Principal’s Letter

Dear parents, friends and Father Simon,

It certainly has been a huge couple of weeks for our prep students. I had the pleasure of being in the class for thirty minutes this week and I was most impressed with their eagerness to assist me. Thanks Anne for the great job you are doing.

Our assemblies have been well attended on Mondays and will stay on Mondays for the remainder of the year. My apologies to the two families who have indicated that they are unable to attend on a Monday.

Our Artist in Residence continues to impress with her skills and expertise. If you have not already seen some of her handiwork as well as our student’s, please see look on Instagram (STMPS15) or see Mrs Davis. This program will culminate in a mural that all students will assist with.

This is the second year we have run our ‘Protective Behaviours’ program in conjunction with ECASA. This phase of the program is running in prep to grade two. The grade three students will participate later in the year and the students in grades 4-6 who have already been exposed to the first year of the program will complete a ‘year B’ program. Please see Amanda Pawley for more information.

The ‘Big Dreams Market’ is on again this Saturday at OUR SCHOOL. It is a twilight market that will run between 3–8pm. All welcome.

Please remember that the next P&F meeting is taking place on Tuesday morning. Please feel free to come along.

Have a great week.

Duncan Arendse
Principal

26 February
Thursday of the 1st week of Lent
‘Good and gracious God, guide our hearts, that we may see you in one another and walk in your light as we travel through our lifetime. Take our hands in yours and set them to the work of making our prayers for love, reconciliation, and justice realities in our time and place.’

Daily Reflections for Lent, Not by Bread Alone 2015

Board Shorts

At the most recent Board meeting we discussed the best way to solve issues. Please see further in the newsletter for the recommended approach to seeking answers to issues that may arise at school.

Members also reviewed the upcoming iPad information session.

Several recommendations for the content were also suggested and will be put into action.

The search for new Board members has resulted in six interested people seeking further information. Nominations are due back next week and will be published in next week’s newsletter. If more than two nominations are received members of our school community will be asked to vote.

Ben Brockliss—Board Chairman

Board / P&F Profile

Kate Bradley
General Board Member

Parent of:
Jack (Gr 6), Liam (Gr2) & two not at STM

Likes:
wine, chocolate, running & netball

Years at St Thomas More:
Seven

Reason for joining:
To be involved in my children’s education and be a voice for parents.
This year we are running a combined Literacy and Numeracy Classroom Helpers Course in term 1. A big thanks to those people who sent back replies indicating their preferred times. As a result of those responses, we will be having two sessions:

Monday 2nd & 16th March, 7-9pm
In the staffroom
- Drinks and nibbles provided -

The course will focus on early reading, writing, speaking & listening and numeracy skills and is a pre-requisite if you wish to help in the Prep-2 classrooms during Literacy or Maths. Even if you are not able to help in the classroom, you would be most welcome to attend to find out how to help your child with their learning. Some people may also be interested to find out more about how things work at STM. In other words, everyone is most welcome!

Looking forward to seeing you there

Judy Smith/Literacy Leader
judys@smbelgrave.catholic.edu.au

Monica Rayner/Maths Leader
monica@smbelgrave.catholic.eu.au
Who Can I Talk To?

From time to time in any school, parents may have a concern or an issue about school life.

Many issues / concerns can be resolved with a conversation with the person concerned i.e. the classroom teacher or specialist teacher. (Please make an appointment).

If you need to, make an appointment to see the Deputy Principal or the Principal to discuss the matter further.

You can make an appointment to see the Parish Priest, who has pastoral oversight of the Parish Primary school.

NOTE: School Board members are able to provide assistance with policy matters and additional advice for parents.

Senior Students Mentoring

This year we are proud to announce that our mentoring program will continue.

Thanks to Chris Crennan, who will be working with a small group of Year 6 boys this term, on practical projects with an emphasis on building healthy relationships, getting along with others and positive role models. This program is set to continue throughout the year for the Year 6 boys, mentored by other willing dads and granddads.

Lighthouse Program

The Lighthouse program, in conjunction with St Joseph's College, will be commencing shortly. In this program, Year 10 students mentor small groups of boys in grades 5 & 6 in a variety of Literacy based projects, culminating in a celebratory Expo night held at St Joseph's mid-year.

Empowering Girls

The ‘Empowering Girls’ mentoring program is being run by Judy Smith and Michelle Burgess with our grade six girls. The program supports girls in understanding social hierarchy, gossiping, teasing, rumours and provides them with strategies to empower themselves to overcome day to day issues and to equip them with skills they can take on to secondary school. The program is run in a safe environment which supports open conversation, with a strong emphasis on confidentiality and is run over three sessions.

Lunch Time Club

Of course, it is important to mention here our long running Lunch Time Club, which provides respite and social skills practice to students in need. The club runs five days a week during part of the lunch break.

These programs are ‘added extras’ in our curriculum and form part of the overall Social Skills program at the school. Please feel free to ask any of these people or Jeanette Wicks for more information.

Fantale Challenge

Wins for 2015

It is with great pleasure that I announce the three winners of the Fantale challenge for 2015.

Juniors
Stefanie T—Fantale wrapper was an amazing 75cm long.

Middles
Alice F—Fantale wrapper was speculator at 105cm long.

Seniors
Gabby S—Fantale wrapper was totally mind blowing at 180cm long.

Once again I am totally lost for words (and that hardly ever happens!) at how these students managed to get the wrappers so looong! I dare you to try at home...

Mrs Rayner

CAN YOU HELP shift sand?

We have approximately three wheel barrow loads of sand that need to be shifted approximately five metres. If you can assist please let Duncan know.
Hi Everyone! Last week at after school care we had heaps of fun creating, playing, cooking and laughing! We celebrated Shrove Tuesday with yummy pancakes (which we made ourselves!), made our own bubble mixture and sticks – which was so much fun and found ways of staying cool through the heat! Come on in and say hi, we would love for you to join us. Have a great week!

Josh

Next week’s activities:

SPORT WEEK!
Monday 2 March: Newspaper Hockey
Tuesday 3 March: Soccer
Wednesday 4 March: Basketball
Thursday 5 March: Cricket
Friday 6 March: PUPIL FREE DAY – NO OSHC

AUTUMN HOLIDAY PROGRAM COMING SOON
Our team have been working hard on the Autumn Holiday Program and bookings will soon be open. We have heaps of fun activities planned that you won’t want to miss out on! Be sure to check our website for updates and watch this space...

Parent Portal: extend.com.au
What’s the Issue?
Spreading rumours and bullying is nothing new. Kids have always found ways to be cruel to one another. But computers, mobile phones, and digital technologies make bullying easier and more widespread. Kids now use their mobile phones and computers to hurt, humiliate, and harass each other, and it’s starting at younger ages. Cyberbullying is defined as repeatedly sending or posting harmful or mean messages, images, or videos about someone else using the Internet, mobile phones, or other digital technologies. Kids may call each other names, say nasty things about one another, threaten each other, or make others feel uncomfortable or scared. Children’s increased access to digital technology has created more pathways to communicate — for both good and for bad. Although cyberbullying is typically associated with tweens and teens, more cases are now being reported with younger children. Cyberbullying is especially disturbing because it is constant, inescapable, and very public. It can happen anytime — at school or at home — and can involve large groups of kids. The combination of the boldness created by being anonymous and the desire to be seen as “cool” can cause a kid who normally wouldn’t say anything mean face to face to show off to other kids by cyberbullying someone. Younger kids may bully to get attention, because they think it will make them popular, or because they want to look tough and make others afraid of them. And because it happens online, it can easily go undetected by parents and teachers.

Why Does It Matter?
Cyberbullying is a growing problem among younger kids. Younger kids are starting to use online communication and at the same time they are exploring ways to test other people’s reactions. For instance, kids who send a mean message might not fully understand how another person might react to that message. What’s more, hurtful information posted on the Internet is extremely difficult to prevent or remove, and anyone can see it. Imagine being publically humiliated in front of everyone you know. Such behaviour usually happens when adults aren’t around. So parents and teachers often see only the anxiety or depression that results from their kids being hurt or bullied. Parents can help by becoming aware of the issue, learning to identify the warning signs of bullying, and helping kids to understand how to be respectful to others online.

What Families Can Do?
Make a list together of how talking online is different than talking face to face. Get kids to think about how it might be easier to say things online you wouldn’t say in person, and how this may be good sometimes and a problem at other times. Practise writing a text or chat message to a friend. Model for your child how to compliment people and how to avoid mean words or behaviours. Point out that it’s important to stick up for others, online as well as in the real world. Discuss ways they can support friends who are bullied and report bad behaviour they see online.

Common sense says:
Limit online socialising. Because there is more risk for bullying on sites where kids can openly communicate, avoid open and free chat sites and look for those that offer prescribed or prescreened chat options, like Webkinz or Club Penguin. Explain the basics of good behaviour online. Remind your kids that being mean, lying, or telling secrets hurts — both online and offline. And remember to praise your child when you see good behaviour. Remind your kids not to share passwords with their friends. A common form of cyberbullying is when kids share passwords, log on to another child’s account, and pretend to be that person. Kids can protect themselves by learning that passwords are strictly private, and they should be shared only with their parents.

Make sure they talk to someone (even if it’s not you). A child should tell a parent, teacher, or trusted adult if he or she is being bullied online. Tell your child that this isn’t tattling, it’s standing up for him- or herself.

Advise them on how to handle cyberbullying. Even though they might be tempted to, your child should never retaliate against a cyberbully. They can stop the cycle by not responding to the bully. Also remind them to save the evidence rather than delete it.

Establish consequences for bullying behaviour. If your child is mean to or humiliates another child, consider taking phone and computer privileges away and discuss what it means to be respectful to others.
Hello Everyone! Hope you are enjoying your week. It is almost March!

On Sunday the 12th April we have a tentative booking to have a stall at the Belgrave Big Dreams Market. This market is located at our school.

We are going to be handing out school brochures, passing out info on the Go Big For The Kids event and selling the tickets. If you don’t want to buy the tickets through our Facebook page, you have between now and the 12th April to gather your money together (tables of 10 and $20 per head) and bring your dosh and table list to our stall and get your tickets.

It’s very exciting!!

The more people that support the market, the better for our school as the P&F are paid a little money from the coordinator of the market.

We are after Easter Egg Donations for the upcoming Easter Egg Raffle. We would love all sorts of Easter Eggs, gift baskets, Easter Gift Bags, Easter themed stuff, toys. If you could drop the donations into the “Easter Donations” box located in the Staff room that would be wonderful!

Thank you to our Head Lice Ninja’s who came along last Thursday and checked the kid’s heads. Thank you ladies.

You should all be very proud of yourselves too because we had the lowest figures for eggs and lice since we started the program. Thank you so much for being proactive in removing those pests.

We are always on the lookout for more Ninjas, so please ask the office for more information on becoming a Nit Remover.

More information for all the above topics is on our FACEBOOK group – STM Parents and Friends. We have 65 family members. Please tell your fellow school friends about this group and invite them to join. Everyone involved are really fantastic and friendly and it’s a wonderful place to swap ideas and keep up to date with school happenings.
Dear Parents and Friends,

**Re: Go Big For The Kids**

On behalf of the St Thomas More’s Primary School Belgrave community, we would like to ask you for your help. We need monetary donations and/or prizes to go toward our Go Big For The Kids Trivia and Auction Event, to be held on Saturday the 2nd of May 2015.

Our community has been affected by the life threatening illnesses of two of our beloved families.

Matthew and Donna Anderton’s son Cooper has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy which results in muscle degeneration and Chris and Helen Crennan’s daughters Ayva and Jorja have Ataxia Telangiectasia which is a very rare neurodegenerative disorder.

Our community has been touched by these families not only because of the way they handle the hardship they have been dealt, but because they are wonderful and kind-hearted and always pay it forward to anyone they meet. Our Community would like to pay it forward to them to help honour and continue the children’s fight against their diseases.

The toll these illnesses have on our families is profound. The children must endure ongoing treatments and hospital stays while their families cope with unimaginable stress, anxiety and financial strain. Your generous support will assist us in providing help, hope and care to our families.

Our goal for our event is to raise enough money for a car for each family to comfortably transport their children as the addition of wheelchair access becomes necessary.

We are so proud to be a part of the Go Big For The Kids event and would appreciate any support you are able to offer. We have made a commitment to help our families in need, and we cannot try and meet our fundraising goals without help from your organization.

We sincerely appreciate any donation you are able to offer, please remember that any amount helps!

If you need more information please contact:

Terri Walsh 0400 525 008
Toni Brockliss 0458 995 501 or 9752 6885
gobigforthekids@gmail.com or join our Facebook group - www.facebook.com/groups/gobigforthekids/
Sisters Ayva and Jorja are two of only 40-50 diagnosed children in Australia and approx. 600 worldwide with a rare disease called Ataxia-Telangiectasia (A-T). A-T is a hereditary progressive neurodegenerative disorder.

Ayva had always been unsteady on her feet from the time she took her first steps as a baby, but by the time she was three years old there was no improvement. Ayva was taken to a paediatrician who referred us on to The Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH), where she had an MRI.

At the time nothing was detected but over the next few years she started to slowly deteriorate and was becoming more unstable on her feet. We were told it was likely cerebral palsy.

Around the time Ayva turned eight years of age she suddenly had a huge deterioration in her mobility and needed assistance to walk. After another MRI the team at the RCH noticed a change in her brain function and Ayva was referred on to RCH neurologist Dr Victoria Rodriguez-Casero and in December 2011 had chromosomal testing, leading to a diagnosis of A-T in January 2012. Just two months later, Jorja was diagnosed with the same condition.

The disease is a combination of cystic fibrosis, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and also includes immune deficiency and a high rate of developing malignancies such as leukaemia and lymphoma. Most A-T children are dependent on wheelchairs by the age of 10 and can only get around with assistance. Children usually die from respiratory failure or cancer by their teens or early twenties. There is no cure for A-T and currently no way to slow the progression of the disease.

A-T is a complex disease, of all the children with the condition none are exactly the same. The way to explain it is if you think of A-T as having 10 different symptoms, one child might have symptom number one and two, another child might have three, four and five and one might have all of the symptoms, they never present in the same way or at the same time.

The girls do physiotherapy and hydrotherapy frequently and are often in for appointments with their specialists at the RCH. Specialists include: neurologist, respiratory specialist, immunologist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, skin therapist, eye specialist and oral therapist.
If the girls come into contact with someone with an infectious disease they have to be taken in to the RCH for an immunoglobulin injection immediately to supplement the weakened immune system. No chances can be taken – it could be the difference between life and death.

The girls participated, for the first time, in an A-T research clinic last year in Brisbane. It involves most of the kids with A-T from around Australia and the girls will continue to go every year in the hope the research will lead to a positive outcome. This clinic is funded by a non-profit organisation called BrAshA-T.

Ayva is now 11-years-old and Jorja is five-years-old. Including their older sister Kelsey (non A-T), they are loving and caring sisters, who always support each other well. Jorja helps Ayva with walking to the swings and getting around the house. Some mornings she even helps her big sister get dressed, but only if she’s in a good mood, they are still just normal sisters after all.

Ayva can only walk assisted, otherwise she has frequent falls. Jorja is unsteady on her feet and gets around unassisted but has falls when she is tired.

Day-to-day, we work hard to maintain a normal existence and a positive attitude for the girls. Ayva and Jorja are treated just like any 'normal' kids. If they have a small fall we say 'up you get, brush yourself off'. We try not to make a big deal of it.

Our lives have changed significantly.

Helen and Chris Crennan

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COOPER

At age 3 and a half, it was noticed that Cooper had difficulty climbing walking and was unable to ride his bike as he seemed to lack leg strength. After several investigations doctors, x-rays and paediatricians in early 2011, Cooper was diagnosed in June with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy.

So we were devastated to learn the progression of Duchenne. 1:3500 boys are born with Duchenne. This is because Duchenne is a recessive condition. Two thirds of cases are directly inherited from the mother’s X chromosome, whereas the remaining are the result of a genetic spontaneous mutation.

Basically due to a genetic mistake the body is unable to make the protein Dystrophin. Dystrophin maintains the integrity of muscle fibres or regenerates muscle that is damaged in everyday activities. For children with Duchenne they are born as healthy looking babies but carry a secret. It is not until the children seem to be slightly delayed in their gross motor skills, commonly between the ages of 3-5, that concern begins to grow.

Children with Duchenne generally begin to walk with a waddling gait around 3-4, they fall frequently and often need assistance to get up from the floor. Between the ages of 9-12 we can expect that Cooper will need the assistance of a wheelchair due to the loss of leg strength and mobility. Then his torso and arm muscles continue to decline. The heart and diaphragm for breathing are also affected as they too are muscles. Respiratory infections and cardiac issues are some of the major complications that contribute to children with Duchenne passing away in their late teens to mid-twenties.

Steroids are the only cause of treatment to help prolong muscle strength for as long as possible. There are many side effects to long term steroid use and these have to all be carefully monitored. We are very lucky that we are cared for so well by all those at the Royal Children’s Hospital. We attend the hospital roughly every 8 weeks...

Children with Duchenne endure nightly stretches to stop the wasting muscles shrinking and tendons tightening. They socially and emotionally struggle with wanting to be the same as everyone else and knowing they are not. They tire easily during a school day and often sit out to rest or need to use mobility aides to help them conserve energy.

Cooper is now 7 and we are beginning to notice that life is becoming more challenging. Walking is becoming more laboured and he tends to withdraw himself from whole class activities when it becomes too tiring for him. His stretches are becoming more involved and time consuming and his heart is beginning to show signs of decline and medications are now required to preserve his heart muscle for as long as we can.

Cooper wants to be just like a normal kid...and we strive to provide that as best we can every day.