

2023



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# About this report

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St Joseph's Primary School (the 'School') is registered by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and managed by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO), Maitland-Newcastle. The Annual School Report (the 'Report'), provides parents and the wider community with fair, accurate and objective information about various aspects of school performance and development. Additionally, the Report complements and is supplementary to other forms of regular communication to the School community regarding initiatives, activities and programs which support the learning

## Message from key groups in our community

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### Principal's Message

It is with great pride that I present the 2023 Annual School Report. St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa is a small, rural school situated in the Upper Hunter.

Demographically, we are the furthest school from the Diocesan offices, but we are never left wanting!

Our mission is to be a community of Catholic faith where the uniqueness of each child is nurtured and valued; where students are empowered and challenged to become lifelong learners with optimism and hope for the future.

Students this year have achieved academically, with placings in the Diocesan Public Speaking and Maths Bee as well as representing the school in the Regional Spelling and Regional Debating. This year we had one student working within the Maitland Newcastle Gifted and Talented Virtual Academy program and two students participated in the Aspire Young Scriptwriters program.

This year staff have continued with professional learning in Learning Intentions, Success Criteria, and the Assessment Waterfall with a continued focus on literacy.

I express my personal gratitude to all the staff for their continued hard work, dedication and genuine love for each other, the students and families and our beautiful school.

We look forward to continuing to improve the standard of our learning and academic outcomes throughout 2024 and beyond as our school enrolments increase.

### Parent Body Message

2023 – a year of success and adaptation for our P&F.

Throughout the year, our P&F has provided opportunities for us as parents and guardians to play an active role in the life of the school, advocating for improvement and contributing to school activities and finances.

In 2023 our P&F volunteers have operated the school canteen and uniform shop on a weekly basis, Mother's Day and Father's Day gifts stalls and BBQ, the canteen at the town Campdraft, supported school sporting events, all in addition to running our annual Campdraft and Fete.



including myself were successful in the small schools relay making it to State. We were over the moon with our achievement.

In Term 3 our school performed our original school play, this years theme, 'Animals Reclaim Their Land' and like all the years before it was a sell out! Sadly that was my last ever primary school play.

To rap up it has been a huge year full of opportunities for all. I really believe that this school has helped everyone become respectable students who are prepared for amazing things in the world.

## School Features

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### History of the school

St Joseph's Primary School was founded in 1883 by the St Anne's Catholic Parish Merriwa. In 1885 the Sisters of St Joseph took up residence in Merriwa and assumed responsibility for the education of the children at the school. They were the first Foundation formed from Lochinvar, which had come into existence only two years earlier in 1883. The Sisters of St Joseph continued a teaching presence at the school until the early 1990s.

In 1886, the total enrolment was 77 - 39 girls and 38 boys. On 25th November, 1928, Bishop Dwyer blessed the new school in Marquet Street. In 1954, Bishop Toohey blessed the new infants' classroom and in 1961, blessed the new school building of three classrooms.

Secondary classes operated at St Joseph's Merriwa from the early 1950's to 1968. In 2008 the Honourable Joel Fitzgibbon opened and Fr Des Harrigan blessed the new Kindergarten classroom giving the school a total of four classrooms.

In 2016 the school gained a new library which boasts state of the art facilities. In 2019 the total refurbishment of the student toilet blocks was completed. In 2020, the belltower was lovingly restored after significant damage. In 2021, the new playground shelter was constructed, giving students a safe place to play in all conditions. In 2023, the playground equipment was upgraded.

For over 130 years, St Joseph's Catholic School has provided quality education to the children of the Merriwa district.

### Location/Drawing Area

St Joseph's School is located in the rural township of Merriwa in the New South Wales Upper Hunter Shire Council area. It is the most western school in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. Students travel from within the town limits, as well as from outlying rural properties. The villages of Cassilis to the west, and Gungahlin to the east are served by this school. Although the geographical drawing area dwarfs other Diocesan urban schools, the population within the drawing area is small as is the school enrolment (2023 - 43 students).

Neither the small population nor the 180 odd kilometre distance to our Newcastle based Catholic Schools Office can dampen the St Joseph's School Community's passion for education. St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa is a small school with a big heart! Students at St Joseph's are offered Catholic education from K-12. Students completing Year 6 are able to travel by coach daily to St Joseph's High School Aberdeen.

# Student Profile

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## Student Enrolment

The School caters for students in Years K – 6. Students attending this School come from a variety of backgrounds and nationalities. The following information



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# Staffing Profile

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## Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2023:

Total number of staff	13
Number of full time teaching staff	5
Number of part time teaching staff	3
Number of non-teaching staff	5

### Total number of teaching staff by NESA category

Teachers at this School are either accredited as conditional, provisional or proficient as defined by the NSW Teacher Accreditation Act 2004. Accreditation at the levels of Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher are voluntary. The number of teachers within the Diocesan Schools System (systemic schools) at these levels is as follows:

- Conditional 107 teachers
- Provisional 69
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## Catholic Identity and Mission

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Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle participate, under the leadership of the Bishop and in partnership with parents and parishes, in the mission of the Church to provide quality education in the context of a living Catholic Christian tradition. Within this context, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle educate from and for vibrant, welcoming and diverse communities with a particular commitment to the poor; for justice, integrity and peace; and with hope for the future.:

At the heart of everything there is always Jesus Christ.

Catholic schools educate:

- From and for the community of faith
- From and for excellence in learning
- In a rigorous, creative and critical pursuit of truth

(Adapted from: The Catholic School's Office Diocesan Vision Statement, 2016)

### Catholic Imagination and Spirituality

St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa's mission is to be a community of Catholic faith, where the uniqueness of each child will be nurtured and valued, where students will be empowered and challenged to become lifelong learners with optimism and hope for the future. There were many opportunities for students to celebrate Catholic mission and identity at St Joseph's school. Daily prayer, Opening School Mass, Commissioning Mass, liturgies for St Joseph's Day, Grandparent's Day, Mother's Day and Father's Day, just to name a few. Towards the end of their final primary school year, the Year 6 students participated in a Retreat, where they reflected on their time at the school, and their journey moving forward. Likewise, Year 5 students were involved in a Leadership Day which focused on servant leadership and what this may look like in the community; seeing a need and doing something about it. Wherever possible the school community attends significant parish liturgical celebrations at our local church, St Anne's.

During Friday assembly each week the students reflect on the Sunday Gospel and apply the salient message to their everyday lives, they also take part in a reflection where they have time to think about how the week's lesson may be present in their lives. Parents are invited to share this Liturgy, along with all others, with the students. Staff members also gather for prayer once a week which focuses on the Gospel message and applying this to their

personal and school lives. The staff participated in a Lenten Program to which parish members also attended.

A positive relationship between the school and Parish continues to be a high priority at St Joseph’s school. During Catholic Schools Week students and teachers opened their classrooms and school for the wider community. St Joseph’s participated in a Catholic School’s Week Mass and a school parish dinner was also held during this week. Each fortnight there is an REC section in the newsletter which is emailed out to parents to keep them updated of any changes in our school and parish communities. Social media is also used to build awareness of significant religious events and feast days we celebrate. The school supported the local St Vincent de Paul Society via Vinnies Day in Term 2 and Catholic Mission by Socktober and Mission Day in Term 3. The Parish Priest maintains an active working relationship with the Principal, REC and other members of our school community. The REC works closely with the parish priest and the children preparing for the Sacraments of Initiation.

Christian Discipleship

Prayer and reflection begin all meetings, gatherings and the parent newsletter. In each prayer there is a call to

development on the Religious Education curriculum to gain insightful knowledge about the newly developed modules that have begun being released.



The school's learning support programs, which included MiniLit, Multi Lit, MacqLit and this year, a Mathematics intervention program CAMS and STAMS and assistance with Literacy and Numeracy, provided students with excellent pathways to success.

Whole school approaches to improve student achievement included the use of Learning intentions and Success Criteria in Religion Mathematics, English and other KLAs, which highlighted strengths and areas of improvement for students. This gave students a greater clarity in their learning and allowed staff to refine their teaching skills. 2023 has seen further focus on feedback as well as co-constructed success criteria.

Staff work in two Professional Learning Teams (PLT's), Infants (K-2) and Primary (3-6). These teams are highly collaborative and professional in their diligence and pursuit of high performance throughout the school. The teams worked closely with our Pedagogical Mentor (PM), to achieve strong growth in all areas of the PAT testing regime.

A continuation of the "Leading Learning Collaborative", a CSO initiative based on the work of Lyn Sharratt, Canadian Educational Researcher, was weaved through the Professional Learning of staff. Data Walls have continued to enhance the terrific work being done in this area of school improvement.

Our Performing Arts program was further enhanced this year, with the

# Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

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NAPLAN

Students

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NAPLAN RESULTS 2023		Percentage of students in the top 2 proficiency standards	
		School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	40%	64%
	Reading	70%	74%
	Writing	50%	66%
	Spelling	60%	69%
	Numeracy	50%	68%

## Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing

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### Pastoral Care Policy

The School's pastoral care and student wellbeing policies guidelines and procedures are informed by the [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#).

The Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2022 aims to provide a framework for the policies, programs, resources and practices implemented at system and school level with the purpose of supporting and enhancing the wellbeing of students, and all within its school community. It refers to the overall climate of care that exists within a Catholic school.

The environment is designed to be safe and inclusive, one that promotes academic rigour. A high priority is given to building and maintaining positive and caring relationships between staff, students and parents, and the wellbeing of all.

### Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned the CSO [Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy](#) and to the [Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion Procedure](#). The dignity and responsibility of each person is promoted at all times along with positive student behaviours whilst ensuring respect for the rights of all students and staff. Corporal punishment is expressly prohibited in this School. The School does not sanction administration of corporal punishment by School persons and non-School persons, including parents, to enforce discipline in the School. Further information about this and other related policies may be obtained from the School's website.

### Anti-Bullying Policy

The Catholic Schools Office has established an [Anti-Bullying Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all schools in the diocese. It provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person. The CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the Anti-Bullying Policy may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website.

## Complaints Handling Policy

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has established a [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) which is implemented by our school and all systemic schools in the diocese. The rationale for the policy is that within

In 2023, our Pastoral Care Worker funding continued. Our PCW worked diligently to provide services such as a lunchtime clubs, Gardening Club, breakfast club, young farmers program and provided meaningful and local support for students and families where necessary.

# School Improvement

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The School implements the system's review cycle of improvement which outlines the processes and benchmarks for creating the culture and practice of continuous improvement with students as the focus. Strategic Improvement Plans are future focused documents that map the School's directions, aimed specifically at improving educational and wellbeing outcomes for all students through the following areas:

- Catholic Identity and Catholic Curriculum
- Learning and Wellbeing

Each year, the School develops a Strategic Improvement Plan

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continual classroom practice where it occurs informally during lessons and for both formative and summative assessments.

### Priority Key Improvements for Next Year

#### Catholic Formation and Mission

The improvement of the overall teaching of Religion

All staff working towards gaining accreditation, as per the Catholic Schools Office Faith Education Accreditation (FEA) Policy

The continuation of a more rigid environmental awareness through the document, Laudato Si with support from our Pastoral Care Worker.

#### Learning and Teaching

- Targeted Mathematics groups- the instruction questions to develop a greater depth and understanding of a concept.
- Infants- focus Quantifying number and Additive strategies
- Primary- Quantifying number, Additive strategy, Multiplicative strategies
- Professional Learning for all staff and utilising knowledgeable others and sharing resources and knowledge from other schools.
- To diminish cognitive load, creative repetitive, sustainable practices and match them to resources.

#### Leadership

To continue to enhance the quality of the Principal and REC and their leadership capacity.

Continuation of Mentoring and Observation of teachers throughout the school, including Instructional Walks and Talks, to enhance leadership capacity and build teacher capacity.

#### Wellbeing and Partnerships

Continue to enhance, review, and implement the PB4L program throughout St Joseph's.

Visible Wellbeing Professional Learning for all staff – through engagement with Annabelle Knight- Canvass strengths.

# Community Satisfaction

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Consultation with parents, students and teachers is valued and sought. Their feedback contributes to the planning and the achievement of improved outcomes for students. This year, the School has used a variety of processes to gain information about the level of satisfaction with the School from parents, students and teachers. The school undertakes extensive surveying of all stakeholder groups annually. This data is shared with the school community and contributes to the priorities for future planning.

## Parent satisfaction

Enrolments for Kinder 2024 has risen from 4 in 2023 to 16 in 2024

### The Tell Them From Me Survey

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## Teacher satisfaction

- According to the Tell Them From Me Survey for Teachers in 2022:
- Teachers felt well supported in challenging times (10/10)
- Staff felt as though they collaborated well with each other (8.3/10)
- Student engagement and work were discussed regularly (9.2/10)
- Staff felt that they worked well with students with special learning needs
- Staff felt they have clear expectations for classroom behaviour
- Teachers wish to continue to improve their skills in engaging with feedback at the school.
- All teachers felt that leadership was strong and effective, as well as their belief that the school was highly regarded in the local Merriwa community.
- Over the last 2 years there has been 100% turnover of teaching staff. All teachers are remaining at the school for 2024.



## Financial Statement

This School Financial Information is based on the detailed information provided to the Commonwealth Government in the Commonwealth Financial Questionnaire.

School Financial Information for the 2023 year is detailed below:

Recurrent and Capital Income 2023	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants <sup>1</sup>	\$1,250,277
Government Capital Grants <sup>2</sup>	\$0
State Recurrent Grants <sup>3</sup>	\$351,419
Fees and Private Income <sup>4</sup>	\$107,044
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$4,933
Other Capital Income <sup>5</sup>	\$33,650
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,747,323</b>

Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2023	
Capital Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$187
Salaries and Related Expenses <sup>7</sup>	\$1,160,473
Non-Salary Expenses <sup>8</sup>	\$630,841
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$1,791,501</b>

### Notes

1. Commonwealth Recurrent Grants includes recurrent per capita grants and special purpose grants.
2. Government Capital Grants includes all capital grants received from the Commonwealth and State Governments.
3. State Recurrent Grants includes recurrent grants per capita, special purpose grants and interest subsidy grants.
4. Fees and Private Income include Archdiocesan and school based fees, excursions and other private income.
5. Other Capital Income includes building levy fees and capital donations used to fund Capital Expenditure.
6. Capital Expenditure includes expenditure on School Buildings, and Furniture and Equipment.
7. Salaries and Related Expenditure includes all salaries, allowances and related
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