Friday 5th February, 2016

Prep/Foundation Level Newsletter

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the start of the 2016 school year. We extend a warm welcome to our new families and all of our new Prep children. It has been a smooth start to Term One and the children are beginning to settle in well. We thank you for your part in preparing your children to begin school. Please encourage your child to carry their own school bag and unpack it for the day. Children need to unpack their water bottle, brain food, green pouch and any other notices, which will encourage independence and ensure they are ready for their learning. Having your child at school on time and ready to learn shows respect towards the teacher and other children. Please remember that work begins at 8:40 and we appreciate your prompt departure from the classroom in the morning which allows all children to settle into routines quickly. Once these routines are established, we will invite you to be a part of our learning in the classroom and to assist with the teaching of your children. The children are becoming tired after lunch time, especially on warmer days, and we are keeping our afternoons a little less busy. We ask that you encourage your child to pursue quieter activities when they get home from school each night and to ensure that the Wednesday is taken as an opportunity to rest. The weather has been kind to us and when it is hot, we have fans and air conditioners in the room to help us cope. We encourage the children to drink plenty of water and their bottles are filled when necessary. The Prep children are playing in a designated playground, which has plenty of shade. Prep teachers supervise the students and release each other to ensure that there is always a Prep teacher on duty for the children to approach when necessary. During Term 1 and 4 we have a NO HAT, NO PLAY POLICY. The yellow hat must remain in your child’s tub to be available whenever needed throughout the school day. It is suggested that if your child attends Before or After School Care that they have a spare hat from home to be used instead of the school hat.

“Contact”- Our School Newsletter

The school newsletter is available to read online and we urge you to take the time each week to read it and keep abreast of all that is happening within our school community. It contains detailed information of upcoming events and acknowledges student achievements.
Parent/Teacher Chats
Parent/Teacher chats take place in Week 3 on Monday 8th and Thursday 11th February. Families will need to book a time for these interviews via a link on the school website as explained in the school newsletter. Please note that these are different to the Numeracy interview you have booked for your child and it is expected that parents make the time to attend.

School Times
8.30 Classrooms open for children to begin preparing themselves for their day.
8.40 First bell. Children should be in their classroom ready to learn.
8.45 Second bell. Lessons/Instructions begin.
10.30-10.45 Time to eat play lunch.
10.45-11.15 Playtime
11.15-1.00 Class time.
1.00-1.25 Time to eat lunch
1.25-2.15 Lunch play
2.15-3.15 Class time
3.15 Dismissal

Green Take Home Book /Message Pouch/ Oral Language
Green take home book pouches MUST come to and from school each day. Please place any notes for school in the pouch and check for other messages which come home. A display book with activities to share will also be sent home in the pouch during First Term. Please discuss the work in this display folder with your child. Until formal reading comes home, it is important to use these activities to establish a reading routine each night. We will be exploring 2 new letters and the sounds they make each week so make sure to ask your child about this when they get home from school. We encourage the children to think about the position of their mouth and the placement of their tongue when making sounds. This teaching also gives the children a hand sign and a song tune which reminds them of what we do to make the particular sound. Assisting them in identifying objects and words that begin with this sound in their home environment is a good way to revise their learning. We also encourage lots of conversation with your child. Encourage your child to ask and answer questions and explain their reasons and thinking. The Prep teachers plan rich language experiences where children practise good communication skills including using eye contact, and waiting for their turn to speak. Clear and correct speech will be a focus in our Literacy teaching throughout the year.

Specialist Classes
Specialist classes will occur every Thursday. Students will be required to wear sports uniform and bring their library bag, except for children in Prep Green who bring their library bag on a Wednesday.
Religious Education
The following topics will be covered in Term One:

Praying to Jesus the Good Shepherd - The children will learn about prayer as speaking and listening to God. They will be introduced to the prayer space and the objects and symbols which make up this space. Children will be taught some of the behaviours and actions of prayer, including making the Sign of the Cross. The students will be introduced to the St. Simon’s School Prayer and also to the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

Alleluia! Jesus is Alive! – The children will explore the Easter Story and will participate in a whole school celebration of “Alleluia day” early in Term 2.

Maths
Throughout Term One we will focus on number recognition, counting patterns, data collection and graphing, the days of the week, months of the year and seasons. We have already started counting our way to 100 days of school and each day the children excitedly remind their teachers what number we have reached. This celebration is a real highlight of the Prep year and we eagerly await our celebration. Thank you to families for signing up for the Prep Numeracy interviews. Your child will be assessed on their current awareness of numbers and mathematical concepts so that their needs can be addressed in our classroom activities. As you are already aware the interviews are 30 minute timeslots and it is vital that you arrive a few minutes before so that every child is tested and that our timetable runs smoothly. Results will not be discussed on the day, due to tight scheduling, however if you have any concerns please speak to your child’s teacher at an appointed time.

Inquiry Learning Topic
Our current Inquiry unit question is “How do I change when things around me change?” This unit will allow us to explore the different aspects of school life. We will explore the children’s transition to school, school routines, classroom and playground rules and the people such as teachers and buddies who will help us in our new environment. The main focus will be to encourage the children to realise that they can become independent learners who are able to organise and look after their belongings. We aim to encourage the children to begin tasks promptly, complete tasks in a set timeframe, listen to instructions and practise good communication skills. We will encourage children to make good choices and we will celebrate their personal achievement. We have introduced the concept of being a “bucket filler” to create a positive culture as the students show kindness, respect and courtesy to those they meet.

Literacy
Prep teachers will be released over the next few weeks to administer the relevant Literacy tests. This testing is quite intensive and results cannot be discussed immediately as the data needs to be collated and analysed to give us a clear picture of your child’s strengths and needs. We will use this information to implement programs which cater to each child’s needs. Take Home books will be sent home when this data has been collated.

Focussed Literacy lessons operate every morning in the Prep classes. Instructions and shared reading activities take place first thing, so it is very important that you have your child at school on time.
For those of you who are new to our school, Literacy Helper information sessions will shortly be run. More details will be provided regarding these sessions at a later date. A “Working with Children Check” is required by any parent helping at school.

**Medication**
If your child has an allergy or requires medication it is important that you advise Administration and your child’s teacher in writing. The relevant form must be completed before medication can be administered. Please note that no painkillers can be administered by the school. Children with asthma are to have labelled puffers stored in the sick bay in the office. If your child is unwell, please keep them at home as the risk of spreading infection is very high in a classroom environment. Any cases of head lice should be reported to the office and treated immediately.

**Notification of Absence**
It is a legal requirement that when your child returns to school after an absence, a note of explanation is given to the classroom teacher. These notes are then filed. An online form is available on the School App and it is an easy way to submit the absence note. Please collect your child from the classroom if you need them to leave early. You will need to sign an early dismissal form first, which can be found in the front office.

**Canteen**
The school canteen operates on a Monday and Friday. The canteen will open for the first time this year on Monday 8th February. A list of items for sale and instructions about how to order can be found on the school website.

**Lunch Boxes**
Please check your child’s lunch box each day. If there is a great deal of food left uneaten or if the lunch box is empty you may need to adjust the amount of food you are providing. We suggest one treat only so that the children will eat the sandwiches, fruit and cheese you often include. Only water is to be placed in drink bottles, no cordial. Children can refill their bottles as needed and they are able to drink from them at any time whilst in the classroom.

**Brain Food**
We encourage children to bring in some “brain food” that they can quietly munch on as they work or eat at an allocated time during the morning session. We ask that these snacks be cut into bite sized manageable pieces that children can easily access and eat without too much mess or fuss. Grapes, apples and carrot sticks are examples of ideal foods. The children will be encouraged to place their “brain food” directly on their tables as they arrive each morning.

**Toys/Valuables**
The policy at St. Simon’s is that, unless requested, students do not bring toys or precious possessions to school, in order to avoid the child becoming upset due to loss or damage. Please note a letter regarding Show and Tell will come home in the next few weeks.
School Assemblies
Whole school assemblies are usually held every second Monday. This timeslot has been chosen so that it does not clash with any specialist classes. You are welcome to attend these at any time if you are free. Parents are requested to sit at the back of the church, due to the amount of space required by the students. As the year progresses, your child’s class will be preparing and presenting their own liturgy. Further details will be provided as we approach these dates.

Labelling Belongings
Please ensure that all items of school clothing are clearly labelled with your child’s name. A spare pair of socks and underwear should be kept in your child’s bag and is both helpful and necessary in case of accidents and muddy falls in winter.

School Stationery/ Supplies
If you have not already returned ALL of your child’s stationery items, books and classroom supplies, please do so as soon as possible because as though we may not be using them straight away, we do need to check that we have them ready to use. These books are allocated to different subject areas, resulting in many of them being used once a day.

Food Allergies
Birthday treats are welcomed in the Prep classes, but need to be given to the teacher to be handed out. Please inform your child’s teacher in writing of any allergies your child has and the procedures to be followed. If a nut allergy exists, please inform your child’s teacher in writing if your child is able to eat treats or ingredients which read “may contain traces of nuts”. We request that NO nuts or nut products such as Nutella or Peanut Butter are sent to school.

School Nurse
A School Nurse will visit our students later in the year. As the time approaches, parents will receive further information along with consent forms. If, however, your child’s class teacher or you as their parents have concerns you would like addressed prior to these visits, it is imperative that these discussions occur with the relevant parties sooner rather than later. The upcoming parent/teacher chats might be the place to start.

Prep Prayer Night
The Prep Prayer Night will take place on Tuesday 23rd February from 6.30pm – 7.30pm. The Prep teachers look forward to sharing this night of reflection with their Prep students and their families. The evening is held in the Parish Church and is a highlight of Term One.

Prep Sports Night
The Prep Sports Night is another highlight of the Term One Prep calendar. It will take place on Tuesday 22nd March. In recent years it has been quite a social event for our families. More details to follow. In the event of inclement weather on the day, the Sports Night may be rescheduled.
Cyber Safety Policy
You will have received a Cyber Safety Policy Form. Please ensure you read this with your child and complete the appropriate slip and return it to your child’s teacher, as soon as possible.

Staff Email Addresses
The Prep staff are available to discuss any of your concerns but we ask you to make an appointment time to meet, especially for more complex issues. Booking an appointment assists us in giving you the attention you require to address your concerns adequately. Alternatively, you may choose to contact us via the following email addresses:

erodrigo@ssrowville.catholic.edu.au
mhiscox@ssrowville.catholic.edu.au
slugens@ssrowville.catholic.edu.au
nlafontaine@ssrowville.catholic.edu.au

We look forward to meeting you at our Parent/Teacher chats.

Elizabeth Rodrigo  Samantha Lutgens  Natalie La Fontaine  Megan Hiscox

Important Prep Term Dates

February
3rd - No school for Preps. Prep testing
5th - Opening of the School Year Mass 11.30 (Preps not attending)
8th – Parent/Teacher Chats
9th – Shrove Tuesday
10th - Ash Wednesday. No school for Preps. Prep testing
11th - Parent/Teacher Chats
17th - No school for Preps. Prep testing
22nd - Harmony Day Liturgy
23rd - Prep Prayer Night
24th - No school for Preps. Prep testing

March
7th - Assembly/ Liturgy
9th - School Photos
11th - Staff Professional Development Day. No school for students
14th - Labour Day holiday
18th - Passion Sunday Liturgy 11.30
21st - Holy Thursday Liturgy 2.30
22nd – Prep Sports Night
24th - Good Friday Liturgy 11.30. End of Term 1.