Dear Parents

Learning for our students is well underway. This year we hope to make learning ever more visible to our students so that they always know what they are learning and why and how they will know they are successful. Teachers are working to become more aware of the effect of their teaching on the learners. Our inspired and passionate teachers are working together as part of a great team to improve their own professional performance so that they have a significant impact on student learning.

One of the best things they can do is to give your children great feedback about their learning so that the children always know if they are on track. Students are taught the stages of learning – from just becoming aware of something right through to mastery of it.

STAFF NEWS

I wish to advise that I will be taking a short period of leave from Wednesday, March 11th until Thursday, April 2nd to attend the LA RE Congress in Anaheim, California. During this time Ms Kathy Fleming will be at the helm, supported by Mrs Leonie McCormack and Mrs Judith Conroy.

TIME AT SCHOOL

Everyone would be aware that time in class with the teacher is what is required for the best learning to take place. As such, it is vital that we ensure our children are at school, in class, for as often as possible. Getting to school late, leaving early or having days away from school all reduce the quality learning time available to our students and it can make a difference. Obviously, there are times when this is unavoidable but I would encourage all parents to make every effort to ensure their children are here at school for the greatest amount of time possible.

School begins at 8:40am with morning duty beginning at 8:15am. Arriving late for school may cause some children to be anxious as they miss the instruction session for the class, which sets them up for the day’s activities.

NEW SMOKING LEGISLATION

New laws have been passed in Queensland banning the use of smoking products, including tobacco and electronic cigarettes, in all areas at state and non-state schools in Queensland and for five metres beyond the boundary of school land. These laws offer further protection to the Queensland public—and in particular, children and young adults—from exposure to harmful environmental tobacco smoke. These new laws apply at all times—during and after school hours, on weekends and during school holidays.

P&F FEDERATION

The Parents and Friends Federation is the state-wide parent organisation officially recognised by the Catholic Church and Catholic Education authorities for the 294 Catholic schools in Queensland. It represents the parents and carers of 140,000 children in parish, diocesan and religious institute schools in the state. St Thomas’ P&F is affiliated with the state wide body. Any parents seeking more information about the P&F Federation can access it via the following website http://www.pandf.org.au/ . The site contains a wealth of information relating to issues faced by the parents of students in catholic schools.

PARENTS & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION:

Congratulations to our P&F Executive Officers for 2015:-

- President - Mr David Saul
- Vice President – VACANT
- Secretary - Mrs Roberta Alexander
- Treasurer – Mrs Dani Esposito
- Markets Coordinator: Mrs Leonie McCormack
- Market Coordinator Assistant: Mrs Stella Byrne

..........I am sincerely grateful and I look forward to working alongside them and all families and friends of the school community in ensuring that our children are the recipients of the best Catholic education we are able to possibly give them together. I realise that it is not always easy to find time in the busyness of our lives but our children certainly deserve, and will benefit from, whatever time and support we are able to give.

Throughout 2014, year levels across the school made submissions for funding to the P&F to purchase items such as classroom resources, air conditioning, sporting equipment and much more. Sincere thanks must go to our outgoing executive members of 2014 -- Jason Jaques, Shiralee Stewart and Tamara Dalla Costa. The P&F and the various capacities in
which it operates is tangible evidence of the necessary link between school and families.

PREP ENROLMENTS 2016

We will be holding interviews for Prep enrolments for 2016 in Term 2. If you, or someone you know is interested in Prep enrolments, please collect an enrolment pack from the front office.

THE HOLY FATHER’S RESOLUTIONS

The month of February is often the point at which New Year Resolutions continue or crash and burn. Below are the resolutions on Pope Francis’ list. The Holy Father continues to inspire the faithful ‘in the spirit of St Francis’: accepting minority groups, embracing the poor, showing humanity, celebrating with the world’s youth, and drawing people to God.

Described by Forbes Magazine as one of the four most influential people in the world, Pope Francis’ role is broad and complex and is not without its challenges. In all of this, his faith in God, his love for humanity and his sense of hope are inspiring to all. Pope Francis is a good man doing God’s work in our contemporary world.

CYBER SAFETY

Technology and the use of devices provide opportunities to support learning and assist us with the activities of our daily lives. However as with many other tools, technology not managed well presents risks and potential dangers. One of the most significant dangers is the vulnerability of young people to those who wish to do harm to others. At St Thomas’ we place a great deal of emphasis on Internet safety and cyber bullying for young people. The following link provides parents with some helpful hints and information:


Sadly the dangers of online activity have become too real for all school communities in recent years; of particular concern for schools is the ever-increasing numbers of young students accessing social media sites with varying levels of personal security settings.

St Thomas’ will continue to work with students in ensuring the provision of an education that supports cyber safety. Your ongoing support and vigilance in this area will enhance the effectiveness of these cyber safety strategies.

RECALL OF FROZEN BERRIES

As you may be aware in recent media reports, Patties Foods Ltd has undertaken a recall of Nanna’s Mixed Berries, Creative Gourmet Mixed Berries and Creative Gourmet Raspberries from Coles, Woolworths, IGA and other independent supermarkets nationally due to potential microbiological (Hepatitis A) contamination. A number of confirmed cases have been reported around Australia, including one in Cairns to date.

At St Thomas’ School, frozen berry products are NOT used in our tuckshop.

Hepatitis A can be a serious condition if untreated and anyone who is concerned or has developed symptoms should contact their GP or 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).

The Queensland Health website has a detailed Hepatitis A fact sheet available at the following link:


LENT

As we enter into the spirit of the current Lenten season, this is an ideal time of soul searching and repentance; a season for reflection and taking stock of our attitudes and values in the light of the gospel precepts and persuasions. Lent is a special time when we are each called to reflect, to prepare and to change with the hope of always becoming and living like Jesus Christ.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAuB-3V46zk

ON A FINAL NOTE

Please keep the residents of Yeppoon, Rockhampton and surrounding communities in your prayers, as they rise to new beginnings after the devastation of their towns in the aftermath of Cyclone Marcia. Their hope, resilience and courage will be stronger if they know their needs are being presented to God through the prayers of so many of their colleagues around Australia.

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
Induction of our SRC leaders

This morning on parade, our nine SRC leaders elected by their classmates, were commissioned by Fr John. We pray for these students who together with our School Captains and House Captains, have been called to leader our school for 2015, that through the guidance and intervention of St Thomas of Villanova they will live up to their commitments and fulfil their duties as school leaders. We congratulate: (front row L to R) Sage Stevens, Ethan Cummings, Tahlia Spena, Brayden McKinnon, Angus Haendel, Tiahna Maloberti, Jasper Cole, Tylee Madrid, and (back row) Kate Baksaj.

2015 Parish Sacramental Program

Catechism for the Sacrament of Penance, for our Parish Sacramental Program will be held in the church tonight and Thursday evening beginning at 6:00 pm (families need only attend one session of their choosing). 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 (Tuesday to Thursday) on 4092 1077 or stthomas@ledanet.com.au.

Caritas Just Leadership Day

St Thomas’s will host a Just Leadership Day tomorrow in our School Activity Hall from 9.00am-1.15pm for schools and colleges in our Western Deanery. Our 19 Year 5 and 6 student leaders, together with other like-minded student leaders from St Anthony’s Dimbulah, St Augustine’s Mossman, Mt St Bernard College Herberton and St Stephens Catholic College, will work together 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.

TREWTH Conference

This Saturday, all of the teaching staff from St Thomas’s will attend a conference hosted by Cairns, Catholic Education Centre’s Identity and Mission Team. TREWTH provides a wide variety of workshops related to Religious Education and Wellbeing, that particularly suited to teachers of Religious Education, Spirituality and Social Emotional Learning aiming to deepen our knowledge and understanding in these areas.

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:

Remy Fuller, Casey Sielaff, Elly Martin, Isabelle Jennings

God does not bestow all His choicest blessings on one person. He did not give to St. Peter what He gave to St. Paul nor to either what He gave to St. John.

Mother Catherine McAuley Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy
Another important point is to keep an open mind about what you hear. We love and cherish our children however it is wise to remember that they can sometimes embellish and misinterpret things. Checking ‘stories’ with those concerned in a courteous manner usually resolves any misunderstandings that may occur.

Problems can arise between various parties involved in a school community. Most of these issues usually result from a breakdown in the lines of communication. The key then, is to maintain lines of open, clear and courteous communication.

If you need to contact your child’s teacher please either phone the school office, see the teacher before or after school or email your child’s teacher at the following address-

Kyra Terkelsen - kterkelsen@cns.catholic.edu.au
Jenna Armour - jarmour@cns.catholic.edu.au
Elaine De La - edelai@cns.catholic.edu.au
Michele Serravalli - mserravalli@cns.catholic.edu.au
Colleen Sheppard - csheppard@cns.catholic.edu.au
Stacey Vohland - svohland@cns.catholic.edu.au
Maggie Beare - mbeare1@cns.catholic.edu.au
Lyndel Lacey - lacey@cns.catholic.edu.au
Debbie Filippelli - dfilippell@cns.catholic.edu.au
Katrina Miller - kmiller@cns.catholic.edu.au
Nola Nunes - nnunes@cns.catholic.edu.au
Michelle Pearsall - mpearsall@cns.catholic.edu.au
Tracey Eaton - teaton@cns.catholic.edu.au
Bethany Knights - bknights@cns.catholic.edu.au
Megan Jackson - mjackson@cns.catholic.edu.au
Michelle Brammer - mbrammer@cns.catholic.edu.au
Morgan Ah Gum - mahgum@cns.catholic.edu.au

Leonie McCormack

Guidance Counsellor News

Supporting and enhancing social/emotional learning at St. Thomas’s

Resilience- Being able to bounce back after a negative or hurtful experience

In an edition of the Kids Helpline Newsletter, one of the focus areas was on resilience, which is commonly defined as “a person’s ability to deal with or cope with and overcome negative life experiences”. Some people take on the challenges at hand but others find obstacles difficult to overcome and can take much longer to recover (if at all).

People generally respond differently to a crisis or a distressing situation, but those who have been taught the skills to being resilient, cope better than others.

The Clinical Practice Manager at Kids Helpline, Kathryn l’Hanson says that, “young people who are resilient, tend to be optimistic, confident and have a high sense of self-worth”. In schools teachers and counsellors place tremendous emphasis on teaching resilience to students, focusing on self-esteem,
self-control, social skills, problem solving, realistic expectations and optimism.

Ms. l'Hanson states that “resilience is a powerful tool for coping, adjusting and innovating and it provides young people with the resources to handle all kinds of adversity”.

Things that can really prevent young people from developing resilience are:

- Poor self-esteem
- Poverty and /or neglect
- Unstable accommodation (moving from house to house or town to town)
- Low school achievement
- Poor school attendance and disconnection from the school community
- Parental separation/divorce
- Family violence
- Abuse
- Few friends or associating with high risk young people
- Absence of goals
- Substance abuse and other risky behavior

The ways in which you can help your son or daughter to develop resilience are:

- Demonstrate how to manage difficulties with simple stress reducing actions such as enough sleep, regular physical activity, and being able to ask for help when they need it.
- Improve self-worth through positive reinforcement, teaching hygiene and nutrition, recognizing achievements, setting realistic goals and ensuring they are involved in school, work or the community.
- Develop social skills and optimism by asking for their opinion, encouraging them to develop their network of friends, teaching them how to handle disagreements, helping them to make sense of their feelings and teaching them to challenge negative thinking patterns.
- Help improve problem solving skills by setting and adhering to boundaries and expectations, provide opportunities for them to challenge themselves and improve skills, increase independence and autonomy.
- Provide challenges to develop problem solving and give a sense of achievement.
- Provide a sense of belonging and opportunities for communication and cooperation in group settings.

Some useful websites for parents to gather information and strategies relating to the social and emotional development of their children include:

http://www.beyondblue.org.au
http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au
http://www.parentingideas.com.au
http://www.raisingchildren.net.au

I do hope you find this article and related websites of interest and the tips helpful, in building resilience in your son/daughter.

If you have any concerns in relation to the emotional well-being of your child, please contact the Principal, Mrs. Rita Petersen on 4092 1570 or myself by email at bschofield@cns.catholic.edu.au. Wishing you all well.

Bryan Schofield
Guidance Counsellor

LEARNING SUPPORT

To have emotional resilience children need a growth mindset – the ability to have a go.

Failed or NOT YET - The Power of “Yet”

Children need to be taught the power of “Not Yet”, Not that you have failed, but that you haven’t got it - YET. What is important is the journey, which may take longer for some. Hence you haven’t got it - YET.

There are some things that can be done to get an understanding of the power of YET.

1. Use praise wisely – praising the effort, strategies and persistence, rather than the product.
2. Use the words “Yet" and “Not Yet" to help develop confidence and persistence.
3. Encourage your child to move out of their comfort zone.

For more information listen to http://tinyurl.com/mnblves

What is dengue fever?

Dengue fever is a viral illness spread by the dengue mosquito (Aedes aegypti). This mosquito is found in many tropical countries around the world, including parts of Queensland.

There are 4 types of the dengue virus that cause dengue fever - Dengue Type 1, 2, 3 and 4. People become immune to a particular type of dengue virus once they’ve had it, but can still get sick from the other types of dengue if exposed.

Catching different types of dengue, even years apart, increases the risk of developing severe dengue. Severe dengue causes bleeding and shock, and can be life threatening. There have been deaths in Queensland from severe dengue.

Mrs Judy Conroy - Learning Support Teacher

1. Demonstrate how to manage difficulties with simple stress reducing actions such as enough sleep, regular physical activity, and being able to ask for help when they need it.
2. Use the words “Yet" and “Not Yet" to help develop confidence and persistence.
3. Encourage your child to move out of their comfort zone.

For more information listen to http://tinyurl.com/mnblves
How dengue fever starts

The dengue virus is not endemic in Australia, which means the virus is not normally present in Queensland.

Dengue fever outbreaks begin in Queensland when someone is infected with dengue overseas and arrives with the virus in their blood. This is called an imported case. A local dengue mosquito bites this person, becomes infected with the virus, and then passes it on to other people by biting them. These are known as locally acquired cases.

The dengue virus does not spread directly from person to person.