

St Mary's Catholic School

58 Main Highway, Ellerslie, Auckland

Principal Mrs Saira Boyle



Issue #16 | 6 December 2017

We provide a Catholic education for the whole child



Welcome to Advent

Christmas Concert 2017

It is almost that time of the year where we bring a picnic blanket, some food and get cosy on the field to watch our talented St Mary's students perform for the annual Christmas Concert. This year the concert is on Thursday 14 December at 6.30pm, please make sure your child is at school and in their classroom at 6pm.

The children have already recorded their class songs with the recording equipment, ready for the big evening, and they are very excited to perform for the concert! Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Parking

Please remember, as in all years, parking at school is limited. The car park and courts will be available. We have also requested Ellerslie Racecourse support with parking. However, the entrance off Morrin St is currently closed as the owner is bringing down the old brick wall and replacing this. He has not said when this will be done so at the moment this entrance is closed. So, if it is open come next Wednesday or Thursday then our guests can go through this entrance and park to the left alongside the wall that is facing Morrin Street (behind TopDogs).

If the entrance is closed, then the best thing would be to go through the entrance off Mitchelson Street, then drive through the racecourse and park up against the wall/area facing towards Morrin Street (again behind TopDogs). It will mean a walk if Morrin St entrance is closed. Our guests cannot park in the main racecourse carpark as this is a pay and display, unless you want to pay and display. Please be patient with one another and our staff around this matter and give yourself enough time to park and walk.

We will try to have some car park wardens or volunteers to ensure that the school grounds parking is managed properly and once again be mindful that at all schools parking is always an issue for big events, especially at this time of the year.



Principal's Post

Nau mai haere mai – Greetings – Tena Koutou – Kamusta – Malo e Lelei – Talofa Lava – Namaste – Ni Hao – Hallo – Kia Orana – Bula – Fakaalofa Atu

Dear Parents and Whanau, Kia Ora!

The season of Advent is a most exciting and holy time as we await the coming of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. The real meaning of this time is often lost in the commercial build up to Christmas these days. As a school we remind ourselves, the children and our community that this is a time of contemplation, self-reflection and action to help us live more like Jesus. At school, there are a couple of things that have been on top for us recently in terms of contemplation around the safety of our children.

Parish

The Sacramental course commences on Sunday 11th February 2018 with Lisa Moor as facilitator after the 9am mass (venue to be confirmed before the commencement date).

Children must be 9 years of age or older as at the 31st January 2018. If you wish to enrol your child for the programme, please email icparishellerslie@gmail.com (attention to Lourdes Domilies) for the enrolment form. Forms can also be downloaded from the parish website www.ellersliecatholic.org.nz.

Enrolments close 31 January 2018. No late enrolments accepted.



Zone Athletics

The Year 5 & 6 Zone Athletics representatives preformed outstandingly at Mt Smart Stadium on Tuesday 28 November. The team competed with zeal, achieving very impressive results. Congratulations to you all for your participation and results on the day.

- The Year 5 Girls Relay team, Julia Taldan, Kiera Martin, Te Aria Nathan & Anna Wilkinson, made the finals.
- Fraser Donaldson made the final of the 60m, 100m and 200m sprints.
- Anna Wilkinson made the final of the 60m, 100m and 200m sprints.
- Kaleb Rawiri made the final of the 60m and 200m sprints.
- Brooke Blakey made the final of the 60m sprints.

Zone Results:

Kaleb Rawiri came 2nd in the 800m final, this was a photo finish and he was 2nd in the 200m final.

Anna Wilkinson came 4th in the 60m final, 3rd in the 100m final, 2nd in the long jump, 3rd in the high jump.

Fraser Donaldson came 4th in the high jump, 4th in the 100m final, 3rd in the long jump.

Congratulations to this year's formidable St Mary's Athletics team. As a team you did St Mary's proud and we look forward to following your sporting careers.

Gospel Reflection

Taking your children to Mass, especially on Sunday is a rich and faith nurturing activity for families. It is a special time to support your child's faith development and nourish your own spirituality. When children are of primary school age it is something they are more willing to do and this is a great time to connect.

1st Sunday in Advent - 3 December 2017 The Holy Gospel according to Mark 13:33-37

*"You do not know the hour when the master of the house will come."
(Mark 13:35)*

A few years ago, a six year old, once said, "You know, God is a part of every family."

Children often express practical theological statements from their simple but wise view of the world and some often have a comforting understanding about spirituality and talk about God, asking us if we know that they come from God.

Families – all of us – don't need to "put God" into our lives, because God is already there. It is not our job to pray and do good works so God will come and be with us, so God will love us. God already loves us totally, unconditionally. God is already here; we just need to take the time to become more aware. Sometimes that is hard to do because we live such busy lives.

Our job is to slow down and become aware that "you know, God is a part of every family; every life." If we live with this realisation, we won't need to be concerned with the admonition in today's Gospel. We will be awake and ready.

As this Advent begins, start or deepen a specific prayer ritual, an intentional time for prayer, during your day. This designated time, and a particular type of prayer you enjoy, can set the atmosphere for your day: recognising all the ways God is with you.

Principal's Post continued

I am part of a principal forum and there was some recent discussion around how tricky it can be to ensure students have a hat, bring them to school and wear them. I was interested in this discussion as we are being challenged with the same issue at the moment. Some schools have started to give up and let it be a choice. Then once Principal told a story that touched my heart and made me realise how important this issue is and how we must work together to ensure our children arrive at school wearing a hat, wear it whenever they are outdoors and leave school wearing a hat.

The story he told was that a young, beautiful, vibrant teacher in her 20s worked at his school and one day discovered a mole, which was diagnosed as a melanoma. She had surgery to have this removed and for a year or so continued her career. She then left to travel overseas and returned to visit the school. Her message on return was a sad one. Her cancer had returned. There was no hope. Within a few months this beautiful, young woman was gone. She asked her Principal to always ensure that the community and the students understood the dangers of childhood exposure to the sun. Children are not old enough or wise enough to make these choices for themselves. Yet, 80 percent of damage to skin from the sun takes place during childhood.

Therefore, is it our responsibility to ensure, if we know something is a danger, to protect our children from this. Monitoring, managing and ensuring children wear hats in school is a really hard job for teachers and leaders. We need your support. We need you to back us up and ensure your child wears their hat coming to school, and walking home from school. We need to build a culture in our school and our community of sun safe ACTION.

After hearing the message from the Principal, it made me realise that whilst sometimes it is the easy option to let things go, ignore things and not fight the good fight, in the long term this is not reaching for excellence!

From 2018 all children will be expected to wear a school hat to and from school. All children will be expected to wear a hat at any time they are outdoors. If they do not have a hat we will contact home for your support and they will not be able to play outside in the sun. This is not because we like rules and consequences. This is because we love our students, we know the sun is dangerous and we care.

Caring about our students has also resulted in tightening up in our end of day procedures. Again, this is a matter of health and safety. Over the last few months I have been dealing with an array of issues which have occurred around end of day 'bell time'. These matters range from unsavoury strangers around the area, children physically fighting with one another, lost children, children wandering around the school and holding up the flow of traffic and some near misses with children almost being hit by cars, just to mention a few. We ask you to be patient with us while we try to find the best solution to ensure our pick-up time is safe and smooth flowing, whilst also ensuring our legal obligations as a school to ensure children are accounted for, are being met.

Our bell rings at 2.45pm to signal the end of the day. We have asked all teachers to release the children who are escorted to the bus, to leave first and meet the duty teacher at the allocated point. Teachers will then escort ALL children in their classes to the front of the school. Children will be seated.

Then, the duty teacher will call for children who walk home, then children at the back gate, then children at after school care, then Walking School Bus children to be released. We will then continue to call out the names of children who are being picked up by a car. Our official end of day is 2.50pm.

If you are waiting to walk your child(ren) home please wait by the front of the school / grotto / playground area.

Please try to understand that in all decisions we make, in all actions we take, we truly do have the best interests and safety of our students at the heart. We are also sometimes required to make decisions or establish procedures for the common good.

Yours in God's Love

Saira Boyle, Principal

Help Needed - Road Patrol

The 2018 Year 6 children are being trained by Constable Cyrus to be a member of the school patrol team at St Mary's. This is a very responsible job and the children are not allowed to do this duty without adult supervision.

We need parent volunteers to help with this supervision, as it is a difficult time for the teachers to be out of their classrooms, especially in the morning. If you have a child who is a Year 6 Road Patroller you will be rostered on with him/her, but any school parents able to help with this important job would be very much appreciated (thanks to the three who have already volunteered).

Morning duty is 8.25-8.50am

Afternoon duty is 2.45-3.05pm

If you are available to help out in any way at all, please contact Mary Bowden on Mary@stmary.school.nz

Key dates

6 December	Leavers' Mass 6.30pm
7 December	PTA Mini-market 2pm* BOT Meeting 6pm
8 December	Whole School Assembly* (Rm3 Lead)
14 December	Christmas Concert*
15 December	PTA and Community Helpers Afternoon Tea 3.30pm
20 December	Last day of term, 1.30pm finish

* all welcome to attend

Special Catholic Character from the Director of Religious Studies

"Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are God my Saviour; for You I wait all the day long." Psalm 25:5

On Wednesday 22nd November, we were fortunate enough to be visited by Bishop Pat Dunn. We all gathered in the Sustainable Garden area for shared prayer and then Bishop Pat blessed the gardens – and the chickens! The children responsible for helping create our beautiful Mo Maria painting with Pepe Gaka, then followed the Bishop around to the front of the Father Walter McDonald Block where Bishop Pat blessed Mo Maria also. The children were all very excited to meet the Bishop, (although I believe a couple of the junior students were expecting "the Pope!") and he looked amazing, all decked out in his stunning pink vestments. Check out the pictures on Facebook.

On Wednesday evening, our Year 3-6 students are attending the Leavers' Mass at Sacred Heart College chapel. This is a beautiful mass in which our Year 6 students are farewelled and it rarely fails to bring tears to the eyes of all of our teachers and parents, alike. While it is compulsory for the senior students of our school, younger students are also welcome to attend but can remain sitting with their parents. The older students must come in uniform (including sandals) and sit with their teachers. Year 3-6 meet at the Chapel entrance between 5.45pm and 6pm.

We are almost at the end of the school, (and calendar) year now which means we are entering into the most joyous of seasons in our Liturgical year – Advent. Advent means "Waiting for the Coming" and signals the start of the new year for the Church. Four Sundays before Christmas is always the first Sunday of Advent. On this Sunday, the first purple candle, 'Hope' is lit. On each following Sunday, another candle is lit – 'Joy', 'Peace', (the only pink candle) then 'Love' and finally on Christmas Day – the white 'Jesus' candle. As part of the current Religious Education programme, many of the children are learning about the Advent Wreath, so make sure you ask them about this. The children are now into the Liturgical Year modules of 'Advent' and then shortly 'Christmas'.

As part of the Advent season, the senior children are also now preparing for the Rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which is taking place on Wednesday 6th December. We are all encouraged during this period of "waiting" and "preparation" for the birthday of Christ, that we too, should make ourselves ready by attending one of the Rite II Reconciliation, (community reconciliation) liturgies that are taking place in our parishes at this time. Our Parish of the Immaculate Conception is holding theirs on 13th December at 7pm.

God's blessings with you always.

Rachael Hill
Director of Religious Studies



Classes for 2018

The teachers and Senior Leadership Team are currently working on the class lists for 2018. We are thinking about the 'best fit for your child', by taking into consideration friendship combinations, teachers and your child's abilities and passions. If you have any concerns which you have not voiced yet, please let the SLT know. The class lists will be made available at the end of this term.

Wellbeing

Wow! What a busy term of Wellbeing we have had at St Mary's.

At St Mary's School we believe that the art of looking after one's self or caring about your own wellbeing is a jigsaw of learnt habits. Teaching is an extremely demanding profession and it is vital that teachers take some time for themselves during each working day. To help develop these new habits we have started a programme to support our teachers. This has been a lot of fun and feedback from teachers has been great!

You may have noticed that we have been encouraging our teachers to wear active wear on Wednesdays to promote movement and PE within our classes. We will be extending this to our students next year with the children having the option of wearing school PE uniform on Wednesdays.

Our school environment is looking fantastic and we are very lucky to have new markings on our playground that are extremely popular with the children – a huge thanks to the Lions Club.

The playground and playing areas will continue to be developed over next year. The children have been enjoying skipping to music and dancing in the playground during break times – it's great to see all year levels getting involved and all wearing their sun hats!

The staff and Student Wellbeing survey is almost complete, we will be looking at the data over the holidays and will be beginning to actively plan and improve the way St Mary's includes all its students.

Don't forget to check out Twitter to see what's happening for student wellbeing.

Parent connections P is for parent involvement

Research shows that students with parents who are involved in their education have higher achievement. You can get involved in your child's education by:

- reading with your child each night. Regular reading improves many skills. It reinforces that reading is a valuable and pleasurable activity
- Volunteering at school. Call your child's teacher for ideas about how you can help at school or from home
- Attending school activities. Be your child's number one fan!



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From your PTA *Fun and social, caring and capable!*

Santa Parade - Sunday 3 December

A big thank you to Rebecca Schollum and her team of wonderful helpers that put a lot of hard work into organising our St Mary's group for the Santa Parade. Over 60 children were involved and we also want to thank all the parents that came out and helped as well. A very hot but fun day.

Raffles Co-ordinator

Our lovely Raffle Co-ordinator (Lana Bennett) is stepping down at the end of this year (2017) and we are keen to find someone to co-ordinate this in 2018. If we don't get any volunteers then we will need to put the raffles on hold.

The Raffles take place at the end of each term and require volunteers to help sell tickets (before school) and organise the prizes to go as part of the raffles. For more information about what it entails, contact Lana on email: lanabennett@me.com or on 0210 242 5005.

Mini-market, Thursday 7 December 2-4pm

We have some lovely handmade items leftover from the Christmas Craft Market that would make ideal gifts, as well as lots of pocket money treats. So give your kids some chores and let them earn their spending money!

Students will be let out of class at 2.15pm to shop at the market. Parents and families are welcome, so come along early if you can. If not, the mini-market will be open until about 4.00pm.

This gives us a chance to add to the \$24,000 already raised from the recent Christmas Craft Market. We will be sure to keep you up to date on how this money is spent in partnership with the school.

Thank you once again for all your support during this term. We wish you and your families a very safe and blessed Christmas and Happy New Year.

St Mary's PTA

Sustainable Learning Environment

It has been a busy few weeks in our sustainable area, with a sick chicken who has been hand fed and cared for by Miss Maginley.

Our garden is looking green and plush with growth. We are slowly receiving produce from our garden with peas, strawberries, lettuce and much more on its way. Eggs and produce are currently purchased at reception when they are ready to be eaten, the free-range eggs are especially delicious.

The trees for survival have now all been planted into their own bags and are growing at a speedy rate, we are excited to go out into the community and plant these to create a bush area next year!

Thank you to the Shearer family who will be babysitting the chickens over the Summer holiday period.

Inquiry Concept Planning for 2018

Our Inquiry Team recently met to discuss our theme for next year. Inquiry planning at St Mary's is a vital part of our school curriculum as it helps students to learn how to inquire into new topics and develops critical thinking skills, as well as giving opportunity for forward-thinking, researching and questioning.

The planning begins with a main theme that everyone will follow for the school year, next year the theme will be 'Collaboration'. We then integrate an overarching religious understanding which is then linked to a Maori whakatauki and will drive our inquiry. The beginning of the school year always starts with a focus on Ako (reciprocal learning), which allows discussion around the topics of, "how do I learn best?", "What makes a good learner?", "Who can help me learn best?" etc. This ensures that we are re-focussed after the summer break and are ready to learn to our top potential!

From there we look at two sub-themes that can be explored in more detail throughout the year in classrooms, linked closely to 'Collaboration'. We are excited at all of the possible outcomes that we will see as a result from this inquiry planning for next year.

A Thank you to all our Parent Helpers

Dear Walking School Bus Coordinators, Road Patrol Helpers, PTA members and all our other wonderful parent community who have supported our school so generously with your time. The staff of St Mary's Catholic School invites you all to share a drink and nibbles after school on Friday 15th December at 3.30pm. This is our way of saying a big thank you for all of your help and support this year.

Please RSVP to: Kate Rogers adminaccounts@stmary.school.nz.

BYOD Safety Advice

Bring your own device (BYOD) will be optional in 2018 for Year 3 upwards with Chromebook being the preferred device. With Christmas fast approaching, it is often the time parents buy new devices. Netsafe has teamed up with CERT NZ to create some handy tips for buying devices, and helping kids get a safe start. <https://www.netsafe.org.nz/byod/>