



2025 Parent Handbook

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VISION Statement

We are a
welcoming and supportive
Catholic Community.

We proclaim the
presence of Jesus Christ
in all people.

We value and celebrate our
faith, diversity, individuality
and life-long learning.

In the Spirit of Mary MacKillop.



St Mary's School Prayer

Loving God,

At St Mary's we proclaim your presence through
justice, love and peace for all.

Thank you for guiding us in our love of
learning and play.

Bless everyone in our school community
and help us work together to
serve you and serve one another.

Amen.

Mary, Help of Christians.

Pray for us

St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop.

Pray for us



School Values

RESPECT

Showing kindness and empathy through understanding and accepting each other's differences.

RESPONSIBILITY

Taking ownership of our actions and decisions knowing that they impact ourselves, others and our learning.

RESILIENCE

Working persistently through difficulties when they arise, knowing things can get better.

COURAGE

Finding the strength and bravery to do what we think or know is right even when it is challenging.

Learner Characteristics

SELF MOTIVATED LEARNERS

- Engage and show effort
- Work towards goals
- Use positive self talk

RISK-TAKING LEARNERS

- Are prepared to make mistakes
- Take on challenges
- Get out of your comfort zone

LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS

CREATIVE LEARNERS

- Think of different ideas
- Use your imagination
- Find solutions

CURIOUS LEARNERS

- Want to know more
- Ask questions
- Investigate

PERSISTENT LEARNERS

- Never give up
- Try again
- Keep going

Absences

School attendance is compulsory and therefore we must have notification explaining any absence a child may have from school. This is a legal requirement. To record an absence, you will need to complete the form which can be found on the school website (look for the Absences icon on the homepage) or via the School Updat-ed App. These notifications are kept indefinitely by the school. Please do not ring the school to inform us of an absence.

Anaphylaxis

We have students in our school who are anaphylactic, which means they have serious allergic reactions. We also have students who have severe allergies but are not anaphylactic. These students not only have allergies to nuts but also to eggs, shellfish & white fish, salmon, kiwi fruit and legumes among other things. If these students eat or in some cases, touch any food products that contain any of these foods or traces of these foods they could be put into a life-threatening situation. We are asking for your cooperation, that NO sharing of food takes place in any class, particularly if one of these students is in your child's class. These students are well aware of what they can eat but if you reinforce with your own child that these children are not able to 'eat' everything that other children can and to please not share food with them. On special occasion days e.g. birthdays, class teachers will have a 'treat' that these students can eat. These treats are supplied by the family at the start of each year. A current list of these students' classes is shared with the community at the beginning of each year.

Arrival

Each morning the following 3 entrances open at 8:30am:

- Church gate (Railway Street between the front building and the Church)
- Sargood Street
- McBain Street

Parents can enter the school with their child and wait on the netball court for the first bell to ring at 8:45am.

Children in the Junior school can play on the Junior playground (Sargood Street) under the direct supervision of their parent/carer while waiting for the bell.

To encourage independence, we do not have parents entering school buildings/hallways before school.

Once the bell goes at 8:45am, parents are encouraged to leave the school premises and not peer into classrooms through windows. We find that some students, particularly those who have difficulty separating from their parents, become more anxious if they see parents looking in.

Brain Food

Students are encouraged to bring fruit, vegetables, etc to snack on during the day. This food needs to be peeled/cut up, ready to eat. (This is additional to their morning tea snack and lunch). They are also encouraged to bring a drink bottle filled with water to keep in class. These items will keep students' energy levels high and help them remain well-hydrated. Consumption of flavoured drinks or juices is restricted to recess and lunch times, though water is preferable.

Canteen

Fridays

The canteen will be open 1 day per week (Fridays). Lunch orders can be placed on these days. The canteen menu is available on our website. Lunch orders should be sent to school in a labelled bag (usually paper) with cash and placed in the class tub.

It is also open at recess and lunch for students to purchase snacks.

Wednesdays

We also have an online company that delivers lunches on Wednesdays. Orders can be placed up to 8am on the day. Instructions on how to order can be found on our website (Parents tab \ Tuck Shop)

Class Teachers

Teachers are always here to discuss your child's progress. Please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher directly if you have any concerns. Please be aware though, that teachers often have work commitments directly after school. At 8:45am, teachers are responsible for the supervision of all their students, so making an appointment at a mutually convenient time may be necessary.

Communication

Communication is an essential element in your child's education. It is important that the school communicates with you and that you communicate with the school. Your child's education is a partnership between the family (home) and St. Mary's School. To maximise the benefits for your child we must communicate effectively.

The school communicates with parents in the following ways:

***Operoo**

Operoo gives parents control over their child's medical and emergency information. Parents can easily ensure all important information required by the school about their child is up-to-date. Another great feature of Operoo is the ability to send notes out to parents with information about upcoming events or permission notes to attend excursions or camps. For more information go to: <https://www.operoo.com/>

*** Seesaw**

Seesaw is an app that is used primarily at St Mary's to communicate the learning that takes place at school with those at home. Families can have several members connected to their child's Learning Journal. Here, members are able to see, like and comment on work, photos and videos. Another feature is the notifications or announcements feature. Using this feature, teachers are able to communicate to whole classes important messages, preview the week to come or send other general information. There is also a message feature where

staff and families can communicate with one another.

*** Email**

Staff can also be contacted by email, so if it is more convenient to use email, then please do so. We will attempt to respond to your email within 2 business days. You will receive your child's teacher's email address as well as the email addresses of the specialist teachers. Our email addresses follow the same structure: firstinitialsurname@smaltona.catholic.edu.au eg rriccardi@smaltona.catholic.edu.au

Your child's teacher is your first point of call and should always be contacted as a first option. If you feel you need to communicate directly with the principal, the address is: principal@smaltona.catholic.edu.au

*** Facebook**

Our school Facebook page (St. Mary's Primary School Altona) can be accessed via a link from our website. It is regularly updated with photos and information. New parents to the school need to read and abide by our Facebook Code of Conduct. This can be accessed from our school website, under About Us \ School Policies and Procedures.

*** Information Evenings**

From time to time the school will conduct evenings for parents on specific topics. These may be curriculum-related, on Religious Education/Sacraments or simply administrative. We encourage all parents to attend these evenings whenever they occur. You will find it much easier to help your child if you are well-informed about what is going on.

*** Open Door Policy**

The Office window is always open and parents are encouraged to come and see us about any concerns or problems that you may have. If you wish to meet with the Principal an appointment can be made by contacting the school office on 9398 4842.

*** Newsletter**

A digital format newsletter is produced every Friday afternoon and it is also published on the school website in the NEWS tab. The content of this service may vary from week to week but includes sections such as our Principal's Message, Wellbeing, Education in Faith, community announcements and links to our regional high schools. These sections will include reminders, articles to read and general information about the school. These will come to you via email. To receive these newsletters, you will need to subscribe via the Subscribe tab on the school website home page. All families need to subscribe as we may also send other updates and news out using this system.

*** School Website (smaltona.catholic.edu.au)**

The school newsletter and forms can be accessed via our website. The school website is updated regularly with new information, dates, upcoming events and photos of school events. We encourage parents and children to refer to the website as the first point of call to check on information, dates and times, etc. before contacting the school. Our absence form and school interview bookings can be accessed from the school home page.

***UPDAT-ED App**

The School App, Updat-ed, is available via the App Store or Google Play. The app is great for sending out alerts and reminders with one of its best features being the ability for you to save events directly into your phone's calendar. Our absence form, newsletters and other forms are also available through this app.

*** Phone**

Our telephone number is 03 9398 4842. If you cannot physically come in to arrange an appointment, please call us. We encourage all parents to call us if you have any concerns or if your home situation changes in any way. Often changes at home are reflected in behaviours at school. It is most helpful to

know if there are things that may be affecting your child's school experience.

Dismissal

The school gates open at 3pm on each day. Parents may enter the school grounds at this time and wait for the bell to ring at the end of the day.

Parents are not permitted to enter classrooms or buildings at this time as students are packing up and preparing to go home and hallways can get busy and congested during these times. It also fosters independence when students are given space and time to prepare themselves for the end of the day.

Again, we encourage parents to refrain from looking into classrooms through windows/doors as this can be very distracting for the students.

Early Dismissal

There may be times when you need to collect your child during the school day. To minimise interruptions to the class you are asked to arrange these either directly before or after scheduled break times. Please inform the class teacher that your child will be leaving early. You will need to come into the office and sign out your child using the iPad.

Late Arrival

Any children who arrive at school after 9am will need to report to the school office to receive a late slip and the office staff will amend the class roll. If a child arrives at the classroom after this time without a late slip, the teacher will ask them to go to the office to receive one. This ensures that our attendance records are accurately maintained.

Lost property

Any lost property (without a name) is placed in the Lost Property drawer located outside the staffroom. If staff find an item of clothing

with a name, this is usually returned to the class.

Parent/Child/Teacher Conferences

Early in Term One an opportunity is made for a get-to-know-you chat. This is a great opportunity to meet your child's teacher and let them know about your child.

Towards the end of second term, mid-year reports are issued. At this time we schedule a Parent/Child/Teacher Conference where your child's progress is discussed in a formal setting. Appointments are arranged via School Interviews Online, an online portal. You and your child are encouraged to attend these meetings together. Additional parent/teacher contact can be requested by you and/or the classroom teacher at other times of the year as deemed necessary.

Parent participation

Parents have the opportunity to help in many forms:

Classroom Helpers

A classroom helper course runs in first term each year. All parent helpers must attend a session to ensure expectations, particularly around confidentiality) are understood before helping in classrooms.

We welcome helpers who can help occasionally or those who have regular availability.

Parents and Friends

This group organises fundraising and social activities. We meet twice per term, on average, on Tuesday evenings at 7pm. If you are interested in joining this team, contact

parentsandfriends@smaltona.catholic.edu.au

School Advisory Council

This team advises the principal on finance and policy matters. It exists to support the MACS (Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools) governance model that has replaced Parishes and Parish Priests as school administrators/employers.

Volunteers

Parents may wish to help in the canteen, on excursions or school-based events (such as sports days and discos). Parents who wish to help will require a Working With Children Check (see WWCC section below)

Parent Support Groups (PSGs)

Parent Support Group Meetings (PSGs) are held each term with the parents of students with additional learning needs. Parents will be notified via Operoo and bookings are done through our School Interview portal.

School Office Hours

The School Office is open each day between 8.30am and 4pm. There is an answering machine in operation outside these times. Please leave a message at other times when staff are unable to answer the telephone. The message will be actioned at the earliest opportunity. If you are running late to collect your child at the end of the school day, please telephone the office on 9398 4842 as early as possible.

Specialists

Our students participate in 4 specialist classes each week. These are:

- Arts
- Physical Education
- STEM
- AUSLAN (sign language)

Supervision & Safety

BEFORE SCHOOL: Supervision commences at 8.30 am. Children are to remain on or in the vicinity of the netball court and Junior Adventure Playground (Prep – Yr 2) as these are the only areas that we supervise before school. No child is to be on the basketball court, senior adventure playground and/or oval before school as there is no teacher supervision in this area. Children are not to be on the school grounds or unsupervised in the office before 8.30 am. Downball is the only game permitted before school on the netball court.

AFTER SCHOOL: There are two teachers on duty; one near the Junior Adventure Playground and Netball Court and the other, near the Basketball Court. You can arrange to meet your children in any of these areas. Children whose parents are not present when they are dismissed are to assemble outside Prep B's classroom and if they haven't been collected when the supervision period ends, they will be escorted to the school office to wait. If you arrive after the school gates are locked, please enter through the main school entrance to collect your child/ren. If you believe you will regularly be late to pick up, you are encouraged to check your child into Camp Australia.

All children who ride to school must dismount from their bikes, scooters etc before they enter/leave the school grounds.

Junior students (Years P-2) are permitted to play on the Junior playground before and after school when there is a parent/guardian actively supervising.

Students are permitted to play on the Senior playground until 3:35pm if there is a parent/guardian actively supervising.

After 3:30pm, the Senior playground is accessed by Camp Australia, our Out of School Hours Care program.

Timetable

Our day starts with the first bell going at 8:45am.

First block of learning:	8:45am - 11:00am
Recess:	11:00am - 11:30am
Middle block:	11:30am - 1:30pm
Lunch (eating in class):	1:30pm - 1:40pm
Lunch break:	1:40pm - 2:30pm
Afternoon block:	2:30pm - 3:15pm

Prep students have Wednesdays off in February. They will be allocated an appointment time on one of these Wednesdays to complete assessments with their class teacher.

Uniforms

All students are expected to be in full school uniform at all times

unless they have been instructed otherwise. Sports Uniforms which include runners and white socks should be worn on the day your child has Physical Education. Your child's teacher will share the class timetable with you early in the new year.

We are very proud of our uniform at St Mary's and it should be worn with pride. Please make sure ALL JUMPERS, JACKETS & HATS are clearly marked with your child's name. A reminder that all children are required to wear hats when outside from the beginning of September till the end of April. No Hat, No Play! Sunglasses are recommended, but not compulsory.

Noone's is our official uniform supplier. Parents are encouraged to make a booking for fitting. Noone's recommends not leaving your fitting until late January as waiting times will be long.

Working with Children Check (WWCC)

Any volunteers and helpers must have a current Working With Children Check and present this to the school before commencing. WWCCs are free for volunteers. For more information and to register for one, visit <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>

Contact Us

93984842

Leadership

Sonia Riccardi (Principal)

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John Hein (Deputy Principal)

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Front Office

Katrina Chavarria

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