

# 2021

## ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

SERVICE | LEADERSHIP | JUSTICE *Together in Christ*

ST JOSEPH'S  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
MERRIWA



ACTIONS  
NOT WORDS

### St Joseph's Primary School

Marquet Street, MERRIWA 2329

Principal: Ashley Borg

Web: <http://www.merriwa.catholic.edu.au>

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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 CSO as the 'approved authority' for the diocesan registration system formed under Section 39 of the NSW Education Act (1990), is responsible for monitoring the compliance of member schools in the manner that has been approved by the Minister of Education. 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 and wellbeing of its students.

Detailed information about the School's improvement journey is documented in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) which is developed, implemented and evaluated in consultation with key stakeholders. Further information about the contents of this Report may be obtained by contacting the School directly or by visiting the School's website. Information can be also be obtained from the My School website.

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## Message from key groups in our community

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### Principal's Message

It is with a great sense of accomplishment that I present the 2021 Annual School Report to the community. St Joseph's Primary School Merriwa is a small, rural school situated in the Upper Hunter town of Merriwa.

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.

This year the establishment of the playground shelter, built and engineered locally, provided students with a wonderful space to play safely and out of the heat, that we get from time to time.

For the first time in 10 years, St Joseph's Merriwa presented an above state average result in one or more of the NAPLAN areas in Year 3, an outstanding achievement for the school, given the challenges we face on a daily basis.

With COVID-19 decimating many of the general activities throughout schools, St Joseph's Merriwa students continued to thrive and learned to work under different conditions. Microsoft Teams was utilised by each teacher and class throughout the school in order to continue the previously established learning from home routine and continue the terrific links between home and school.

Staff this year have undergone significant professional learning and collaboration related to the advanced and enhanced teaching of Reading, through a renewed focus in phonics, phonemic awareness and collaboration between teachers. Staff have also worked diligently in producing high level outcomes in Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for students, to enable them to have a greater student voice in their learning.

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

A special thanks to our families. Your cooperation, patience and trust in the staff to keep your children safe, continue the great learning and to follow COVID safe procedures was very much appreciated.

As this is my last report as Principal of St Joseph's Merriwa, I would like to wish the school my absolute best for the future. I will most definitely miss the wonderful community and rural lifestyle.

### Parent Body Message

It feels like only yesterday that the last report on activities of the St Joseph's P&F was being written, and yet, here we are again with another 12 months behind us. Despite the enduring restrictions of COVID-19 impacting on our ability to be present in the School again for many months of the year, true to form, the P&F have achieved meaningful support for the students, parents and staff of St Joseph's Primary School.

It is easy to become frustrated, or disappointed that goals for the year may not have been fully achieved, but if there is a positive to be found, it is that the resilience, resourcefulness and adaptability of students, teachers and families of Joey's kids is second to none.

We have found ourselves immersed once again into a global health emergency, whereby even our small school in rural NSW was being affected in similar ways as our city and international counterparts. We faced the challenges of physical isolation, but despite this, the efforts of the staff went above and beyond to provide engaging learning-at-home opportunities for students, provide virtual classrooms via video conferencing, and offered face-to-face education for families of essential workers where alternative care or education options were not possible.

The support and assistance provided by all staff in ensuring continuity of quality education for students is not only commendable, but also genuinely appreciated.

This year we were incredibly fortunate to be able to just scrape in prior to further shutdowns, our annual St Joseph's Campdraft and Fete. Despite the hard years before with Droughts, Fires, Floods, Mouse Plagues and general disruptions, the event was a resounding success with over \$15,000 raised in support of the learning of St Joseph's students.

As a direct result of this fundraising, new laptop computers have been purchased increasing the accessibility to technology by all students, and improving the stability of digital learning platforms, which in the current environment of uncertainty around face-to-face education is vitally important for our students to be digitally capable learners.

The P&F have also seen the return of Canteen services to the School, as well as continuing to provide the Uniform Shop on site, ensuring parents can access replacement or new uniform items without travel out of town, or uncertainty in sizing or style. Mothers and Fathers were able to enjoy gifts provided through the P&F in the marking of their special days, and special efforts ensured that Father's Day was marked with gifts, even during a Pandemic and school isolations. A special thank you to the School for supporting the P&F in this regard.

As is often the case, we have the sad farewelling of staff at this time of the year, where we lose a member of the St Joseph's Merriwa "family" as they embark on new journeys and opportunities. This year we farewell Miss Love, and whilst we will deeply miss your enthusiasm and energy, we wish you every success in the future, and thank you for all you have done for our students and school.

To all parents and friends who have contributed in any way, shape or form this year with P&F events, or simply survived the challenges of home-learning, thank you for being a part of our school community. A special mention of thanks goes to our P&F executive – we could not achieve these results without your unwavering dedication and commitment.

To our School Principal, Mr Borg and all staff and teachers at St Joseph's, thank you for your steadfast support of our P&F and School, and for all the additional work that you put into each and every student.

It takes a village to raise a child, and in closing, thank you to each and every individual, group and business who have been part of the rich fabric that makes up the "village" that works together to raise our children. I look forward to working with you again in 2022.

### Student Body Message

As captain of St Joseph's 2021 I have seen many highlights and challenges throughout another year of COVID.

Although there have been some tough times for the families and students of St Joseph's, the teachers have done everything possible to help students thrive.

Since the lockdown has ended, everyone has thoroughly enjoyed being back and seeing each other in person. I believe that the students and teachers no longer take being at school for granted.

Some of my highlights of this year include the buddy system, school play and have our principal teach one day a week. The buddy system is something I will always remember because it has been an amazing experience for me to have a younger member of the school to look after.

Personally for me, my buddy and I have a great friendship and he will always make my day. The buddy system gives students in years five and six an opportunity to learn responsibility and learn to think of others first instead of themselves.

The school play has been a highlight because it is a great opportunity for students to get up on stage, come out of their shells and perform in front of an audience. Having our principal teach Stage three one day a week is another thing that is a great thing about our school.

Having the principal teach one day a week gives our teacher an opportunity to complete her executive role. By having the principal teach it gives the principal a chance to teach and gives students a chance to build a relationship with their principal.

So overall St Joseph's is an amazing little school and I feel privileged to have been a student of St Joseph's for 7 years. If anyone is looking for a school to enrol their child they should definitely look into St Joseph's.

#### SCHOOL CAPTAIN

A small school means great things are happening inside and working together especially throughout Covid-19. This year has been a big roller coaster much like last year until the vaccine came everything got a bit better. COVID effected everyone who lived through this monstrosity including myself. This meant that I couldn't travel to see my older siblings in WA.

This year our amazing class were meant to go to Canberra to see things that make us Australia. Like: Telstra tower, Australian war memorial, international film and sound archive, Parliament House and more. Because of Covid we were not allowed to go so we did Zoom tours instead.

Much like last year we did learning from home. Some essential workers decided that they were going to send their kids to school. But for non- essential workers they stayed home working with their children. Some students were allowed to stay home alone to work mostly because they had older siblings.

Kindergarten were super excited this year to come join this small Catholic school. We had a few more colourful kinders than last year. They had some much fun coming here and seeing what primary school is all about including working together as a small school like ours. This generation will never forget these past years and will soon have a story to tell.

I would highly suggest coming to St Joseph's to any parents who are reading this and are looking at schools for your child for either a new start or to start kindergarten than don't hesitate to call the school as we love to see new growing and beautiful faces just like Year 6 who most have come through the 7 years of primary school at St Joseph's.

#### VICE CAPTAIN

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## 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.

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 (2021 - 47 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.

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## 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 describes the student profile for 2021: Additional information can be found on My School website.

Girls	Boys	LBOTE*	Total Students
21	26	2	47

\* Language Background Other than English

### Enrolment Policy

The [Enrolment Policy](#) applies to all school enrolments within the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese. School authorities manage local enrolment processes and procedures in a manner consistent with the rationale and guiding principles articulated in this Enrolment Policy and accompanying procedures. It aims to:

- Set direction for school procedures and practices for enrolling students into Catholic primary and secondary schools within the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- Establish a common, consistent approach in enrolment practices.
- Assist the system of Catholic schools to:
  - provide schooling, where possible, for children of Catholic families who seek enrolment
  - cater for the individual needs of each child equitably within the constraints of the available teaching and material resources
  - encourage parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools to give support to parish and school life, especially in education in faith.

### Student Attendance Rates

The average student attendance rate for 2021 was 92.05%. Attendance rates disaggregated by Year group are shown in the following table.

Attendance rates by Year group						
Kindergarten	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
89.16	90.36	92.69	91.63	90.56	94.56	95.41

## Managing Student Non-Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential if students are to maximise their potential. The School, in partnership with parents, is responsible for promoting the regular attendance of students. While parents are legally responsible for the regular attendance of their children, School staff, as part of their duty of care, monitor part or whole day absences.

School staff, under the Principal's leadership, support the regular attendance of students by:

- providing a caring teaching and learning environment which fosters students' sense of wellbeing and belonging to the School community
- maintaining accurate records of student attendance
- recognising and rewarding excellent and improved student attendance
- implementing programs and practices to address attendance issues when they arise.

The Principal is responsible for supporting the regular attendance of students by ensuring that:

- parents and students are regularly informed of attendance requirements and the consequences of unsatisfactory attendance
- all cases of unsatisfactory attendance and part or full day absences from school are investigated promptly and that appropriate intervention strategies are implemented
- documented plans are developed to address the needs of students whose attendance is identified as being of concern
- the Regional Directors of Catholic Schools Office (CSO) or designated CSO officer is provided with regular information about students for whom chronic non-attendance is an issue and for whom the School's strategies have failed to restore regular attendance.

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## Staffing Profile

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### Staffing Profile

The following information describes the staffing profile for 2021:

Total number of staff	14
Number of full time teaching staff	5
Number of part time teaching staff	4
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 260 teachers
- Provisional 136 teachers
- Proficient 2060 teachers

Additionally, there are approximately 3 teachers who are currently actively engaged in the submission process at the higher levels of accreditation. Teacher status at individual schools can be sourced directly from the School.

### Professional Learning

The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in services, meetings and conferences and a range of professional learning programs provided by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). The School takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking of its staff professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

## Summary of professional learning at this school

Staff development days were spent on:

1. Whole school writing day - staff were given opportunities to learn more about the Writing progression points, in particular, Creating Texts. From there, staff graded samples of work with their newly found skills, and created data walls to suit.
2. Spirituality Day - was focused around the Science of Theology with Professor Michael Dennin. He challenged staff to think more deeply about their own spirituality, how it can be nourished and how it can be passed on to their students.

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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 aspire to be:

“Communities of living faith where the heart of all we do is Jesus Christ.”

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

As such, they are to:

Be truly Catholic in their identity and life;

Be centres of the 'new evangelisation';

Enable students to achieve high levels of 'Catholic religious literacy'; and

Be led and staffed by people who will contribute to these goals.

(Catholic Schools at a Crossroads, 2007)

### **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 and many other areas of focus. The Year 6 students participate in a Retreat, and all students help the community wherever we find a need. Wherever possible the school community attends significant parish liturgical celebrations, although this was not possible due to COVID during 2021.

During Monday assembly each week the students reflect on the Sunday Gospel and apply the salient message to their everyday lives. When able during 2021 many parents share this Liturgy with the students. Staff members also gather for prayer once a week which focuses on the Gospel message applying this to their personal and school lives.

The staff participated in a Lenten Program to which parish members also attended. This focus continued for 2021 on the Plenary Council - Building the Kingdom of God Together - Our Journey - Engaging in Contemplative Dialogue.

The staff also participated in the Spirituality Day facilitated by Professor Michael Dennin – Faith, Reason and Miracles

The learning intentions were:

- To explore how advances in our understanding of the physical world (science) can inspire a deeper understanding of theology (faith).
- To examine how faith focuses on our attempts to understand the fullness of reality (which is arguably the most natural definition of God).

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 prepared displays for the main street to highlight the Catholic identity of the school. A school parish dinner is also held during this week. The fortnightly school newsletter was placed in the church and in the local newspaper to ensure our message is spread. The school supported the local St Vincent de Paul Society through its appeals. The parish priest maintains a good relationship with the Principal, REC and others.

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 action. At the end of the school year, Year 6 students participated in a retreat. During this retreat, the Year 6 students took time to reflect on their years at school and what direction they see themselves and their friends going and what special gifts they are to themselves and others. Our weekly liturgy provides opportunities for students, staff and parents to reflect on the message of the Gospel. A relevant hymn/song is also used at times to help staff and students fully understand the Gospel message of the week.

Throughout the teaching of Religion, students are given the opportunity to reflect and participate in meditations which allows for the formation and development of their own spirituality. Each classroom and the staffroom have a sacred space designed and refreshed regularly.

Religion lessons at St Joseph's follow the curriculum set by the Maitland–Newcastle Diocese.

All class teachers are responsible for the teaching of Religious Education in their classes and are formally accredited to teach Religious Education or are in the process of satisfying the academic requirements needed for accreditation. Each structured lesson develops the knowledge and understandings of Catholic faith. Class and school liturgical, sacramental and prayer celebrations form an important aspect of the Religious Education curriculum.

Religious literacy is a priority in the classroom with added resources and support given to teachers and students particularly a focus of Religious Literacy vocabulary- which directly link up with the units taught. Teachers attend relevant professional development on the Religious Education curriculum.

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## Curriculum, Learning and Teaching

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The School provides an educational program based on, and taught in accordance with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabuses for Primary Education. The Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Human Society and its Environment, Creative Arts and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education. The Catholic Schools' Office Learning Framework is brings together structures that relate to quality learning and experiences in schools across the Diocese.

The Learning Framework provides a context for the development of learning and its key components, informed by research, are built around five essential elements:

Continual focus on Leading Learning

Cultures built on Collaborative Learning

Rich and purposeful Personalised Learning

Creating the conditions for Supportive Learning

Building capacity through Professional Learning

### **Professional Learning**

The ongoing professional development of each staff member is highly valued. Professional learning can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in services, meetings and conferences and a range of professional learning programs provided by the Catholic Schools Office (CSO). The School takes responsibility for planning, implementing, evaluating and tracking of its staff professional learning and individual staff members take responsibility for their ongoing professional development. All teachers have been involved in professional learning opportunities during the year related to improving student outcomes.

### **Summary of professional learning at this school**

Staff development was mainly focused in delivering a whole school reading program, which was developed by the school's Leading Teacher along with the Principal.

The main aspect of this approach was to build teacher capacity in the areas of reading and writing.

Teachers completed extensive professional learning in the writing and reading progressions, phonemic awareness and teaching phonics (K-3), working with teachers on improving the consistency of the teaching of comprehension in reading, consistent teacher judgement in writing.

In addition to this, scope and sequences were reviewed and adjusted to meet the requirements of NESA as well as to better align with the newer teacher philosophy in the school. This approach required teachers to utilise collaboration time and significant funds were used to release teachers to do this work. The benefits of this work should be seen in the coming years with a more consistent approach to the teaching of phonics, reading,

comprehension and spelling, all of which are encompassed in the School Improvement Plan and Strategic Planning of St Joseph's.

St Joseph's also continued their work in the Positive Behaviour For Learning (PB4L) program and held several professional learning sessions on effective discipline, the PB4L process and rewrote the Restorative Justice Matrix, in order to create a greater consistency amongst decision making for teachers in matters of discipline. This continued awareness and approach to the behavioural outcomes for students have seen a 65% decrease in incidents at the school, more calm students and teachers who focus more of their teaching time on teaching, rather than on behaviour management.

Staff engaged in a refresher in Visible Well Being with Annabelle Knight, from Strengths Canvass in Melbourne. This professional learning, coupled with the school's work in Wellbeing this year, has contributed to the establishment of a Wellbeing Framework for the school, which will hopefully commence in 2022.

At St Joseph's, a culture of "High Expectations, No Excuses" is embodied throughout. Staff are dedicated to the pursuit of excellence, this was highlighted by the end of year parent surveys distributed throughout the school.

All staff in 2021 were fully accredited or graduate teachers with NESAs and conducted themselves professionally in their work.

When the pandemic struck Australia early in 2021, St Joseph's along with all schools, faced a plethora of challenges, which we proudly took on and conquered. Staff worked diligently to create an online presence and platform for students and parents to continue learning from home. Student and parent satisfaction for the program created was extremely positive and has been continued throughout the year as a platform for homework and communication.

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

Whole school approaches to improve student achievement included the use of previously created Learning intentions and Success Criteria in Mathematics, which highlighted strengths and areas of improvement for students. This gave students a greater clarity in their learning and allowed staff to hone in their teaching. 2022 will hope to see a greater 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 Lead Teacher (LNAP), 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 will continue to enhance the terrific work being done in this area of school improvement.

Our Performing Arts program was further enhanced this year, with the regular visit of Anna Kerrigan, ASPIRE Artist Director. Her input, influence and expertise were invaluable in assisting all students and staff in the formation of the highly successful School Play. With COVID this year, we successfully negotiated the filming and production of "The Battle for Earth", which was streamed to all interested families and proved to be a hit.

St Joseph's worked diligently with students throughout the year in Mental Maths and Spelling, as well as Public Speaking. The school held school-wide competitions, but unfortunately no further progress was made due to the pandemic.

## Student Performance in Tests and Examinations

### NAPLAN

Students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 across Australia participate in the National Assessment program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The purpose of this test is to provide information to parents and teachers about the achievements of students in aspects of Literacy and Numeracy. The test provides a measure of the student's performance against established standards and against other students in Australia. Each year the results are analysed by the school to inform teaching with a view to improving student performance.

The Commonwealth Government sets minimum acceptable standards for literacy, numeracy, reading, writing, grammar, punctuation and spelling at particular ages. These are referred to as national minimum standards. Student performance in NAPLAN in our school is compared to these standards.

NAPLAN RESULTS 2021		% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
		School	Australia	School	Australia
Year 3	Grammar and Punctuation	44%	54%	22%	11%
	Reading	56%	55%	0%	10%
	Writing	44%	53%	11%	7%
	Spelling	33%	50%	33%	13%
	Numeracy	33%	37%	0%	13%
NAPLAN RESULTS 2021		% of students in the top 2 bands		% of students in the bottom 2 bands	
		School	Australia	School	Australia
Year 5	Grammar and Punctuation	0%	35%	50%	14%
	Reading	17%	41%	50%	11%
	Writing	0%	20%	0%	18%
	Spelling	0%	38%	33%	14%
	Numeracy	0%	29%	50%	14%

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## 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 Well being and Pastoral Care Policy.

The Wellbeing and Pastoral Care Policy 2017, 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.

The Pastoral Care and Wellbeing Policy for Students can be found at [www.mn.catholic.edu.au/about/policies](http://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/about/policies)

There were no changes to the policy in 2021.

### Behaviour Management and Student Discipline Policy

The School's policies and procedures for the management of student behaviour are aligned the CSO [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 at this link.

## 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 the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that, from time to time, misunderstandings and differences of opinion will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world. CSO monitors the implementation of this policy.

The full text of the [Complaints Resolution Policy](#) may be accessed on the School's website, the administration office or at the CSO website at this link.

## Initiatives promoting respect and responsibility

St Joseph's willingly and wholeheartedly participates in Positive Education and Visible Wellbeing Programs, as a member of the Where There's A Will Foundation Upper Hunter Cluster. The Principal attends regular meetings each term to keep in touch with the latest information. These continued via Zoom in 2021.

We engaged with Annabelle Knight, from Melbourne, who is an expert on Positive Education. We met online with her once per term to speak about how we can enhance our teaching and learning in the area of Positive Education. Staff completed online training refresher courses in Visible Wellbeing using the SEARCH Framework.

In 2021, a regular Character Strength of the Week focus was placed in newsletters and on our Facebook page, to keep the public informed of our initiatives. A Character Strength of the Week Merit Award was introduced, to great effect.

Well Being Weeks continued, which were in Week 5 or 6 of every term. The emphasis was on "No Homework, No Meetings" and opportunities for staff and students to enhance wellbeing on a personal or spiritual level. Activities were organised by teachers and were proven to be a great success and change from the regular routine during lunchtimes! Discos, mindfulness colouring, thankful cards and meditation were some of the terrific initiatives provided by the school staff.

Due to COVID, St Joseph's Merriwa students were unable to participate in any community gatherings, as these were all cancelled. Our School Captains attended the Remembrance Day and ANZAC Day ceremonies, which were greatly appreciated and definitely noticed in the town. Students created Christmas Cards and engaged with the local hospital (Merriwa Multi Purpose Centre) and Gummun Place to deliver these cards to those in need.

In 2021, our Pastoral Care Worker funding continued. Our PCW worked diligently to provide services such as a Science Club, Gardening Club and provided meaningful and local support for students and families where necessary.

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## School Improvement

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The School implements the systems 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 Plans and School Improvement Plans are future focused documents that map the School's directions, aimed specifically at improving educational and pastoral outcomes for all students through the following areas:

- Catholic Formation and Mission
- Learning and Teaching
- Leadership
- Wellbeing and Partnerships

Each year, the School develops an Annual Improvement Plan indicating the intended key improvements for student learning outcomes. A copy of the Strategic Improvement Plan and the Annual Improvement Plan may be obtained from the School administrative office.

### Key Improvements Achieved

#### **Catholic Formation and Mission**

Staff undertook several professional learning sessions and regular staff prayer. Each staff member, as part of their formation, were asked to contribute to liturgy during the year. Staff attended the Professor Michael Dennin Spirituality Day, which challenged staff to look at the individuality of each child and families' spirituality, their current journey and how we can meet families on this partnership.

Staff also completed the Lenten program with members of the St Anne's Parish. Our Parish Priest and parishioners commented on the wonderful and frank nature of the conversation into the Plenary Council's questions.

#### **Learning and Teaching**

Staff were successful in using Learning Intentions and Success Criteria into the Key Learning Area of Reading and Writing.

On the Acadience reading scale, 80% of students in Years 3-6 have achieved proficiency in the Oral Reading Fluency and Retell scales of the assessment.

In a similar assessment of Acadience in K-2, 77% of students are achieving proficiency. Staff have been engaged in the Leading Learning Collaborative and have learned about creating success criteria for the basis of student understanding, engagement and feedback. Individualised feedback stamps were purchased for each staff member, so they could give

"Two Glows and a Grow", to engage in discussion with students about their work and how to improve it.

The Principal engaged in regular Instructional "Walks and Talks", where students were asked about their progress, how they recognised improvement and what they needed to do to improve.

### **Leadership**

The Executive Team (REC and Principal), attended Executive Leadership training courses, provided by the Catholic Schools Office and run externally, during 2021.

### **Wellbeing and Partnerships**

All aspects of community partnerships in 2021 were very difficult to uphold and maintain, although students created cards and letters for the sick and elderly in Gummun Place and to the Merriwa Hospital. Our partnership with the local Newsagency, who sponsor our "Spirit of St Joseph" award, was continued.

The major success in wellbeing was the continuation of the Online E-Counselling Project as part of a reduced timeframe for counselling in the Upper Hunter Region. St Joseph's is the only school in the

Diocese who have adopted this program, with the assistance of the CSO, our school counsellor and the cooperation of the parent community. This provided our students in a remote, isolated school with an added opportunity to seek counselling and support in school, online.

St Joseph's also reintroduced and implemented Positive Behaviours For Learning (PB4L) throughout the school. This has seen a 65% decrease in documented incidents in the school and a much calmer and improved learning environment for students.

The school also replaced the playground shade shelter and upgraded to a steel structure, which has provided students with a safe, cool place to play and expend much needed energy in the play ground.

### **Priority Key Improvements for Next Year**

The 2022 School Improvement Plan (SIP) was drafted late 2021, with the view to consolidating many of the wonderful initiatives throughout the school. These included:

#### **Catholic Formation and Mission**

- The improvement of the overall teaching of Religion

- All staff working towards establishing and attaining Graduate Certificates / Masters Degrees in Religious Education from accredited educational providers, as per the Catholic Schools Office Faith Education Accreditation (FEA) Policies
- The establishment of a more rigid environmental awareness through the document, Laudato Si.

### Learning and Teaching

- To build capacity of teachers in the pedagogical practice in phonics in Infants to improve reading and spelling K-2 and ultimately, K-6.
- To refine and enhance our daily and weekly focus points in the teaching of phonics.
- To diminish cognitive load, creative repetitive, sustainable practices and match them to resources.
- To improve comprehension outcomes across K-6, in particular, 3-6.

### 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 and implement the PB4L program throughout St Joseph's.  
Visible Wellbeing Professional Learning for all staff - this will be in the form of an online course, through the SEARCH framework and Lea Waters.

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## Community Satisfaction

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The opinions and ideas of parents, students and teachers are valued and sought. Their suggestions are incorporated into planning for and achieving 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. At the beginning of each review phase school's undertakes extensive surveying of all stakeholder groups. This data is shared with the school community and contributes to the priorities for future planning.

### Parent satisfaction

According to the Tell Them From Me Survey for Parents in 2021:

- Parents felt very welcomed in the school, could easily speak with their child's teachers and the Principal about any matters.
- They were well informed and were given appropriate and immediate feedback about their child or school events.
- Parents believed their teachers had high expectations for their children to succeed and showed a high interest in the child's learning
- Parents showed a significant change in their collective beliefs about the school's ability to consistently deal with behavioural issues, something which is also reflected in the 65% decrease in behavioural incidents at school in 2021.
- 100% of parents "strongly agreed" in recommending St Joseph's Merriwa to others.

### Student satisfaction

According to the Tell Them From Me Survey for Students in 2021:

- Students valued their positive relationships with their peers
- Students valued, very highly (94%) their schooling outcomes and believed what they learn at school will make a difference to them.
- Students mostly felt their behaviours were "positive" at school (84%)
- 94% of students felt as though they worked to the best of their ability at school
- Very low levels of bullying were exhibited by students in Years 4-6 at St Joseph's (21% as opposed to 28% average)
- 88% of students recommended St Joseph's strongly to others.

### Teacher satisfaction

According to the Tell Them From Me Survey for Teachers in 2021:

- Teachers felt well supported in challenging times (10/10)

- Staff felt as though they collaborated well with each other (8.2/10)
- Student engagement and work were discussed regularly (9.2/10)
- 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.

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## Financial Statement

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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 2021 year is detailed below:

<b>Recurrent and Capital Income 2021</b>	
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants <sup>1</sup>	\$981,147
Government Capital Grants <sup>2</sup>	\$0
State Recurrent Grants <sup>3</sup>	\$278,022
Fees and Private Income <sup>4</sup>	\$72,940
Interest Subsidy Grants	\$4,257
Other Capital Income <sup>5</sup>	\$32,547
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,368,913</b>

<b>Recurrent and Capital Expenditure 2021</b>	
Capital Expenditure <sup>6</sup>	\$40,603
Salaries and Related Expenses <sup>7</sup>	\$1,074,291
Non-Salary Expenses <sup>8</sup>	\$227,479
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$1,342,373</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 expenses such as superannuation and workers compensation insurance.
8. Non-Salary Expenses include all other Non-Salary Recurrent Expenditure covering resources, administration, operational expenses, utilities, repairs and maintenance.

END OF 2021 REPORT