



# 2024 PARENT HANDBOOK

**An Introduction to Prep at  
St Mary MacKillop Primary School**



***We welcome you to St Mary MacKillop Primary School as we commence the journey into your child's formal schooling in a Catholic-centred learning environment.***



**St Mary MacKillop**  
Primary School Birkdale

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

### **Our Vision**

Inspired by Saint Mary MacKillop, we strive for excellence in contemporary and inclusive education where God is sacred in our daily lives.

### **Reach Out**

We are a school that reaches out to create positive partnerships with families, our parish and the wider community. Our children are called to grow in faith as people of justice and Christian charity.

### **Embrace**

We are a school that embraces the dignity and unique qualities of each child. Our children are inspired to develop their potential in a high quality and safe learning environment. We nurture a deep respect for self and others, and are called to be stewards of our natural and school environment, gifted to us through God's loving providence.

### **Achieve**

We are a school that delivers contemporary education that is engaging, challenging, innovative and fosters a love of learning. Our children develop holistically and achieve success in a variety of ways which are celebrated and recognised within our school community.

Our school's Mission and Vision is consistent with the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#).



*This booklet has been produced to assist you in settling your child into Prep.*

*We look forward to our journey together.*

## Information about your child's first year of school

The Preps attend school Monday to Friday each week. School begins at 8.25am and concludes at 2.55pm. In the first weeks of school, from 8.15am to 8.30am you are welcome to spend time settling your child into his/her classroom. The normal morning routine will begin in Week Three.

**The  
First  
Day**



The first day of school is one to celebrate! It is an important milestone in the lives of your child and your family. Listed below are some hints to help you and your child adjust to Prep.

- There will be a mix of emotions on the first day of school - excitement, apprehension and a few nerves. You will probably find that your child will be up nice and early and be dressed in their uniform and raring to go! Please make sure that you are on time for the first day, and that your child has had a good breakfast for the busy and exciting day ahead.
- Try not to build up your child's expectations too much. Many children think they will learn to read and write on the first day. They may then become worried or disappointed when they don't. Talk to them about reading and writing but let them know it takes time.
- Once the classrooms are open, bring your child into the room and help them find an activity. Take this time to have a look around the room, and to introduce your child and yourself to the teacher and the other parents.
- When the bell has rung, give your child a kiss and a hug and then please leave promptly and confidently. This will help with the separation process. If your child is upset, please do not linger outside the room. It is best if you leave and allow the teachers to get the day under way without distractions.
- Reassure your child that you will be there at the end of the day to pick them up. Please don't be late picking your child up. A few minutes can seem like a long time when you are four or five years old and all the other children have gone home.
- It is important for a smooth afternoon transition to please wait in the undercover sports court area after school, we will walk the children to you for collection. This may be adjusted a little in the first couple of weeks and staff will keep you informed of expected practices.

As a parent, the first day of school can be an emotional experience for you too! Congratulations! Be proud of the many achievements you have made as a parent in the lead up to this day. You will find we are a nurturing community at St Mary MacKillop, so please have faith as we guide your child on the next stage of their life journey.

## What to expect in the first few weeks



***Prep students meet their Year 6 buddy within the first few weeks of school.***

Starting school is a very important time for every child and can be very emotional for many (including parents). To ensure a smooth transition, school should be an environment in which your child feels comfortable and supported.

Most children are very enthusiastic about starting school and most will continue to feel that way. However, some children lose that enthusiasm quickly and parents of these children may become discouraged. Please understand this may be part of your child's settling in process, please encourage positive thoughts and use positive talk. Celebrate this step into Prep through positive words and actions.

The first term is hot, humid and very busy. There is lots happening, learning new things, meeting new people, and trying to be "very good" all day. Experience suggests that it can be helpful to avoid booking your child into too many after school or extra-curricular activities in the beginning as you can expect your child to be very tired after school. It will be important for you to be very understanding, very calm and listen to your child when he/she wants to talk.

Crying can be a very natural emotional reaction to the initial adjustment to school life. Tears can be a common occurrence during the first few weeks. If this happens, don't allow your child to see that it is upsetting you. Support your child with love and understanding.

Positive reinforcement, patience and time are the best ways to progress through this transition stage. Teachers are experienced in these situations, so please have faith in them, as they also have your child's best interest at heart.

*"I don't like school!" "I don't want to go!"* Don't be surprised if you hear these words in the first few weeks of school. During this time, it is best to support your child by showing love and understanding.

The Prep staff will spend the vast majority of time in the first few weeks building connections and relationships with your children and you. They will focus on the explicit teaching of routines, procedures and expectations for behaviour. Gently and gradually, they will work towards building a love of learning in your child.

## Teaching and learning in Prep

Using the Australian Curriculum and the Religious Education Curriculum, Prep planning and assessment is based on the achievement standards and expected learning outcomes at the Foundation Year Level. We begin by getting to know our learners so we can meet their needs. There are eight Learning Areas in Prep:



## Specialist Lessons

Prep students attend weekly lessons with Specialist Teachers including Physical Education, Visual Arts, Music and Library Lessons.

At St Mary MacKillop our languages program begins in Year 4. Japanese is the subject provided.

## How do we teach our students?

A quality early childhood program is delivered here at St MMK. Students are encouraged to actively learn, problem solve, effectively communicate, create and meet social needs. Children's long-term success in education and citizenship are developed and supported through these experiences.

Throughout the year students will participate in a variety of learning experiences supported by a variety of different ways to learn. These include:

- Discovery learning
- Inquiry based learning
- Play/Hands on experiences
- Real-life situations
- Investigations
- Routines and transitions
- Focused learning and teaching
- Explicit Instruction



Students at St Mary MacKillop enjoy a range of learning opportunities that support and foster a child's intrinsic desire for learning.

The various styles of learning offered allows all students to engage in different ways and caters for different abilities.

## How is the Australian Curriculum delivered at St Mary MacKillop School?

The implementation of the Australian Curriculum began in 2011. The Australian Curriculum is designed to teach students what it takes to be confident and creative individuals and become active and informed citizens. This curriculum emphasises the importance of knowledge, understanding and skills of learning areas, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities as the basis for a curriculum designed to support 21st century learning. In the early years, priority is given to literacy and numeracy development as the foundations for further learning.

The Australian Curriculum describes a learning entitlement for each Australian student that provides a foundation for successful, lifelong learning and participation in the Australian community. It acknowledges that the needs and interests of students will vary, and that schools and teachers will plan from the curriculum in ways that respond to those needs and interests. The Australian Curriculum acknowledges the changing ways in which young people will learn and the challenges that will continue to shape their learning in the future.

The Australian Curriculum sets out what all young people should be taught through the specification of curriculum content and the learning expected at points in their schooling through the specification of achievement standards (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011). Please visit [ACARA](http://acara.gov.au) for further information about the concepts covered in each Learning Area.

### How is the Australian Curriculum organised?

There are three dimensions in the Australian Curriculum:

- learning areas
- general capabilities
- cross-curriculum priorities.

#### 1 Learning areas

The Australian Curriculum is organised into learning areas and subjects. Some learning areas bring a number of subjects together: Humanities and Social Sciences includes History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Economics and Business; The Arts includes Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music and Visual Arts; Technologies includes Design and Technologies and Digital Technologies. There is also a choice of 15 Languages.

Learning areas contain content descriptions that detail knowledge, understanding and skills to be taught each year or across a band of years. These content descriptions are accompanied by achievement standards that describe what students will know and will be able to do as a result of teaching and learning in the classroom.

#### 2 General capabilities

General capabilities are included in the content of the learning areas. These are the skills and abilities intended to help prepare young Australians to learn, live and work in the 21st century. The Australian Curriculum has seven general capabilities:

Literacy	Critical and Creative Thinking
Numeracy	Personal and Social Capability
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability	Ethical Understanding
	Intercultural Understanding

#### 3 Cross-curriculum priorities

In a similar way, there are three priorities critical to Australia's future:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Culture	<i>Preparing students for 21st century living</i>
Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia	
Sustainability	

They build across the curriculum and allow students to connect the content of learning areas.

## How do we deliver this content?

At St Mary MacKillop we aim to nurture students as active, capable and responsible learners. We understand that each child has different interests, abilities and ways they learn best. Therefore, by providing students with a variety of learning experiences and teaching strategies we aim to cater for each individual child. Below is a breakdown of some of the different teaching methods we adopt and support within our Prep Program.

**Teaching through Play** - Play is a term used widely in early childhood literature when discussing how effective curriculum for young children is enacted. Play involves both cognitive and physical activity. Through play children bring thoughts into action and express ideas and realities in response to external stimuli or internal motivation. For children, play can be their way of looking out at the world, testing understanding of adult roles, exploring theories and predicting possibilities.

PLAY  
is the highest  
FORM OF  
RESEARCH

*Albert Einstein*

*Teachers support student's learning through play by acknowledging the intrinsic need for children to work through ideas and possibilities using materials and objects. Teachers recognise play as a strong motivator of children and support learning through considered questioning and interactions.*

**Teaching through Inquiry Learning** – Inquiry learning is where a question/problem is posed to students (or they may come up with their own) and they are given the time, resources, means and support to uncover or discover the answers/solutions.

*Teachers support students through this process by using open ended and guiding questions, delivering content that can enhance understanding in this area and embracing the student's own ability to drive their learning.*

**Teaching through Visible Learning** – Visible Learning is where students are made aware of the learning intentions of lessons and experiences. They also consider success criteria by discussing what successful learning looks like.

*The teachers role in Visible Learning to ensure student's know what they are learning about, why they are learning it and what they can know, understand or expand on to ensure the expected outcomes are met. Staff check children can answer these 5 key questions: What are you learning? How are you going with that learning? How do you know? How can you improve? What do you do when you get stuck?*

**Teaching through Explicit Instruction** - Explicit instruction is a way to teach skills and concepts using structured or direct instruction. It makes lessons clear by modelling how to start and succeed on a task and it gives students ample time to practice.

*The teacher's role in explicit instruction is to break learning into smaller parts which lightens the 'cognitive load' (how much brain resources students need to process information). This in turn, frees up students' working memory to assist them in learning new skills. Once students are successful with guided practice, the teacher moves on to independent practice tasks that align with the skill that was modelled. Cumulative reviews of newly learned skills review old and newly learned skills and help students gain and retain automaticity with skills for it to 'stick' in long-term memory.*



## Religious Education

At St Mary MacKillop, we value a school in which children are at peace and have a sense of belonging to church, parish and the wider community.

The Religion Curriculum is integrated through four key areas. These are:

- Sacred Texts
- Beliefs
- Christian Life
- Church

During the first year of school, the curriculum will provide opportunities for your child to develop an understanding of the teachings of Jesus. Your child will be immersed in a culture that fosters Gospel values and builds upon their own faith journey.

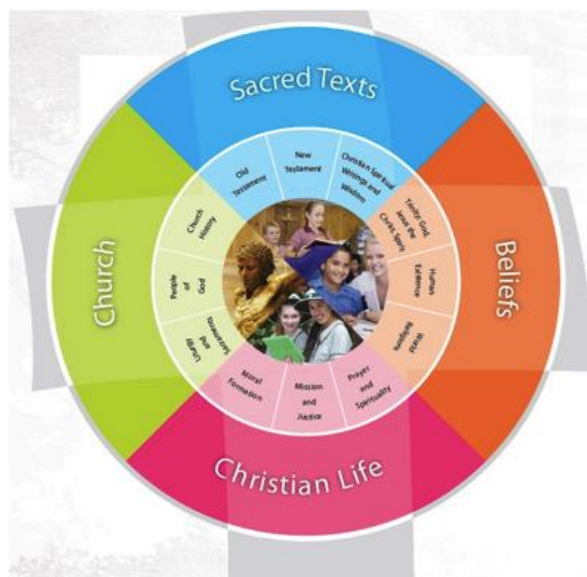
The Religion curriculum focuses on developing student's understanding of the Catholic faith and its history, his/her own spiritual journey and the importance of prayer.

During the school year, students will participate in and witness liturgies, class and whole school masses, school sponsored weekend masses, feast day masses and prayer assemblies. Through participating in the religious life of our school, students will be experiencing the presence of Jesus, which is the foundation of our faith.

Within the classrooms, students will participate in morning prayer each day. A special element of this prayer is when it is shared with parents. Opportunities will be provided for parents to join their child for morning prayer.

Prep Students will be introduced to the school's HUGE values which are how we keep the charism of St Mary MacKillop alive in our school. These values were important to St Mary MacKillop, our school's Patron Saint. Each year, the school has one of these values as its focus.

**Humility.... Unity..... Gratitude..... Empathy.**



## The Prep Uniform

The Prep uniform consists of green sport shorts with the school logo, maroon shirt with tartan collar and sleeve cuffs (formal uniform shirt), black shoes (prefer joggers with Velcro), white crew length socks and a green school hat which is available in two styles, bucket hat and broad brim hat. School shoes will be worn at all times during school hours for safety reasons. School policy requires children to wear their hat at all times when outside. Hair must be neat and tidy and tied back. Small earrings may be worn, silver or gold in colour, studs or sleepers only. Further information about our uniform guidelines can be found in our Uniform Policy.



## How lunch times work at St Mary MacKillop

Healthy food is encouraged. A healthy snack of fruit or vegetables to have between breaks should be included in a separate container labelled with your child's name. We call this "Munch and Crunch" and we will provide an esky container for your child to place it in. The children require lunch, snack and munch & crunch. Children will need a drink bottle, a named lunch box that is easy to manage, and a special smaller named container for munch and crunch.

We have an early lunch break at 10.30am to avoid playtime in the harsh midday sun. This is the time the children eat their sandwiches and yoghurt or fruit. Snack is our second break and begins at 1.15pm. Chocolates, lollies and chips are discouraged in keeping with our healthy food policy. Ordering tuckshop for Prep students will commence in week 3 and is only available on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at first break (snack will still need to be provided).

It is beneficial if you discuss with your child each day what you have given them for lunch. Make suggestions about what they could eat at each break (or even have food separated into two different containers).

## Children with allergies

We may have children in our Prep classes who have life threatening nut and egg allergies, so these products are **not allowed** in Prep lunchboxes. More information will be made available at the start of school if there are any other allergies that you need to be considerate of.

## School arrival and departure times

It is extremely important that you have your child at school each day in time for our 8.25am start. (If your child is at school at 8.15am it gives them time to see their friends, go to the toilet and get a drink etc.) Please do not send your child to school too early in the mornings as before school supervision only begins at 8.05am. Before and After School Care is available on site via booking. Children who arrive after 8:25am will be required to go to the office with their parent to be signed in. Children departing school for any reason during the day will be required to be signed out by a parent or guardian at the office.



## **The importance of staying up-to-date and involved**

It is parents, families and carers who have the most influence on their children. When families are actively involved in their children's education, children usually enjoy school and achieve better results. Staying involved in your child's education is the key to a successful year. Engage your child in conversation about his/her day but know that children won't always give out much information. This is where our weekly communication becomes vital as it provides information about what is happening inside the classroom and these can be conversation starters. Check our Prep Blogs regularly for news and updates.

### **Children who require medication**

Please contact the school office if your child requires medication to be administered at school. All medication requires chemist labels and the completion of a form.

### **School newsletters and messages**



The school newsletter is available for parents on Tuesdays via the Parent Portal and the BCE Connect App. Permission Slips will be sent electronically via email. Our weekly Prep Press News will be available via the Prep Blogs on the Parent Portal and BCE Connect App. Each child will receive a named blue homework satchel next year, which will be used to bring items to and from school each day. Replacement homework satchels can be ordered through the Uniform Shop.

### **Meeting with class teachers**

All parents are encouraged to attend the Parent Information Evening held early in the first term to inform you of the classroom program and procedures. Parent-Teacher Meetings are formally held in Term 1 and Term 3. Should you wish to meet the teacher at other times please make an appointment with them to do so via email.

### **The Reporting Process**

Formal reporting to parents will take place at the end of Term 2 and Term 4 in the form of written reports which are available via the Parent Portal. At the end of Term 1 and Term 3 parent/teacher meetings will be offered. We will be using the Achievement Standards from the Australian Curriculum to monitor and assess your child's progress.

### **Sun Safety**

Outside of the classroom all children must wear a hat. Parents are asked to assist by their own example and provide 30+ sunscreen and apply it well before the children come to Prep.



## Parent Involvement

As parents, you play a vital role in the education of your children and therefore, we welcome you to become involved in the classroom on occasion. Some ways you can help may include:

- Visiting the classroom for classroom prayer mornings and celebrations.
- Offering to share hobbies, interests and expertise.
- Volunteering to complete jobs at home to assist staff in preparing activities.
- Volunteering to assist in supervision on school excursions and other special days as required.

Parents who wish to volunteer in the classroom, tuckshop, uniform shop or at any school events are required to complete the relevant online volunteer training and paperwork prior to volunteering.

## Have Trust and Foster Good Communication

Trust that your child will be able to cope without you whilst they are at school. Over protectiveness stifles children's development and self-confidence. Trust the teachers – they have your child's best interests at heart. They are dedicated to helping children progress at their individual rate to reach their potential. Please respect and co-operate with their decisions and professional recommendations. It is important for your child to know that we are a team.

Communication between home and school is extremely important. We want to work in partnership with you. Please approach your teacher if you have any concerns. If you find it easier, you are welcome to email your child's teacher. Please ensure your email address is always up to date via the Parent Portal and remember to check the Prep News via our Prep Blog Space on the Parent Portal and BCE Connect App.

## Remember to wait, stop and enjoy this time

It's important to wait for your child to develop. Children's development proceeds in "fits and starts" so don't expect a smooth road! This development cannot be rushed and varies from child to child.



## How to get your child ready for Prep

Knowledge of formalities such as hello, goodbye, please and thank you. Is your child confident?

- ✓ in toilet use and personal hygiene. (blowing own nose, washing hands, fully toilet trained)
- ✓ with being left, trusts that Mum or Dad will return.
- ✓ to open and close their lunchbox
- ✓ to pack/unpack their school bag including zips & clips
- ✓ to put on and take off socks/shoes
- ✓ to write and/or recognise their name
- ✓ to carry their own bag



## Ideas to Help Prepare Your Child:

**Rhyming:** is a very important skill you can practise with your child. Read lots of books that have rhyming words in them and remember to teach nursery rhymes to your child. A child's ability to rhyme is a good indicator of future reading success.

**Games:** Visual perception activities are important too. Try games such as Spot the Difference; Find "the hidden picture" e.g. "Where's Wally?" and "I Spy"; Pick Up Sticks; Balloon patting/bouncing; Lotto games; Bingo (pictures/shapes) and Puzzles.

**Establish Routines:** In the weeks leading up to the start of school take your child to school and walk around the grounds. Show them the classrooms, the toilets, office, church etc., so that they gain familiarity with their new surroundings. Even if they have older siblings at St Mary MacKillop, it would be a good idea to do this.

**In the New Year:** Begin to establish a routine for bedtimes and mornings, as this will help your child prepare for getting ready for school on time.

Initially it can be very daunting for your child trying to find their school bag on the shelves. Please label your child's school bag in some unique way (key ring, small toy, ribbon etc.) to make it easier for them to identify.

Read picture books at bedtime each night. One story which you might like to try and find, which we will read to the children at school, is "The Kissing Hand" by Audrey Penn. This is a wonderful story which addresses the nerves and excitement of this important time.



## **YOUR CHILD NEEDS:**

- Prep uniforms
- A St Mary MacKillop school bag – with bag tag
- A suitable lunch box – clearly named
- A smaller container for Munch and Crunch – clearly named
- A named drink bottle filled with water
- Headphones over ear style wired headphone jack connector suitable for iPad Gen 9 (not Bluetooth) – clearly named
- 1 spare pair of socks and 2 spare pairs of underpants (a spare pair of shorts would also be of benefit) to keep in school bag in case of accidents
- A St Mary MacKillop school library bag available from the Uniform Shop.
- A St Mary MacKillop school homework satchel delivered to the classrooms at the beginning of the year.

**Please name every item your child brings to school in lower case letters not capitals.**

e.g. Susan White not SUSAN WHITE



## ***WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL***

***We are looking forward to working with you and your child.***

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