St Joseph’s Primary School

 GLOUCESTER



2018 Parent Handbook

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**WE WELCOME YOU TO OUR SCHOOL**

St Joseph’s School is a small Catholic Primary School located in the Manning Region of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. There are three classrooms , consisting of composite class structures. Because of our small class sizes, we boast inclusive education, designed to meet the individual learning needs of all our students. All the children have access to the added assistance of Learning Support Officers to enhance their learning and to assist the classroom teachers meet the needs of every child, regardless of academic ability.

Staff and students have access to the latest technology to enhance learning, including ipads, laptops, smart boards and video conferencing facilities. This technology enables the students to access the wider world, including classrooms in locations other than Gloucester. We are proudly associated with other Catholic Schools in the Manning Region, including St Clare’s High School in Taree, implementing and accessing the Region’s Gifted and Talented Program in Mathematics. Video conferencing enables our students to be a part of a virtual classrooms as they build upon their skills in Mathematics with like-minded students in other locations.

St Joseph’s, offers a variety of sporting opportunities for students, with many representing at PSSA in Athletics, Swimming and Cross Country. Weekly sport programs are assisted by Sporting Schools Australia and all the children are given opportunities to develop skills in a variety of sports, including golf, tennis, hockey and union. All classes take part in the yearly swim program conducted in Term 4.

St Joseph’s offers a variety of cultural activities also. We have access to the Diocesan ASPIRE program that recognises the talents of students in the area performing arts. Children take part in many school based assemblies and performances, utilising our school hall and surrounds. We proudly display artworks at the local gallery and other public domains as the opportunity arises. Children in all stages participate in the Diocesan Public Speaking Competition and the students in Stage 3 have the opportunity to participate in the Diocesan Debating Competition if they wish.

St Joseph’s is a small school, staffed by a very committed team dedicated to delivering a quality education to all our students. Thank you for taking the time to consider St Joseph’s for the education of your child.

Please feel free to come and visit to see first- hand what we can offer. Please contact the Office to make a suitable time to come and view our facilities and to meet the staff. We look forward to meeting with you soon.

The Staff at Joey’s

**2018 Staff**

**PRINCIPAL**: Mrs Bronwyn Underwood

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATOR**: Mr Lee Sullivan

**KINDERGARTEN/YEAR ONE TEACHER:** Ms Teegan Rowsell

**YEAR TWO/THREE TEACHER:** Mr Lee Sullivan

**YEAR FOUR/FIVE/SIX TEACHERS:** Mr Bronwyn Underwood/Mrs Donna-Maree Watt

**EXECUTIVE RELEASE:** Mrs Amy Maslen

**LEAD TEACHER LITERACY/NUMERACY**: Mrs Amy Maslen

**TEACHER LIBRARIAN**: Mrs Cathy Beard

**LEARNING SUPPORT TEACHER**: Mrs Amy Maslen

**LIBRARY ASSISTANT/LEARNING SUPPORT OFFICER:** Mrs Jennifer Shultz

**PASTORAL CARE WORKER/LEARNING SUPPORT OFFICER:** Mrs Joanne Relf

**ABORIGINAL EDUCATION WORKER/LEARNING SUPPORT OFFICER:** Mrs Kelly Middlebrook

**ADMINISTRATION/RECEPTION:** Mrs Lisa Hollingsworth

**CLEANER:** Ms Melissa Mitchell

**COUNSELLOR:** Mrs Alison Perry

**SPEECH THERAPIST:** Mrs Donna Crowe

**IT SUPPORT:** Mr David Fitzhardinge

**PRIEST MODERATOR:** Fr Perter Malone



St Joseph’s Gloucester is a Catholic School Community that values and is committed to:

* **Nurturing a faith based education that develops a value base, centred on the person of Christ;**
* **Providing highly skilled, inspiring educators in a contemporary learning environment;**
* **Producing independent, life-long learners with outstanding leadership qualities;**
* **Providing the highest quality inclusive education, supported by the latest technology and contemporary resources;**
* **Creating an environment of support for every student’s needs;**
* **Fostering positive family relationships and genuine partnership;**
* **Modelling and developing integrity, honesty and openness;**
* **Building a pastoral, respectful and cohesive community.**

**Absences**

All absences from school must be explained as soon as possible. Parents/carers can write a note, email, phone the school office, use the absence function in the Skoolbag App or complete a form in the Absence Booklet distributed to parents at the commencement of each school year. Children will be marked absent without explanation until the school is informed otherwise. Unexplained absences will be followed up by the school and continued unexplained absence from school will result in formal action being taken, in line with Diocesan Policy.

**Arriving at/leaving school**

Supervision of students commences at 8.30 a.m. each morning, so parents are asked not to drop off children before this time. The first bus arrives at approximately 8.35 a.m. Students who walk or ride their bikes are asked not to arrive before 8.30 a.m. to ensure that supervision is available. In the afternoon, supervision of all students is carried out by the teacher on bus duty. Students being collected by parents wait in the COLA area until parents arrive.

**In the event of students arriving late or leaving** **early, parents/carers must sign the students** **in or out at Reception**. The class roll will be marked to reflect late arrival or early departure.

**Assemblies**

Every morning the school gathers together in the Library to commence the school day. This is a time to settle for the day, give messages, hear from students regarding any achievements or causes to celebrate and to acknowledge birthdays. It is also a time to greet visitors for the day.

Assemblies to celebrate student achievements in the classroom, are held every second Friday afternoon commencing at 2.40 p.m. in the Library. Every class is rostered to present assembly items once per term and these dates are advertised in the school newsletter and these assemblies are held in the school hall. From time to time, there will be an assembly held to commemorate special events and these are advertised on the newsletter and will be held in the hall. Parents and carers are always welcome to attend.

**Assessments**

Assessments are a major part of the teaching and learning cycle. Students undergo formal and informal assessments in Key Learning Areas on a regular basis so staff can monitor each child’s progress closely and accurately. Assessments can take a variety of forms and information gathered is used to provide feedback not only to teachers, but to the students and parents/carers. Students K-6 are placed on the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums and this is regularly reviewed. Students start their journey on the continuum when they complete the **Best Start Assessment** at the commencement of Kindergarten. All students K-6 take part in Standardised Assessments in Term 4. Students in Years 3 and 5 complete the NAPLAN tests in May each year. Students in Stage 3 take part in the Newcastle Permanent Maths Competition held state wide in August each year.

**Bus Travel**

Bus travel is free for every student K-2 regardless of where they live. Free travel is available in Years 3-6 if the child lives 1.6 km (straight line) distance from school or the walking distance is more than 2.3 km. In the event of this not being the case, Newcombe’s Bus Company offer a term pass for $30.00. Bus forms need to be filled in by every student who wishes to travel on the bus. Bus forms are available online at <https://apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/howtoApply>. Any student in Year 2 or Year 6 need to update their details at the end of the school year.This can be done at <https://apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/updateDetails>. Forms once completed need to be verified by the school.

For families who live in outlying areas who need to drive their children to the bus stop, you may be eligible for **Private Vehicle Conveyance Subsidy.** The subsidy is designed to offset the cost of using a private vehicle to get to the nearest bus stop. You need to live more than 1.6 km from the nearest bus stop to be eligible. Forms are available online at transport.nsw.gov.au/schooldrive or phone 131 500. Payment to eligible families is calculated on school attendance.

**Canteen**

Canteen is twice a week at St Joseph’s – Monday and Friday. Our canteen is run by volunteers and their assistance is greatly appreciated.

On Monday, **Shared Table** operates. A group of parents/carers/grandparents cook lunch for the students and everyone eats together in the hall at set tables. For $5.00, children receive fruit break, cooked lunch and afternoon tea. A variety of dishes are on the menu and the menu for the week is advertised on Facebook and Skoolbag. Local produce is purchased and when available produce from the school vegetable gardens is used. Students with dietary requirements are catered for. All money from Shared Table is banked into the P&F account to buy resources for the students.

On Friday, the students can order from a more traditional canteen menu and purchase treats at lunch time. All money from Friday canteen goes toward our Pastoral Care Fund to assist families in need as required. A Friday canteen price list is available from the Office.

**Child Protection**

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an absolute and abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children. As a parent sending your child or children to St Joseph’s Gloucester, you should be aware of your rights and obligations in protecting all children within the school.

In NSW you are able to report certain information to Family and Community Services (FaCs). If you are concerned for any child in the school, you can discuss your concerns with a teacher, the Religious Education Coordinator or the Principal. You can report your concerns to the **FACs Child Protection Helpline** (133627 24 hours, 7 days) if you have reasonable grounds to suspect a child or young person is at risk of significant harm and your concerns are current. Risk of significant harm may occur from a single act or a series of acts. It is better to be safe than sorry. So, if you are uncertain, talk to a staff member at school.

**Part 3A Ombudsman Act 1974,** defines St Joseph’s Gloucester as a ‘designated non-government agency’ and as such we must have systems in place for preventing, reporting and investigating reportable conduct.

All staff and volunteers at St Joseph’s Gloucester fall within the scope of Part 3A and may be investigated for alleged ‘reportable conduct’ which includes sexual offences, misconduct, assault, ill treatment, neglect and behaviour that causes psychological harm to children.

**Zimmerman Services** is the Diocese’s specialist child protection service who works with the Ombudsman to ensure the Diocese meets its obligation under Part 3A.

**The Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012** – under this legislation people who work in a paid or volunteer capacity at St Joseph’s Gloucester are required by law to have a Working with Children Check Clearance (WWCC). This clearance can be obtained by applying online at check@kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au.

As a parent, if you know about a staff member or volunteer working in the school without a clearance, you should talk to the Principal or Religious Education Coordinator as soon as possible. If you believe that nothing is being done to address your concerns, you can contact **Zimmerman Services** (49791390 Mon-Fri 8.30 – 5.00). The Diocese’s reporting policy and procedures are available to everyone on the Diocesan Website: Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Reporting Child Protection Concerns

As a parent, you are entitled to contact Zimmerman Services directly about any concerns you have about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or if you are concerned that the school isn’t addressing allegations of reportable conduct or abuse.

**Communication**

Communication occurs through:

**Newsletter:** The school Newsletter is emailed and placed on Skoolbag on Friday of every second school week. It includes a calendar outlining the events of the coming fortnight and advanced dates to assist with long term planning. Articles, reports and pictures inform readers of recent happenings in the school. The Newsletter is also on the website.

**Skoolbag App:** Our Skoolbag App acts as a major form of communication to families and can be downloaded free of charge to families at St Joseph’s.

**Email:** Please ensure the school has your current email address as all information is communicated via email.

**Facebook:** St Joseph’s has a Facebook page and this is updated daily to reflect current school happenings.

**School Website:** The website offers a virtual experience including quick links to Parent Handbook, Policies, Newsletter and events as they transpire. The school’s web address is gloucester.catholic.edu.au

**Early Birds Transition to Kindergarten Program**

Every year during Terms 3 and 4, children enrolled to commence Kindergarten in the following year attend our Early Birds program. The program operates every Thursday in the school Library and the children take part in the school activities for the day. This program is very successful in preparing the students for ‘Big School’ and they have lots of fun interacting with the other students in the school, making new friends and getting to know the routine. Every year our enrolments for kindergarten increase and this program plays a significant role in this. The Principal, Mrs Underwood is the Early Bird’s teacher for the two terms.

**Enrolments**

Applications for enrolment are available from the school office throughout the year. Upon enrolment, birth certificate and immunisation status should be made available.

**PLEASE NOTE: you do not need to be Catholic** to enrol in a Catholic School in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

For parents seeking enrolment for their child into Kindergarten for the following year, the child must celebrate their 5th birthday on or before MAY 31 of the year they will be in Kindergarten.

**Facebook**

St Joseph’s has a Facebook page that is updated daily. It is used to communicate with families and provide up to date information on happenings around the school and Diocese. Parents and carers are encouraged to visit the page often.

**Gifted and Talented Mathematics**

Students K-6 who are identified as gifted or talented in Mathematics have the opportunity to participate in the Manning Region Gifted and Talented Mathematics Program. Children come together on a weekly basis with students from the other Manning Catholic Schools via our video-conferencing facility and take part in problem solving activities. Staff from the Math’s faculty at St Clare’s High School in Taree, are part of the program. The school also participates in initiatives that allow nominated children to participate in Regional Creative and Practical Arts and Science Activities. More information is available by contacting the school.

**Health and Medication**

Good health is vital to school progress. An Immunisation Certificate must be made available to the school on enrolment. **If immunisation is incomplete, the student will be excluded from school if an epidemic occurs.**

If your child appears to be ill before school, please do not send them. Sick children will not get better at school. If your child becomes unwell during the day, the school will contact you. Please ensure contact details are correct and current at all times.

All staff are qualified in **First Aid** and render this as necessary. Where medical assistance is required, parents/carers will be notified immediately and an ambulance called if necessary without delay.

**Medication** will be dispensed to children whose parents have completed the correct form – *Administering Medication*. Medication should contain the label with full instructions – dosage and time to be administered.

**Homework**

Every child K-6 is expected to complete homework as per the school Homework Policy. Non-completion of Homework without an explanation will result in parents/carers being notified and the student attending Lunchtime Homework as per the school Homework Policy.

**Library**

The Library at St Joseph’s is well resourced, catering for children, teachers and parents. Every week, the children have a Library Lesson and can borrow from the library during that time. Library day is WEdnesday. We also utilise the local town library, visiting each fortnight and children can borrow if they have a town library card.

To enable the students to borrow, they require a library bag that can be purchased from the school if required. A pillowcase is a suitable library bag. Children in Year 6 do not require a library bag to borrow. Students can become Library Monitors if they wish in Term 4 of Year 5 and have this responsibility until the end of Term 3 Year 6.

**Lunchtime Activities**

There are a variety of lunchtime activities at St Joseph’s that give an alternative to playing on the playground, if a student chooses. Lunchtime activities are organised and supervised by the Pastoral Care Worker and Learning Support Officers.

Activities are held in the hall from 11.35 – 12.00 three times per week. Activities include art and craft, chess club with our giant chess set, board games, indoor sporting activities, dance and music, including guitar. Knitting has been a favourite also. Parent volunteers are always welcome.

**Mini Vinnies**

Mini Vinnies is a group of Stage 3 students who volunteer their time to support others. The work of the students is supervised by the Pastoral Care Worker and includes fundraising for Caritas, Catholic Missions and other charity organisations. The children visit the local Nursing Home and interact with the residents. Mini Vinnies has supported Day for Daniel, RSPCA Cupcake Day, various cancer charity organisations as well as families within our school in time of misfortune or illness. Mini Vinnies is an integral group within our school and the students give up their lunchtimes to coordinate events. Mini Vinnies is the student equivalent of the St Vincent DePaul Society.

**Parent/Carer Involvement**

**Parents and Friends (P&F):** meets the second Monday of every month at 3.15 p.m. in the Library. The P&F is committed to assisting the school provide resources for the students to use. Within the P&F there is a fund raising committee, committed to raising funds to support the needs of the school from year to year. Examples of resources purchased in recent times include a stage for the school hall, refurbishing gardens including the vegetable patches and painting of the school fence to brighten up the school entrance.

Becoming involved in the P&F is a great way to keep in touch with what is happening in our school and a great opportunity to meet with other parents. Meetings go for around an hour. Informal social gatherings are held throughout the year, organised by the P&F and include tennis nights, barefoot bowls and twilight golf. St Joseph’s P&F has a Facebook page that only the parents of the school can access.

P&F Executive for 2018 will be elected at the AGM in March. The P&F Executive for 2017 are:

President: Ms Melissa Mitchell

Vice President: Mrs Courtney Paynter

Treasurer: Mr Peter Beard

Secretary: Mrs Rhea Ashby

**In addition to the P&F,** parents are encouraged to offer their assistance and expertise in other areas including sporting activities, covering library books, canteen, reading groups, excursion, working bees, art and craft. Please be aware that **all volunteers require a current Working With Children Check (WWCC)** and this needs to be verified by Zimmermann Services before volunteering can commence. The school can assist in this process.

**Parent/Teacher Interviews and School Reports**

Parents/carers can meet with teachers at any time throughout the year by contacting the teacher to make an appointment. Formal Parent/Teacher interviews are held Wednesdays during Week 6 of every Term. Semester 1 reports are issued on the last day of Term 2 and Semester 2 reports are issued on Friday of the second last week of school. This gives time for parents and teachers to meet if needed before the end of the school year. Parents and/or teachers can request an interview at any time in addition to what is offered.

Students in Kindergarten receive the Diocesan Kindergarten Report and students in Years 1-6 receive the Diocesan A-E report. Parents of students with a diagnosed intellectual disability can elect to receive a modified report that comments on their child’s learning goals and social development only.

From time to time teachers will contact parents/carers to discuss student progress if necessary. Teachers and parents/carers are encouraged to phone and or email at the earliest possible time to discuss issues as they arise.

**Pastoral Care**

Like many schools in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese, the school has a Pastoral Care Worker. Pastoral care is an integral part of school life and all staff members take a personal interest in every student. From time to time students require that extra hand or person to lean on and our Pastoral Care Worker is available for this. Pastoral Care is not a counselling service, but simply an extra pair of ears and hands to address the needs of students and often their families in times of hardship, sorrow and indeed times of joy. Our Pastoral Care Worker coordinates Mini Vinnies and lunchtime activities for the students. The Pastoral Care Worker works closely with classroom teachers and Principal to help meet the needs of all students.

**Permission Notes**

At the commencement of each school year, *General Permission* notes are signed by parents/carers that allow students to attend local excursions and sporting activities throughout the year. Teachers are required to alert parents/carers when students will be leaving the school grounds and for what purpose. The general permission note covers such occasions. Parents will be alerted via Skoolbag and email in advance of the activity taking place.

For activities outside the local area, permission notes will be sent home to cover each event.

At the commencement of the school year or upon enrolment, parents/carers are also asked to sign *Permission to be Photographed* and *Cyber Safety* forms issued by the Diocese, for their child/ren.

**Public Speaking and Debating**

In Term 3 each year, all students K-6 participate in the school public speaking competition and the winners in each stage advance to the Manning Regional Final to compete against students from Wingham, Taree, Bulahdelah and Forster. Winners from the Regional competition progress to the Diocesan final in Newcastle and compete against students from across the Diocese. Our school has had great success in this competition over the years.

Students in Stage 3 have the opportunity to compete in the Manning Region Debating Competition. Again the winning team at Regional level progresses onto the Diocesan final in Newcastle.

**Sacraments**

Sacraments of Penance, Confirmation and Eucharist are celebrated every second year in St Joseph’s Parish. They are organised by the Parish and parents are notified of upcoming Sacraments in the School Newsletter and Parish Bulletin. There will be a Sacramental Program in 2017.

**School Banking**

School Banking is with the Commonwealth Bank and banking day is Thursday. Parents need to open a Dollarmite account at the Commonwealth Bank and bank books can be brought into school each week containing the money to be deposited. School banking is organised by the school P&F. Bank books will be returned to the students once the deposit has been made.

**School Fees**

School fees are set by the Diocese and are payable over Terms 1-3. Concessions are available for Health Care Card Holders and additional concessions can be given for financial hardship at Mrs Underwood’s discretion. Parents/carers are urged to contact Mrs Underwood to make an appointment to discuss payment options and amounts. **No child will** **be denied an education at St Joseph’s through inability to pay full fees.**

Once an agreement has been reached, it is important that this be honoured. In cases where agreed fees are not being paid and there is no communication with the school, overdue fees will be referred to the Catholic Schools Office and debt recovery processes will be put in place. Leaving the school and owing money will result in the Catholic Schools Office taking immediate action to recover the debt. All fees owing must be paid to St Joseph’s before an enrolment into St Clare’s High School in Taree will be accepted.

Fees are payable in full by the end of each school year. Payment can be made at any time via direct debit, EFTPOS including credit card, BPay, cash or cheque. Discounts apply for more than one child enrolled in Catholic Schools in the Diocese.

**School Hours**

Supervision commences at 8.30 a.m. The bell rings at 8.55 a.m.

Lunchtime is 11.10 – 12.00 and Recess is 1.30 – 2.00 p.m.

Home bell rings at 3.05 p.m.

Children are supervised in the afternoon until the last bus leaves which is around 3.15 p.m.

Children not collected by this time will wait in the Administration Building with the Principal until they are collected by parents/carers.

**Skoolbag**

Parents/carers can download the Skoolbag App free of charge to keep up to date with school notices and news. Every parent/carer who has an email address registered with the school is able to download the App. It is available for both Iphone and Android. Skoolbag is linked to the school website.

**Sport**

All students K-6 participate in the weekly sport program. Our program is financed by Sporting School’s Australia and as a result we can offer a variety of sports delivered by professional coaches. In 2016 the children will participate in Golf, Tennis and Swimming., utilising the local Golf Course, Tennis Courts and Swimming Pool.

In addition, students aged 8 years and over have the opportunity to represent at Regional, Diocesan and State level in Athletics, Swimming and Cross Country. Students participate in Horse Sport Events, Soccer and Netball Gala Days. Students in Stage 3 with above average ability in Netball, Basketball, Soccer, Touch Football, Rugby League, Rugby Union, Hockey or Tennis can attend Regional Trials in Taree or Forster, for selection to attend Diocesan trails in Newcastle. Successful students at this level go onto represent the Diocese in the state competition and eventually to Nationals if successful.

**Stage 3 Camp**

At the end of Term 3, Stage 3 students will attend a week long camp with Stage 3 students from St Joseph’s Bulahdelah. Students will have an exciting time in Sydney.

**Students with Disabilities**

Funding is available for students with diagnosed intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities such as hearing impairment and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Every child has access to Learning Support Officers regardless of ability, to enable them to access the curriculum and meet their full potential. The school works closely with outside agencies to provide the highest level of support to students with disabilities within our school.

Students with Disabilities have wonderful success in the swimming pool and on the athletics and cross country tracks. St Joseph’s has a proud history of students competing at state level in these events in the Athletes with Disability category.

**Therapists**

St Joseph’s has access to a Psychologist one day per fortnight and a Speech Therapist as required. Both therapists visit the school and work with students and other family members, if and as required.

**Uniform**

All uniform items are available through the school uniform shop. Payment can be made using cash or EFTPOS (including credit card) in the school office. The uniform shop is open Monday afternoon 2.30 – 3.00 p.m. and Thursday morning 8.30 – 9.00 a.m. The school also has a good selection of pre-loved uniform items. Most are available for a gold coin donation.

Please mark all uniform items clearly with your child’s name.

**Visitors/Volunteers**

All visitors and volunteers are to report to the Office and sign in before proceeding into the school. Upon signing the relevant section of the Visitor/Volunteer book they will be issued with a Visitor or Volunteer Badge.

**All volunteers are required to have a current Working with Children Check (WWCC) and can only volunteer when this has been verified by Zimmerman Services. The school will organise this upon receiving the required WWCC number and sighting a 100 point identification check.**

Staff, when seeking volunteers to assist in the classroom, will be reminded of this procedure.

**WEBSITE**

 gloucester.catholic.edu.au

For further information regarding any aspect of the school, please contact the school at a time convenient to you – 6558 1555 and speak with the Principal Mrs Bronwyn Underwood.

We look forward to hearing from you.