing concerns and seeking information in a manner that reflects deep respect for all concerned
We welcome and encourage open, trusting and authentic relationships based on mutual respect.

The parents of St Mary’s play a variety of roles in the school’s long-term planning and in its day-to-day routines and organization. Parents and teachers of St Mary’s work in close partnership. We value the generous nature of our parent community.

In addition to meeting with teachers at official Parent-Teacher meetings, parents are always welcome to make an appointment to see a teacher outside of school hours.

Parents are involved in many capacities including reading helpers, canteen assistants and sports coaches. All parents working in the school in any capacity must have completed Volunteer/Student Declaration Form. As well, parents must “Sign On and Off” at the School Office and wear an identification badge whenever they are in the school as a volunteer. A strong Class Parent Network is in operation at St Mary’s. Class Parents help keep people in touch and informed.

PARENTS AND FRIENDS’ ASSOCIATION
The P & F Association meets once per term on a Wednesday evening at 7pm. Dates are advertised in the school newsletter in advance. The meetings provide a forum for parents to discuss ways of building community and supporting the school. Among its functions are Fundraising, Uniform Shop and School Maintenance.