Dear Parents,

The provision of education in the Early Years offers critical learning opportunities for students enrolled in the Preparatory Year. Children develop rapidly during this time – physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually.

At this stage of their lives we must recognise that we are working with the immediate moment of interest for each individual student, moving from the known to the unknown and that children working together share in their own discussions and support learning from each other. Children’s early learning develops through opportunities for interaction with quality environments and people around them.

It is important that we recognise that we all live within a world that is always growing and learning, and that the growth of the individual and the school community are explicitly bound together.

I express my deep gratitude to all who have contributed to this Handbook and to the successful implementation of the Preparatory Year in schools in the Diocese of Toowoomba.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

Matthew 18: 1-7

John Borserio
Director
WHAT IS PREP?

“Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I will understand”

From 2007, the full-time Preparatory Year replaced the preschool program in schools. From 2007, all Queensland children of eligible age may attend a full-time Preparatory Year of education before starting Year 1. The Preparatory Year is non-compulsory and is available at all Catholic primary schools in the Toowoomba Diocese. It has become the first year in the Early Phase of Learning, which includes Prep to Year 3.

Children need to be five by 30 June in the year they enrol in Prep.

From 2008 the starting age of compulsory schooling increased by six months so that children must turn six by 30 June in the year they enrol in Year 1. This means that Queensland children start school at about the same age as children in other states.

Differences to Preschool:

- Prep is a full time program that runs five days per week. Children are expected to attend full time to get the most from Prep. Any variation to attendance should be discussed with the principal.
- Children are six months older - children must turn five by 30 June in the year they enrol in Prep.
- Learning is built around five contexts for learning:
  - Focused Learning and Teaching
  - Investigations
  - Routines and Transitions
  - Real life situations
  - Negotiated Play/ Projects
- Assessment is built around learning statements, folios and the Early Learning Record.
- Teacher Aide time is reduced.

Religious Education in Prep

In Prep children will be introduced to the two dimensions of Religious Education; namely the classroom teaching of religion and the religious life of the school. The focus of the classroom teaching of religion is educational as it aims to develop children’s religious literacy. The school’s RE program focuses on developing understandings, capabilities and dispositions related to the four strands - Scripture, Beliefs, Celebration and Prayer and Morality. Early Religious Understandings are integrated throughout all the early learning areas, and takes place in all five contexts of learning. Children will also experience the religious life of the school through the expressions of its lived Catholic ethos and values, and its religious celebrations and prayers.
The Prep curriculum changed in 2012. Prep students follow the Australian Curriculum and are taught in conjunction with the Early Years Curriculum Learning Areas of Social and Personal Learning, Health and Physical Learning and Active Learning Processes.

The Early Years Curriculum Guidelines clearly identify play-inquiry based, child-centred learning and investigations as key elements.

The Toowoomba Catholic Diocese identifies a sixth Key Learning Area which is Early Religious Understandings.

What Activities Will Children Do in a Prep Program?

Each day at Prep children will be:

- actively making choices about what and how they learn
- investigating and learning how to inquire about their interests
- planning collaboratively with the teacher
- participating in music and language experiences
- investigating and playing independently, in pairs, small groups and as a class
- participating in dramatic play to build an understanding of themselves and the world around them
- drawing, constructing, collaging and painting to encourage oral language, thinking and designing, and reading and writing skills
- constructing, classifying, sorting, using blocks and creating collages to develop early mathematical concepts and skills
- using tools and technology to support their investigations and play
- communicating and socialising with adults and other children in order to develop socially appropriate behaviours, language, problem solving and self help skills
- developing foundational phonological and phonemic awareness skills as well as emergent literacy and numeracy

Assessing Prep Children

Each prep child will be issued with a report card at the end of each semester. The report card will contain a summary of your child’s progress. They will be marked using a five-point scale: Becoming Aware (BA), Exploring (EX), Working With (WW), Making Connections (MC) and Applying (AP). A portfolio will be sent home at the end of each term. This portfolio will contain work samples and assessment checklists.
ENROLMENTS

The legislation states that from 2008:

*All Queensland children will be eligible to attend a full-time Preparatory Year if they attain the age of 5 years by 30 June in the year they propose to attend Prep.*

*All Queensland children will be eligible to attend Year 1 if they attain the age of 6 years by 30 June in the year they propose to attend Year 1.*

From 2008, parents have an obligation under the education legislation to ensure their child is enrolled in school once their child turns the compulsory school age. Typically, children turn the compulsory school age, being 6 years 6 months, during year one.

**Repeating the Preparatory Year**

Repeating the preparatory year is an option for children who, it is considered, would benefit educationally and developmentally from participation in a second year of preparatory education. The decision to repeat a child in the preparatory year is made following consideration of evidence of the child's attributes: aptitude and ability, social and emotional competence and physical development gathered during the preparatory year. Decisions are made by the Special Needs Committee in consultation with parents/carers, preparatory year teachers, the principal and other relevant professionals.

Enrolment in the preparatory year of a child turning the compulsory school age, or who is already the compulsory school age is deemed to comply with compulsory schooling requirements. An **exemption** from compulsory schooling requirements is **not required**.

**Special Needs Enrolment**

A full-time Prep Year will be offered to children with disabilities. The current provision of support for Prep children with disabilities will apply to students participating in the Prep class. In this case an application for enrolment of a child with an identified Special Need or where it is clear that an ascertainment process will be required, schools will follow their Special Needs enrolment process.

**Children in Care of the State**

Children in care of the state will have an Education Support Plan between the school and the Child Safety Officer from the Department of Child Safety. This will be developed within one month of enrolment.

**Indigenous Students**

Indigenous students are entitled to an IEP (Individual Education Program).
FUNDING AND COSTS

Non-government schools receive recurrent funding from both state and federal governments. Prep students are funded at the same rate as all primary students in the school. Students who are not of the correct age (unless enrolled under special consideration) will not be funded.

Fees
The Catholic Education Office recommends that Prep Year fees are incorporated into the fee structure and charged at the same rate as all primary students.

(**Please see fee structure overview on separate hand out for further details**)

Prep Levy
Prep Parents are required to pay an additional $100 levy per child. This money is put towards:

- **Durables**: Replacement & upgrading of resources - puzzles, games, furniture and equipment.
- **Consumables**: Cooking ingredients, paint, paper, brushes, felt pens, cellophane, cardboard, crepe paper, glue, collage materials, etc.

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

Hours of Operation

The Prep day is the equivalent of a full school day. Hours are 8:35am - 3:00pm.

The Prep room will be open from 8:35am. If your child arrives before this, they must sit in the undercover area until this time. Supervision in the morning begins at 8:20am. No responsibility will be taken for any child before this time.

Students are expected to attend five days per week and for the full length of the school day. The Prep Curriculum is designed for a five days per week program. Therefore parents and carers should be encouraged to have students attend the full five days to gain full benefit from the program. However in exceptional circumstances, schools may negotiate with parents/carers regarding variations of attendance.

Class Size

The age of children, composition of the class and hands-on nature of the inquiry/play-based Prep Curriculum, as well as the needs of the children, is taken into consideration when determining class sizes for the Prep Year.
Teacher Aide

The Prep Teacher Aide allocation is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children in Class</th>
<th>Number of Teacher Aide Hours per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25+</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Drop Off and Pick Up

The Prep class roll will be marked every morning in class at 9:00am. Late arrivals/Unexplained absences/Early departures are also marked on this legal attendance record. Children will only be released at the end of the day to parents or guardians specified by parents. Prep children will not be released to siblings or anyone under the age of 18 years of age. They are not permitted to walk or ride home by themselves.

Punctuality and Absentees

It is very important that arrivals and departures from Prep are punctual. Children may miss out on important instructions, routines or events if late. They also tend to become worried if parents are late in the afternoon. Please inform the school if you will be late to avoid these concerns. A phone call to the office would be appreciated. The Absentee Hotline is (07) 46712 063. Please let your child’s teacher know in writing/phone call/email if they are going to be away or if they have been away unexpectedly, please write a letter explaining why they were away. This is a school rule and all absentee notes go into your child’s school file.

School Uniform

As Prep is active, St Mary’s has opted for Prep students to be dressed in the schools sports uniform each day, with the exception that Prep girls will wear shorts rather than skirts. In the interest of the Sun Safety policy, students will be required to wear the school hat during all outside play times. An 8cm brim is mandatory. The “No Hat - No Play” rule will apply. Our St Mary’s school uniform is set by our School Board. Adaptations or alterations to this uniform will not be tolerated or accepted. The exact St Mary’s school uniform must be worn at all times. Jewellery in the form of rings, bracelets, bangles and necklaces are not to be worn to school. Where girls have pierced ears, only studs should be worn. Boys are not permitted to wear earrings. Only blue clips, headbands and/or ribbons may be worn by girls in their hair.
Tuckshop and Food at Prep

We have a tuckshop that operates each day for both first and second break. At first break we promote the eating of the more substantial foods, such as sandwiches, salads, wraps etc. as well as fruit and water. In both the Tuckshop and home packed meals we promote healthy eating and foods such as chips, lollies and roll-ups are not encouraged. Tuckshop orders are to be taken to the Tuckshop in the morning. Our Tuckshop operates on a cash or online ordering system (*Please see the Parent Handbook for further details*). This means you may send money in with each order, or you can order and pay online. Janelle Faulkner is our Tuckshop Convener. If you can help out in the tuckshop for a day or two, please see Janelle as your help would be greatly appreciated.

We have a class ‘Brain Break’ each day at around 9:30am. The children are permitted to eat a piece of fruit or vegetable during this break.

Bus and Transport Assistance

There are several buses that operate both before and after school (see bus list at end of booklet). Students who are eligible under current transport guidelines may make an application for travel assistance during the Prep Year. If your child is to take the bus they are required to have a bus tag and be marked on a roll, all which you can do at the front office.

Parent Volunteers

Partnerships with parents are important in the Prep Year. As parents are seen as valuable participants in the learning program, strategies to actively encourage parents to participate in the program are explored. These may include parents supporting small group sessions, contributing expertise or resources to the program, supporting real life experiences and excursions, and/or reading to children. All volunteers at a school require a Working With Children check (Blue Card), except for those who are parents of children currently enrolled at the school. “Parent” includes those who have responsibility for the child.
Participation in Extra Curricular Activities

St Mary’s provides a swimming program which gives consideration to the age of the students, their level of competence and the requirement to ensure adequate duty of care. Students participate in the swimming program in Term 1 and Term 4. Each prep class has a 45 minute lesson which is conducted by 3 qualified Aus Swim instructors and will cover the following areas:

- Water Awareness
- Water Safety Skills including Level 1 and 2 Survival Drills
- Beginner Freestyle and an introduction to Backstroke

Prep children participate in experiences such as the Eisteddfod, Prayer Assemblies, Moonlight Carnival and Under 8’s Day.

Excursions

Real life experiences are an important context for learning in Prep. These may involve Prep children going to another site for an excursion.

OTHER INFORMATION

Taking Photos

For educational and school purposes we take photos of your child. Such photos will be used for portfolios, displays, newsletters, presentations, awards nights, assembly, promotional items such as school brochures, newspaper articles, etc. These photos will be taken and used with the utmost respect and dignity to the child/ren and will only be used for these purposes.

Applying Sunscreen

The Teachers will help your child apply sunscreen before swimming lessons. However, on a day-to-day basis, it is the parent’s responsibility to apply sunscreen before Prep. If your child has sensitive skin, please inform the classroom teacher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUS ROUTE</th>
<th>BUS NO.</th>
<th>BUS ID</th>
<th>COLOUR</th>
<th>BUS OWNER</th>
<th>PHONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gooray (Talwood)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GRY 1</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Troy McGowan</td>
<td>0488233136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GDR 2</td>
<td>Purple</td>
<td>Dick Cairns</td>
<td>0746713181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yagaburne (Millmerran)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>YAG 3</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Cate Williams</td>
<td>0428102542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billa Billa</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>BIL 4</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Anne &amp; Ray Allen</td>
<td>074671299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelarbon (Cunningham Hwy)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>YEL 5</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Greg Driver</td>
<td>0428718869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildona (n)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>KIL 6</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Ray Woods</td>
<td>0429386742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toomelah (Bruxner Hwy)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>TOO 7</td>
<td>Red</td>
<td>John Taylor</td>
<td>0427329773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>BOO 8</td>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>Georgie Driver</td>
<td>0428456497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osterley</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>OST 9</td>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Todd Johnson (owner)</td>
<td>0419295106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Run (1st &amp; 2nd Round)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>TOW 10</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Ian Benson</td>
<td>0439770056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenoak Road</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>GLE 11</td>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>Ros Barr</td>
<td>0498113098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Childcare George Street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0746712233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolibah Childcare Lamberth Road</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0746713111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDENTS IN PREP, YEAR 1 & YEAR 2 WILL BE ISSUED WITH A COLOURED BUS TAG WHICH IS ATTACHED TO SCHOOL BAGS. THESE TAGS DISPLAY THE BUS NAME AND NUMBER FOR EASY REFERENCE WHEN THESE STUDENTS ARE USING THE BUS. PLEASE SEE SCHOOL OFFICE.
St Mary’s Sports House Information

Coloured Sports shirts are available at clothing Shops in Goondiwindi

Please purchase LW REID BRAND

In the following colours according to your child’s team:

- Coolock – GOLD
- MacKillop – RED
- McAuley – KELLY GREEN
- Loretto – NAVY

Please ensure that you ask specifically for the colours noted above.

These shirts will not need the school logo on them as they are for internal school carnivals only and for sports day which is Friday’s.

Remember the current sky blue sport shirt with logo is still required.

You will be advised in the first week of each term on which day these blue sports shirts are to be worn.