

Wednesday 11 November, 2020

ST. MARY MACKILLOP PRIMARY SCHOOL

152 Odessa Avenue Keilor Downs, Vic 3038 www.mmkeilordowns.catholic.edu.au T: 03 9367 6199



Staying Connected... No. 24

Dear Community,

I begin by saying how absolutely proud I am of your children. They have settled back into school routine so well and in the main, appear calm and settled. As I wander around the school, I see children engaged in their learning and very happy to be back at school.

My pride extends towards our teachers and staff who have worked tirelessly during Covid lockdown and now are working with commitment and dedication to make sure all children feel safe and in turn ready to learn. There is no doubt we have a wonderful school community.

And of course, you the parents. No matter how much you love your kids and may have enjoyed having them home with you all those months, the reality is, they need to be back at school and you need your space. Of that, I am certain!

We move into the final five weeks of our school term with a spirit of optimism and gratitude that Covid infections in our state are at zero and have been for eleven days now. However, despite this great news, we need to be ever vigilant so as to avoid another wave of Covid in our great state of Victoria.

We continue to commit our school, community, city and state to the care of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Mary MacKillop. As St. Mary MacKillop wrote on 11.11.1880, *"We can do nothing without God"*. However, a lesson that was taught to me as a child and will always remain with me was, *'God helps those who help themselves'*, so we must continue to keep safe and do our bit!

SMMPS... a COVID SAFE SCHOOL.

We know that Covid could easily sneak into our community. However, we are doing our best to keep SMMPS Covid safe. You will find our Covid Safe Plan on our website.

There are a number of strategies we have put in place that I remind you of and draw your attention to. I would imagine these strategies might remain in place well into 2021 and beyond.

1. **We are in the process of removing all 'bubblers'; the drinking taps children often put their mouth over.** We are replacing them with push button type taps from which children can refill their drink bottles. It is imperative that all children have a drink bottle with their name clearly labelled on it. I believe that the children are okay if they have a drink before they go outside and another drink on returning to their classroom. However, as the weather warms up, they may choose to take their drink bottle outside, so they can have a drink during break and get refills if needed. We will supply crates around the school grounds for children to store their bottles during breaks if they wish.
2. **The ban on additional adults onsite will remain.** Only those adults visiting for essential purposes will be permitted on site. This includes parents. I am not being exclusive. I am simply following government advice that states that, where we have a number of people gathering, we increase risk of transmission. Parents are always welcome to email their child's class teacher or call the school if they have a query. Teachers are also telling me that they are having a much more relational and productive time with their children before school. The teachers are able to spend time engaging with the children and have observed them becoming much more independent as they wander into their classroom on their own, unpack their bags and settle into their day, without an adult organising them. The children are growing in confidence, self-esteem and resilience. This is so for the Preps also. It is great to see!
3. While **restrictions** may be changing day by day, we are not in a position to organise additional activities on short notice. I am sure you will understand. For example, at this time we are not permitted to gather in large numbers, so we cannot have our Annual Twilight Christmas Carols. Even if this restriction changes, which I don't think it will, it is too late to organise such an event. This fact may be relevant for a number of activities, such as camps and excursions.

I will make an exception for the Year 6 class. They have missed out on their final year of activities which celebrate their completion of primary schooling. I have sought and gained permission to take the Year 6 class on an excursion on the last Monday of the school year. It's the least we can do for these children in Year 6. There will be plenty of opportunities for the children in Prep-Year 5 in the coming years.

4. **Prep 2021 Transition.** This has been difficult to organise, as the rules keep changing. However, we have decided to have the first full week of Term One, 2021, as a transition week for the children in Prep. In this week:
- a. The children will engage in a variety of activities with each of the Prep teachers and a number of Learning Support staff. We hope to familiarize the children with school routines.
 - b. We will take the opportunity to observe the children in the classroom, interacting with their peers and then group them appropriately.

Therefore:

- **Prep 2021 Transition week: Monday 1 February 2021- Friday 5 February 2021.**
- **The Prep children will come to school from 9:00am – 12:30pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.**
- **Week 2: Monday 8 February- Friday 12 February 2021, Prep children will attend a full day Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday through until Tuesday 9 March 2021, when they will attend a full week (Monday 8 March is Labour Day Public Holiday).**

We have put these plans into place so as to try and continue to keep our school Covid Safe. We are trying to avoid a large number of parents onsite, this year, with their little children about to begin the adventure of schooling. We are simply hoping that next year, we will have a clearer idea of what is possible and permitted to continue keeping our school Covid Safe.

GRADUATION

We are now permitted to have a Year 6 Graduation Ceremony in our Church. Unfortunately, parents are not permitted. This fact is absolutely beyond my control. SMMPS is obliged to and is committed to following Government directives. However, we have engaged a company to live-stream the Graduation, so all parents and families can watch the Graduation from home. Graduation will be on Friday 11 December at 7.30pm. More details to come.

Other Developments

A number of school improvements have happened over the past months and will continue to take place.

- ◇ **We have top-dressed and re-sown our oval.** With no children using it for the past five months, due to lock down, we now have a top class playing surface. (I appreciate an artificial playing surface would in some ways be ideal, however the cheapest quote comes in at over \$600,000. We simply haven't got that money! We will just have to settle for a top dress and re-sow every few years, which we can do for around \$2,000.)
- ◇ **We will, however, be resurfacing some areas with new artificial turf around the school yard.** The surface work is all done there, so it is just a supply and install. We will resurface the turf between John Paul 11 building and Penola. Of main interest is a large new surface which is to be covered with artificial turf. This area includes the Disabled Car parks (which will be relocated) and behind these parks towards the relocatable classrooms near the hall. We will also be constructing a 'shelter shed' over this area to provide shade and shelter. This area will provide another space for Phys.Ed. activities under shade. It will also be a great space for parents to wait to collect their children or for children to wait for parents.

ST. MARY MACKILLOP primary school

- ◇ We are also artificially turfing the deck near the adventure playground. This area will be rezoned as a Prep-Year One play space. More to come on this concept later.
- ◇ Other smaller areas around the school yard will also be covered or recovered with artificial turf.
- ◇ **NEXT WEEK. There will be changes to traffic flow out the back near the roundabout for a week.** I ask for your patience. We are concreting the strip of grass along the fence between the drive and Rosary Home. We need to alleviate the mud that can be a problem there over winter and we need a new space to place our Waste Bins. We need to shift them from where they are currently located as the trucks are turning up our asphalt creating a dangerous trip hazard. So whilst this work is going on, simply follow the cones and whoever might be directing traffic (if it comes to it).
- ◇ **ALSO ...** We will be removing the traffic islands and widening the entrance to the main car park, to improve traffic flow as you come through into the main carpark. This should not create any holdup as it is being completed over a weekend.

As always lots happening at our school... Check the Calendar of dates included.

Go well everyone, keep safe and God bless,



Anthony McCluskey

Principal

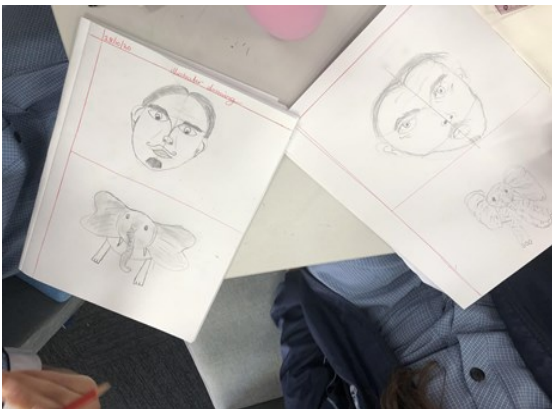
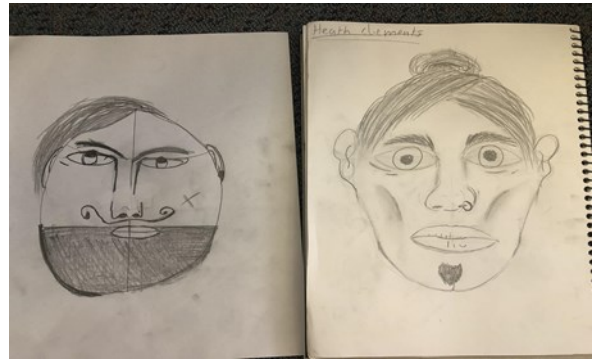
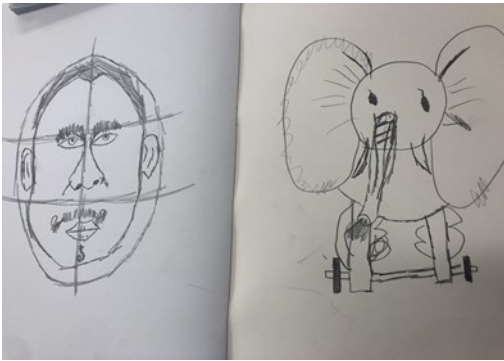
ST. MARY MACKILLOP primary school

BOOK WEEK 2020

The students have enjoyed engaging in a variety of fun and hands-on learning tasks that promoted BOOK WEEK.

We have had the pleasure of Heath Clements, an illustrator and parent from SMMPS, working with all students from P-6 via a Google Meets session. Heath discussed how he became an illustrator and how he worked with an author to decide on the images for their picture book. He also demonstrated various drawing techniques, in which the students followed to create their own person, animal etc. It was great to see the children focused, engaged and having fun experimenting with lines and shape to create their drawings.

Take a look at their magnificent art pieces.



ST. MARY MACKILLOP

primary school

On Friday October 30th the students and teachers were bubbling with excitement as they dressed up as their favourite book character. It was great to see the level of imagination and creativity that went into this year's costumes. Students were eager to share which book character they were and participate in the day's events. Thank you for your support.

Here are a couple of snapshots!



Learning Experiences in Year 6

Parliament Incursion

Due to COVID, the Year 6's annual trip to Canberra and Sydney was cancelled and with that, our trip to Parliament House with it. To compensate for this, the Year 6 teachers organised a Google Meet with a tour guide from Parliament House in Victoria. He taught us about how laws are made and the steps included to make that law official. Laws begin as an idea and then if approved by the members of Parliament, becomes a bill. The bill goes through several stages of review before being approved by the Governor General who represents the Queen. If the bill is approved and given the Royal Assent, it will become an official law.

Incursion with Maria Kerr

On the 29th of October, the Year 6 classes participated in an online incursion with Taylors Ward Council candidate, Maria Kerr. During this session, she explained why she chose to become a candidate in the local council. Maria has taken a great interest in making the Western Suburbs into a better place. Maria grew up in Keilor Downs, however, after moving to Caroline Springs, she noticed the lack of facilities in her home area and moved back. Like Saint Mary MacKillop, Maria saw a need and wanted to do something about it. Maria explained to us why it is important to vote and the power that comes with voting. Maria is a great inspiration to us and is a great example of how we can make a difference in our communities. We thoroughly enjoyed Maria's company and would like to congratulate her on her new position in council after being elected.

Christmas Celebration Day

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

This year we are unable to celebrate our Twilight Christmas Carols Night due to Covid19. Instead, we are organizing a day of Christmas activities in each class.

On this day, children can come to school dressed in Christmas colors or as characters from the Christmas story. These characters could include coming dressed as a Mary, Joseph, an angel, a shepherd, a cow, a lamb or even a star.

We look forward to celebrating this day with the children.



UPCOMING EVENTS-TERM 4

Thursday 10 December

Year 6 Big Day In

Friday 11 December

Year 6 Graduation-From 7.30pm

(More details to come)

Monday 14 December

Year 6 Excursion Day

(More details to come)

Tuesday 15 December-Please note change of day and time

Year 6 finish at 12.30pm with our Annual Guard of Honour, to farewell
our Year 6 students.

Wednesday 16 December

Prep to Year 5 finish at 1.00pm