

St Mary's College

Catholic Identity



ST MARY'S
COLLEGE



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF NEW ST MARY'S COLLEGE STUDENTS.



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WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOUR CHILD TO ATTEND A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

Catholic schools provide education to approximately 770,000 students across Australia. However, many of these students are neither Catholic nor come from Catholic families.

If you are not Catholic but would like to send your child to a Catholic school like St Mary's College, there can be many questions about how a Catholic school might be different from other schools.

This booklet provides information about Catholic schools in general and St Mary's College in particular.



CATHOLIC VALUES

Many parents and carers talk about wanting good values for their children. Catholic values are often seen as fulfilling this. Catholic values are sometimes referred to as Gospel values and are based on these key principles:

- Every person has dignity and deserves respect.
- We are all spiritual beings who are loved by God.
- A holistic education does not only focus on learning but also on nourishing our spiritual side.
- Every person deserves our compassion and kindness, especially those who are disadvantaged.
- We should live sustainably and show care for the Earth.



PRESENTATION TOUCHSTONES

In addition to these Catholic values, each Catholic school has its own 'flavour' or charism. This charism is based on the origins and story of the school, in particular the religious order which created it.

St Mary's College was founded by the Presentation Sisters, a religious order established by Nano Nagle in Ireland in 1775.

The Presentation charism is one based on the following three touchstones:

- Hospitality – all are welcome in our community and we endeavour to cater to the needs of all our students so that they feel included and valued.
- Compassion – we practice care and concern of all in and outside our community which means that we focus on the wellbeing of each student as well as supporting a variety of social justice and charitable causes.
- Simplicity – we focus on the education and growth of our students without fuss or need for recognition.

WHAT WILL YOUR CHILD EXPERIENCE WHEN ATTENDING A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

These core values and touchstones underpin all that your child experiences at St Mary's, but what does this look like on a practical level?

- **Traditions:** The Catholic faith is rich in rituals and traditions. Catholics find meaning and connection to God through these practices and they provide a rhythm to the school year. At St Mary's, many of our traditions have been with us for more than 100 years, some are more recent but all attempt to reinforce our identity as a community and create a sense of belonging. Many of these traditions are combined with prayer.
- **Prayer:** Each day students gather with their class groups to pray, this may be in the form of listening to scripture, praying for the needs of others or reciting significant prayers such as the Our Father. Prayer enables students to develop their understanding of and relationship with God, to look outside of themselves and to practise mindfulness. Students will also gather in larger groups to pray more formally in the Cathedral or at assemblies. Prayer is a central religious practice which reinforces our Christian values. All students, no matter what their personal faith might be, are a part of our Catholic community and are expected to join in communal prayer.
- **Mass:** A key religious practice for Catholics is Mass. It is a gathering of people who pray together, listen to the scriptures and share in communion (or Eucharist). For Catholics, the celebration of the Eucharist is deeply meaningful and therefore many of our significant events are celebrated in the context of a Mass such as the Commissioning of Leaders and Graduation. At our College Masses, all present are expected to join in the responses and song. The words and other instructions will always be provided either in booklet form or in a PowerPoint presentation. Therefore, students who are unfamiliar with the Mass can join in and feel like they belong. During communion time, all staff and students come forward to either receive communion (if they are Catholic) or a blessing (if they are not). In doing so, all students are made to feel welcome and valued.

ВВЕДЕНІЕ ВО ХРАМЪ
ПРЕСЪТІА БЪЦЬ



- **Religious Education:** Like all Catholic schools, St Mary's combines its practice of religious beliefs and traditions with the study of them in formal Religious Education classes. These classes allow students to explore some of the big questions in life and develop an understanding of what it means to respond to these questions through the lens of faith. These studies are both formal, assessed in the same rigorous way as other subjects, and personal, encouraging students to reflect on what they believe and how what they have learnt connects to them personally. The focus of Religious Education throughout the College is on the Christian story viewed through the lens of Catholic tradition, but students are also exposed to a wide range of beliefs and spiritual responses.
- **Charity and Social Justice:** The Presentation touchstone of Compassion gives St Mary's College its focus on charity and social justice. Throughout the year students are encouraged to participate in a variety of fundraising and awareness-raising campaigns to support organisations like St Vincent de Paul, Caritas, Catholic Mission and the work of the Presentation Sisters in places like the Philippines. There are also social justice issues which are discussed at an age-appropriate level in classes and assemblies such as racism, violence, climate change, poverty and gender inequity. Catholic schools like St Mary's believe that every person is valued and therefore we should be aware of and active in supporting people or groups who are disadvantaged in any way.





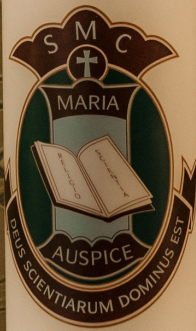
HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD TO SETTLE INTO A CATHOLIC SCHOOL?

Although much of what your child will experience in a Catholic school will be similar to that of any school, the Catholic dimension to the school, if it is unfamiliar to them, may cause undue concern or worries in your child. In order to reduce this apprehension, there are a few things you can do to support your child as they transition to a Catholic school.

- Read about or watch videos about the Catholic church. Learning about some of the key terms, beliefs and rituals will help you and your child feel more at ease when they encounter them at school.
- Learn the Our Father prayer. This is a very famous prayer which you may have heard of. It is used often in Catholic schools and knowing it can help your child feel like they understand a little about what is going on.
- Visit a Catholic church. Look around and talk about the symbols and features you see there.
- Attend a Catholic Mass. Although this might be out of your comfort zone, experiencing a Mass can help you and your child feel more comfortable when you become a part of the St Mary's Catholic community. At the end of Mass you could say hi to the priest and ask any questions you may have.
- The most important thing you can do is to talk to your child about all of this. Ask them how they are going as they settle into school, ask if they have questions about some of the things they have experienced or learnt. Then follow up by finding out more about these topics.



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