10 February 2015

Principal’s Report

Dear Parents

The first two weeks have certainly been a hive of activity and excitement; very few tears and limited reluctance to come to school……and that’s just the staff, so we are well and truly off to a great start and looking forward to an exciting and rewarding term ahead.

For many students, ‘promotion’ into a new year level can be an anxious time, particularly when this is coupled with change of class or teachers. It is important that as parents you are recognisably supportive in the first few weeks of ‘transition’ while children settle into new routines and accustom themselves with different expectations and teaching styles which vary from teacher to teacher, class to class. A positive working partnership between home and school is absolutely vital in ensuring that a shared sense of responsibility is geared towards always maintaining what is best for each and every child. I ask you all to help out in maintaining this positive spirit so that the year will progress fruitfully.

The most important step you can take to help your child learn is to be an active participant in your child’s education. Active participation includes: talking to your child about their day, hearing young learners read, helping with homework and making sure kids go to school happy, healthy and with plenty of sleep.

The second step is to become involved in your child’s school. This is harder than ever due to work and other commitments, but you can still be positively engaged in the life of your child’s school even when you work. Here’s a few tips on how this can be achieved:-

1. Find out what your child’s school is trying to achieve and show your support for its aims. What is your school focusing on over the following three years? What are its specific values? Answer these two questions and you’ll be streets ahead of most parents.
2. Support a broad, balanced curriculum that offers a variety of experiences rather than a program that narrowly focuses on standardized testing.
3. Direct conversations through the correct channels such as your child’s teacher. Classroom teachers are in the best position to provide the facts. Thoughtless gossip and car park committees merely tarnish a school’s reputation.
4. Get the school calendar/newsletter and place important events in your own diary so you can plan ahead.
5. Meet with your child’s teacher at the start of the year and ask for practical ways you can help at home. Every teacher has their own style and way of doing things. Make sure your child’s homework routine fits that of your child’s teacher.
6. Encourage your child to take pride in their school, and don’t ‘bag’ it yourself. Your positive advocacy of your child’s school will send a powerful message about school and learning.
7. Model learning and reading. Your children need to see you learning new things and reading so they become normalized. In particular, boys are more likely to latch on to reading when their dads read to them and also read at home themselves.

There are lots of ways you can support your child’s learning. However you can’t go too far wrong if you start with these basics; take a real interest in what children do at school and be an active, risk-taking learner yourself.

P&F ASSOCIATION

The Annual General Meeting for 2015 will be on Wednesday, 18 February in the staffroom. At this meeting positions of the executive will be declared vacant and re-opened for election. Your contribution in this is valued and we look forward to seeing you there.

P&F Meetings are generally organised on the third Wednesday of the month unless otherwise advertised. I urge all families to play an active role in the Association and in helping to maintain St Thomas’s School as a quality school of faith and learning.

PARENT INFORMATION SESSIONS

This week sees the conclusion of the ‘beginning of year’ parent information sessions for all classes. These are certainly excellent opportunities for parents to meet up with class teachers as well as to gain some insight into the year ahead. The support of the parents who have already attended these sessions is appreciated. I also sincerely thank class teachers for their time and effort in organising and preparing these sessions.

Sessions still to come:

- **Year 4 @ 5:30pm:** Tuesday, 10th February – Year 4 Classroom
• Year 4/5 @ 5:30pm: Tuesday, 10th February – Year 4/5 Classroom
• Year 2 @ 5.30pm: Wednesday 11th February – Library
• Year 2/3 @ 5.30pm: Wednesday 11th February - Library
• Year 3 @ 5.30pm: Wednesday 11th February - Library

TUCKSHOP
This is an urgent plea for more volunteers to assist with the operation of the tuckshop each day. If you are able to help out in any way, please contact the school as soon as possible. We cannot operate the tuckshop without sufficient numbers of volunteers, so any assistance will be greatly appreciated.

ACTIVE AFTER SCHOOL
In recent years the school has provided after school activities on a variety of afternoons, which have been sponsored by a Federal Government program. This year however, the funding process has changed and we are awaiting further information regarding the future of the program. Consequently, until further notice we will not be offering Active After School activities.

ICAS (International Competitions and Assessments for Schools)
Students in Years 3 – 6 are invited to take part in any or all of the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools. Dates are as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>Competition Date</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>Tuesday 19th May</td>
<td>$8-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Wednesday 3rd June</td>
<td>$8-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Monday 15th June</td>
<td>$18-70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>Tuesday 16th June</td>
<td>$12-10</td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Tuesday, 28th July</td>
<td>$8-80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Tuesday 11th August</td>
<td>$8-80</td>
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If interested in having your child/ren participate, please download permission form attached. Please return completed form and entry fee/s to the school by Friday, 6th March.

Please note: Late registrations will not be accepted.

For more information please visit the Educational Assessment Australia website at www.eaa.unsw.edu.au or contact Customer Service on (02) 8344 1010 or by email at info@eaa.unsw.edu.au

ON A FINAL NOTE……..
As this new year begins, I look forward to meeting our students, who are at the heart of all decision making, and our parents who will journey in partnership as we fulfil our Vision at St Thomas’. One of the most important elements of a great school is the partnership between the school and parents. This positive connection and relationship is one of the exceptional strengths of St Thomas’.

In 2015, we will nurture, challenge and inspire our students to shine in all areas of school life.

Rita Petersen

News from APRE – Kathy Fleming

Parish Weekend Mass Times
St Thomas of Villanova – Mareeba – Saturday 6.00pm & Sunday 10.00am
St Christopher’s – Kuranda – Sunday 6.00pm
St Anthony’s – Dimbulah – Sunday 8.00am

Opening School Year Mass
Last Tuesday morning, St Thomas’s celebrated our opening school Eucharist, where our student leaders for 2015, publicly committed themselves to be ambassadors for our school, working responsibly with the SRC team members and staff and following the school rules to be a good role model for students. We congratulate all of our leaders on the effort they have given to beginning the year so positively. Our school motto ‘Walk in the Light’ provided a focus for staff and student prayer rituals to begin the school year. Each class received a paper lantern to remind them to be the light of Christ for others and to see the Light in others this year.

Welcome to our two new priests!

Father John Sullivan grew up in Brisbane and joined the Augustinian Order. After ordination he taught at the Augustinian colleges in Sydney and Brisbane, spent 3 years in the Northern Victorian parish of Kyabram and the last 26 years as a missionary in South Korea where he helped to establish the Augustinian Order by recruiting young South Korean men.

Father Dipi Kattathara was born in India in Kerala State. After his High School studies he joined the Augustinian Order and became an Augustinian priest in 2004. He worked in the Augustinian seminary for 8 years then transferred to Sydney in 2012 where he worked in the parish of Manly Vale. Fr. Dipi moved North to Mareeba last December.
2015 Parish Sacramental Program

The Parent Information Night for our Parish Sacramental Program will be held this Thursday evening beginning at 6:00 pm in the Church. Children in Year Four (or older) in this Diocese, who have been baptised, are eligible to continue their sacramental journey by receiving First Reconciliation, Communion and Confirmation in their parish this year. If your child is not baptised, or baptised in another denomination, and wanting to participate in the program, please contact Monica, the Parish Secretary, at the parish office on 4092 1077 or stthomas@ledanet.com.au.

Caritas Just Leadership Day

St Thomas’s will host a Just Leadership Day on Wednesday 25 February in our School Activity Hall from 9.00am-1.15pm for schools and colleges in our Western Deanery. Together with other like-minded student leaders, they will plan how to engage our communities in building a better, more just world. The aims of the Just Leadership Day are for students to: identify what constitutes good leadership and why it’s important to be a leader in this domain and to explore the qualities of leadership through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching.

www.caritas.org.au

MJR Winners

Our Making Jesus Real focus this term is having ‘Magic Manners’. Congratulations to the winners who were announced at our school assembly over the past fortnight:

Amy Jones, Cherith Ballin, Sienna Alba, Nicholas Brammer

A New Religious Education Curriculum

This year we launch a new RE curriculum in the Cairns Diocese. Teachers will begin trialing units of work using the new syllabus this year. All of our classroom teachers spent one of our student free days in late January focusing on quality teaching, setting high expectations and building relationships in the religion classroom. Teachers began exploring the Year level content and how to teach it and planning units through to assessment, focusing on the year level achievement standards. The achievement standard for each Year level states the visible and explicit evidence that is used to measure students’ learning progress. The new curriculum model engages two dimensions of Religious Education:

1. The School RE Program – Knowing our Faith

This is the classroom teaching of Religious Education. The content of the RE curriculum articulates the religious knowledge and deep understanding and skills that reflects a Catholic Christian worldview.

2. The Faith Life of the School – Celebrating and Living our Faith

This dimension refers to the ways we behave as Catholic Christians. Students will discover our school’s connections with the Sisters of Mercy and the Augustinians, study ways to Pray, Worship and Celebrate, reflect on social action and justice and will celebrate the gospel message present in the life of the school.
The vision for Religious Education to educate and form students who are challenged to live the gospel of Jesus Christ and who are literate in the Catholic and broader Christian tradition so that they might participate critically and authentically in faith contexts and wider society. (Religious Education, p.10)

It is not sufficient that Jesus Christ be formed within us... He must be recognised in our conduct.
Mother Catherine McAuley Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy

Learning Support

Ben Foss, who is dyslexic, describes three ways of reading: reading with your eyes, reading with your ears (listening) and reading with your fingers (braille).

Children with reading or vision problems can still enjoy books, read their emails and do research by reading with their ears. Find out how the iPad and iPhone can turn text into speech at http://youtu.be/AYzJggS4atE.

Comprehension can also be improved through listening to books.

APA News

BACK TO SCHOOL:

It’s great to see so many happy smiling faces around the school. Students have settled in well and are enjoying a positive start to the year. For some children however, school can seem a little daunting and overwhelming at the beginning of the year or new school term, and for some parents this causes great distress and worry. If your child is having some ‘settling in’ issues there are some important strategies and thoughts to keep in mind to make this transition as smooth as possible –

• As the parent you need to set the positive tone about school in your household and on the way to school. Discuss the wonderful friends your child will meet, the great activities and craft your child will make and how before long, it will be time for the end of the day and your child to come home again.
• Never talk about school late at night, children are tired, you are tired and nothing positive will be talked about when having late night discussions about things that are not so nice!
• When you arrive at school be positive, distract your child with the classroom routine your teacher has set up – lunch in tub, water bottle on table etc.. then look for an activity that you can sit down and enjoy together (even if you are feeling sick).
• Do not hang around, 10mins maximum is all you need to be staying with your child before you tell them that you will be leaving, have a great day and I will be back before you know it to collect you and hear about your great day.
• If your child does have problems separating make sure you have made eye contact with the teacher and they know you are about to leave before you say goodbye. A quick hug then leave, do not look back, do not turn around. Although this might be the hardest thing right now, once your child has settled you will not even remember them having any trouble at the beginning of the year.
• Separation problems are common and the worst thing you can do is hang around, say goodbye ten times and hesitate. Your child is incredibly intuitive and although nothing is said they will be picking up on your anxiety and it will cause them to become more easily upset and anxious as well.
• If your child is really struggling don’t tell them that you will ring, come back at lunch to check up on them, leave notes in lunch boxes or that Daddy or Mummy will be home today as they have a rostered day off. Before you know it they will be sick and will be wanting to come home, yet again getting upset and anxious. Your constant reminder to them that they are at school without you will make it all the more harder for them to separate.
• Teachers are very experienced with separation anxiety and have many strategies for making this transition as smooth as possible for you and your child. Trust your teachers and allow them to do what they do best. If your child continues to be upset, the school will certainly let you know and work through this process with you and your child.
• If you have any questions or concerns at any time don’t hesitate to talk to your child’s teacher or anyone in administration. Before you know it your child will be bouncing through the gate and excited to start a new day at school.

Below is a link to an interesting clip on parenting by Michael Grose, well worth watching.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2KczkV6oUY

Redundancy Parenting – Michael Grose Parenting Ideas

DATE CLAIMER:

Thursday, 12 February at 3:15pm: Parent SEL Meeting in the Conference Room; please join us!

Leonie McCormack
Guidance Counsellor News and Information

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you back for 2015 and once again look forward to working with students, staff and parents in a supportive capacity. For 2015, I am scheduled to be at St Thomas of Villanova every Tuesday and Thursday with provision for additional time on alternate Fridays. Additional counselling time has been allocated to St Thomas’s for 2015.

Just for your information, the services that counsellors are able to provide for students and families in catholic schools include such matters as:

- Providing information sessions for classes on current topics such as bullying issues, healthy relationships, goal setting and organisation, self-esteem and resilience.
- Working with small groups on issues such as anger management, self confidence, resilience and assertiveness, positive thinking and stress issues.
- Discussions with parents and staff regarding concerns about student performance, behaviour or emotional well being.
- Counselling sessions for matters relating to a broad range of issues such as, family dynamics, friendship concerns, poor self esteem, bullying concerns, behavioural concerns, grief and loss and general personal concerns.

Parents can access the Guidance Counsellor either through the Principal, Mrs Rita Petersen, by making an appointment at the office or by sending an email to bschofield@cns.catholic.edu.au. My office is always open to parents should you wish to discuss matters relating to your children.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the counselling services available at St Thomas of Villanova, or if you have any concerns regarding the well-being of your son or daughter.

Bryan Schofield
Guidance Counsellor

Tuckshop

Tuckshop Volunteers needed – Please see Janet or phone 4092 4371 if you are able to help for 2 hours once a month.