Dear St Mary’s Catholic School Community,

In the past, schools have encouraged parents to be involved in the life of the school. Often this has looked like parents helping in the canteen, in classrooms, at Feast day celebrations, sporting carnivals etc.

The focus has now shifted to be more on parent engagement than parent involvement. Parent engagement incorporates parent involvement but goes one more, important step further. It helps parents understand that their attitude and actions can heavily influence the educational outcomes of their children. Parent engagement challenges parents to not place limits on their children, e.g. just because a parent may not have been skilled at Maths in school does not mean that their child will be the same. Parent engagement emphasises to parents that it is important to have high expectations of their child’s learning and behaviour.

As a parent or carer, your attitude and ensuing actions do have a major influence on your child’s learning.

Another avenue for parent engagement is in helping you understand how to support your child’s learning. With this in mind, we invite you to our Maths Parent Education sessions to be held at 9.15am and 6.30pm on Tuesday 24 March. The sessions are very practical ones that will help upskill you with strategies and ideas of how to help your child in Maths. Free child-minding is available. Please complete the return slip of the note that was previously sent home (or it is available on our website).

Year 5 in Bathurst
We wish our Year 5 students and teachers well as they travel for their annual overnight excursion to Bathurst. The children need to be at school at 7.00a.m. on Thursday, returning at 4.30p.m. on Friday.

Sacrament of Reconciliation
Please keep the children preparing for the Sacrament of Reconciliation in your prayers. Reconciliation will be celebrated at 4.00pm and 5.30pm on Wednesday 18th March.

Your Thoughts and Prayers
Please keep the Sweeney family in your thoughts and prayers. Sheridan’s (6 Green) and Cooper’s (4 Blue) great grandmother passed away very recently. May your treasured memories and Our Lord’s strength bring you considerable courage during this difficult time.

Kind Regards,

Kevin Williams
Principal

Wil T and Riley G

Upcoming Events

- **Year 5 in Bathurst**
  - Thursday/Friday
  - 12 + 13 March

- **Sacrament of Reconciliation**
  - Wednesday
  - 18 March

- **Cancer Council Healthy Lunchbox Presentation**
  - 9.15am—10.00am
  - Friday 20 March

- **Maths Parent Education**
  - 9.15am + 6.30pm
  - Tuesday 24 March

- **Year 6 Cluster Mass**
  - Thursday 26 March

- **Kinder 2016 Information Evening**
  - 7.00pm
  - Monday 30 March

- **Holy Week Liturgy**
  - 9.15am
  - Tuesday 31 March

Catholic Schools Week
On Monday we celebrated the uniqueness of being a Catholic school with a liturgy in the Church. We then appreciated having so many parents join us in their child’s classroom to appreciate their great work. I hope you get an opportunity to also check out the children’s displays around the school.
This week, I’d like to reflect on our Catholic School, St Mary’s. We have a great Catholic School, filled with happy and caring children, nurturing and enthusiastic teachers and supportive, hope-filled parents. I love that you can feel the respect, compassion, honesty, humour and integrity of the people who make up our community, just by walking through the front gates. We are a community who trust and value each other as we grow academically and spiritually. During Catholic Schools Week, we have another opportunity to celebrate all of these qualities which make us a great Catholic School. Thank you to each of you for the gifts you bring to our community.

As I’ve walked around the school this week, I’ve noticed many children dream of what they’d like to be when they grow up—an astronaut, teacher, dancer, pirate and the child in Kinder who didn’t know what their dad’s job was, but wanted to be “just like my daddy”. Please take the time to walk around the school this week to have a look at the displays. Thank you to all of the parents and grandparents who were in attendance at our Catholic Schools Week Liturgy and Open Classrooms on Monday. We really enjoy being able to share in special occasions, such as these, with you all.

Project Compassion—Caritas Australia

There are Project Compassion donation boxes in every classroom. Mums and dads, please try to find the time to visit the website for Caritas Australia, http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion/, a website the children will be visiting during class time. It provides information, videos, pictures and stories about the work Caritas Australia do in communities around Australia and around the world. It’s a great starting point for discussion about how we can help others!

Stations of the Cross

With Easter fast approaching, it is time to begin preparing for our Good Friday ‘Stations of the Cross’, held Friday 3rd April at St Mary’s church. Please note, this is not a school day. I need many parents and students to come along to participate and be a helper. A note will go home this week.

Reconciliation

We currently have many children in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 preparing to make the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Please keep these children and their families in your thoughts and prayers. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will take place next Wednesday afternoon, March 18.

From Our REC

Catholic Schools Week

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From Our Family Liaison Officer

Coming home with today’s newsletter is an invitation for parents/careers to attend a new Parent Program dealing with helping children cope with the changing family circumstances surrounding separation and divorce. Family breakdowns are becoming ever more common and have a huge impact on every member of the family, particularly the children. Children generally have no control over what is happening and can find things very confusing and even traumatic. They don’t always have the language or sometimes even the opportunity to express how they are feeling verbally and their feelings can then manifest in inappropriate or disruptive behaviour.

This program focuses on the impact of family breakdown on children from the child’s perspective and gives parents/carers ideas and strategies to help children cope with the changing family dynamic.

Please let me know if you would like any further information.

Donna Falzon
Family Liaison Officer
KidsMatter

“Social development involves learning the values, knowledge and skills that enable children to relate to others effectively and to contribute in positive ways to family, school and the community.”

The quote above is from this week’s KidsMatter article on Social Development.

Many outside influences such as family, friends, school, economic issues, etc, as well as a child’s age all play a part in children’s social development.

Over time children also develop social values such as an ability to understand others and learning to take the needs and views of others into account. They learn to make ethical judgements by practicing putting themselves in other’s shoes and reflecting on issues that involve social and moral values. It’s important for the adults around them to have discussions with children about the moral and social values they hold.

If not you, where will they get their values and morals from—the media, sporting identities, celebrities?

When given opportunities to develop social skills and shown positive examples from those around them, children’s social development grows and sets them up for positive relationships with peers and family.

Something We’ve Noticed

Sometimes I wish that you could see the 1001 interactions that your child’s teacher has with the children in their class. The gentle word, the encouraging comment, the approving gesture, the affirming smile, the challenges set, the sense of humour and the patient manner are present in classrooms throughout our school. Our teachers work hard in meeting the needs of your child.

From Our Librarian

Worth Visiting

Anne Frank was a young Jewish girl who had to go into hiding during World War 11. She kept a diary of her experiences which now has become well known and loved around the world. Tuggerah Library is hosting a special exhibition on Anne Frank. It is free and features family photographs and quotes from Anne’s famed diary, and also encourages visitors to think about tolerance, mutual respect, human rights and democracy in our own society. If you happen to be in Tuggerah Westfield shopping, why not visit Tuggerah Library and have a look at the exhibition. I have spoken about this with the children during library lessons and those who have visited have come back eager to share what they saw and learnt.

From Our Office

Thank you to all our families who have commenced regular payments toward their 2015 school fees. This assists the school to meet it’s financial commitments as they fall due.

A reminder that your fee statements and newsletters are sent to you via email. If you are not receiving your statements or newsletter please give us a call at the office so we can update your email address.

Thank you
Lyn and Jacqui

We Appreciated

We certainly appreciated having so many parents/carers and grandparents join us for our Catholic Schools Week Liturgy and Open Classrooms. The children enjoyed sharing their work with you. There is a lovely feel to our school when we have so many people engaged in the children’s learning.
Parent Education
Our next Parent Education session is on Tuesday 24th March. Practical ideas for how to help your child understand Maths is a focus. The repeated sessions are at 9.15am and 6.30pm. Free child minding is available.

P&F Executive
President: Shannon Elwell
Secretary: Brian Cumming
Treasurer: Julie Anderson
DPC Rep: Cathy Whitmore

Easter Raffle
Tickets will be on sale at the top playground before school from 8.30am and at recess each day.
50c each or 3 for $1
Donations of Easter eggs and baskets can be made at the raffle ticket table each morning.

Uniform Shop News
The second hand rack is still overflowing. There are a lot of Winter items at bargain prices.
Cross Country singlets are available for $27.00.

You’re Invited!
K-6 Numeracy Parent Workshop
We would like to warmly extend an invitation to all mums and dads, of both existing families and those new families to our school, to attend our Numeracy Parent Workshop.

When: Tuesday 24th March, 2015 at 9:15am and 6.30pm
Where: St Mary’s Computer Lab/Library.

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Happy Easter

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