

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mater Dei. May your daughters, sons and families enjoy their time with us and experience growth and success spiritually, academically, physically and socially. Mater Dei is a coeducational school for students from Kindergarten to Year 12 who have been assessed with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities as their primary disability. Mater Dei is a Congregational school located within the Wollongong Diocese and it is under the auspices of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan whose ethos is one of peace, prayer, service, hospitality, stewardship and social justice.

The underpinning philosophy of every student's enrolment at Mater Dei is inclusion into the wider community. Inclusion is based on the dignity and uniqueness of each person, self-esteem, respect, equity, independence, interdependence and responsibility. We work collaboratively with parents, carers and advocates of the students entrusted into our care thus providing a student-centred community at Mater Dei. In this way it is our hope that students will live as independently as possible in the least restrictive and most stimulating environment in the wider community.

Mater Dei's programs aim to

- provide a comprehensive, holistic and individual education for each student
- ensure a safe, non-threatening yet challenging teaching and learning environment for each student
- promote spiritual, personal, social, physical, emotional, academic and vocational development through all school programs
- enable each student to maximise his/her achievements
- encourage each student to take responsibility for his/her own behaviour and to accept the consequences of his/her behaviour
- help each student develop positive self-esteem
- encourage each student to appreciate the worth, equity and needs of others
- develop and maintain a partnership between home and school
- constantly assess, program for and evaluate each student's development, progression and needs
- work with mainstream schools, the wider community and local employers to create experiences and opportunities for each student
- prepare each student for effective transition through all stages of education, and
- expand each staff member's professional expertise through ongoing training and professional development to deepen everyone's understanding of the impact of disabilities on our students to ensure best practice as we educate students at Mater Dei.

Mater Dei School is only one of a number of services offered at Mater Dei. Other services include

- **Bethany Early Intervention Program**
This is a family-centred program providing an education and therapy program for children from birth to 6 years of age. In addition Bethany offers support to these children's families and carers and supports them as they determine the most appropriate school setting for their children.
- **Family Resource Program**
This is predominantly a residential program offering individualized independent living skills for students who are in Years 7-12 (or from 12 to 18 years of age) and support for their families. The students reside for one to four nights each week during the school term, in one of four community-based houses in the Macarthur area.

- **Development Program**

This program assists Mater Dei's progression and growth by raising awareness and financial support in the wider community. At Mater Dei we receive approximately 80% of our funding from government sources and the remaining 20% is raised from our Fee policy and initiatives undertaken by the Development Program eg Mater Dei's Annual Charity Golf day, our annual Fundraising Dinner, Mater Dei's Peace Egg, Mater Dei Foundation membership, preparation of submissions etc.

- **Administration** staff will answer your questions and concerns or redirect you to one of the Program Managers where relevant. Each member of staff in Administration has a specific area of responsibility. In 2010, the following personnel comprise the Mater Dei Administration team:

Name	Main responsibilities	Days/Hours of Work
Helen Flett	Reception	Mon, Wed & Thurs
Lisa Gruar	Payroll, student fees	Tues, Wed & Thurs
Anne Lauder	Business Manager	Mon to Fri
Tina McManus	HR Officer	Mon, Tues & Fri
Luisa Penman	PA to the CEO/Principal	Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri & every second Wed
Katrina Sims	Reception, IT Support	Mon, Tues & Fri

MANAGEMENT

Mater Dei is managed by a Board of Directors through the CEO/Principal. In turn, each Program is under the leadership of a Program Manager.

CEO/Principal	Mr Tony Fitzgerald	(02) 46 557481
Assistant Principal	Mrs Pamela Templeton	(02) 46 557481
Administration & Business Manager	Ms Anne Lauder	(02) 46 557481
Bethany Early Intervention Program Manager	Mrs Vida Carmody	(02) 46 557440
Development Manager	Mrs Debbie Gates	(02) 46 557481
Family Resource Program Manager	Ms Jenine Purdy	(02) 46 557481

CLASS GROUPINGS AND SCHOOL STAFF

Students are grouped according to their age and natural progression occurs as it does for their mainstream peers. A Pastoral Teacher is responsible for each class. In 2010, Mater Dei School's staff is as follows

Assistant Principal	Mrs Pamela Templeton	(02) 46 557481
Religion Education Coordinator	Mrs Helen Fahey	(02) 46 557481
Primary Coordinator	Mrs Rebecca Gibbs	(02) 46 557481
Secondary Coordinator	Ms Samantha Giles	(02) 46 557481

Pastoral Teachers

Kinder Purple	Mrs Eryn Lonergan
Kinder Red	Mrs Michelle Charles
Primary R	Mrs Mary Rudd
Primary G	Mrs Rebecca Gibbs (M-Th) & Mrs Rebecca Hanrahan (F)
Primary S	Mrs Anne Salway
Primary K	Mrs Rowena Kennedy (W-F) & Ms Katie Roberts (M-T)
Secondary W	Mrs Carla Warby
Secondary A	Mrs Kellie Andersen (M, T & F) & Mrs Donna Dunstan (W-Th)
Secondary R	Mrs Gayle Roberts
Secondary F	Mrs Helen Fahey (T, W & Th) & Mrs Leanne Steedman (M & F)
Year 11/12 G	Ms Samantha Giles (M, W, Th & F) & Mrs Leanne Steedman (T)
Year 11/12 P	Mrs Glynis Patrick
Relief From Face to Face (RFF)	Mr Alan Moore

Teachers' Assistants

Ms Lisa Bampton	5 days
Mrs Julieta Borgia-Brain	5 days
Mrs Kerry Vivar	5 days
Mrs Kerrie Borthwich RN	5 days
Ms Amanda Giles	4 days
Mr Christopher Herd	2 days (Th-Fri)
Mrs Leigh Hough	5 days

Mrs Helen Jacob	5 days
Mrs Coleen Merlino	5 days
Mrs Cherie Milgate	3 days (T-Th)
Mrs Donna Morrison	5 days
Mrs Christine McIntyre	5 days
Mrs Sue Neal	4 days (T-F)
Mrs Gillian O'Riordan	3 days (T-Th)
Mrs Karen Powell	3 days (T, W & F)
Mrs Kim Rosetto	4 days (M-Th)
Mrs Kerri Whitfield	2 days (M & Th)
Mrs Kerry Vivar	1 day (W)

THE SCHOOL DAY

The school day begins at 9.00am with students moving directly to classrooms upon their arrival by taxi, bus or from parents/carers drop off. Pastoral Teachers read each student's diary and deal with pastoral matters whilst students complete routine and daily tasks. Students have Lunch #1 at 10.30am and Lunch #2 at 12.45pm.

Students who travel to Camden in the afternoon move independently to the taxi ramp at 2.50pm where two Teachers Assistants will supervise them and assist students to move safely to the bus. Remaining students stay in their classrooms with their Pastoral Teachers and Teacher Assistants until their taxis are called via the intercom. Students move to the taxi ramp prior to parents/carers pick up where they are supervised to safely board their appropriate taxis and cars.

STUDENT DIARIES

All students have an individual Mater Dei School diary that is a means of communication between home, school and Residence if applicable. Pastoral Teachers collect and read each student's diary as students arrive in the classroom in the morning, to ensure daily information is noted eg medication change. Pastoral Teachers write in each student's diary on a regular basis and focus upon positive achievements during the day or week.

Students are encouraged to be responsible for their own diaries and deliver them to their parents/carers, Pastoral Teachers and FRP staff, if applicable. Pastoral Teachers also establish a class email address to enhance general communication between school and home. Pastoral teachers will also communicate individually with parents/carers via email once this means of communication is established.

COMMUNICATION

Good clear communication is vital to ensure a safe, happy and successful teaching and learning environment for students, their parents/carers and members of staff. Communication is also the cornerstone of a firm partnership between, home, school, the Residential Program and the wider community.

The weekly Mater Dei School Newsletter is distributed to students' parents/carers each Friday and consists of the CEO/Principal's letter, the Assistant Principal's letter, Assembly Awards, diary updates and information regarding school and community events. The weekly Mater Dei School

Newsletter may also be received via email once Administration has received your email address. Special flyers are forwarded with the weekly Newsletter and via email.

If a student is absent on a particular Friday, the student's Newsletter and additional flyers will be clearly labeled with the student's name and forwarded to Administration. Administration staff will envelope the absent student's Newsletter and additional flyers and include them in Friday afternoon's mail collection.

On a Term basis, "Mater Dei Matters" is published and distributed to parents/carers and members of the local and wider community. This publication is comprised of reports and information from all Program Areas at Mater Dei.

The Mater Dei website ensures extended communication with all members of the Mater Dei community and those seeking information about the Organisation, its programs and facilities. The website is updated weekly. The Mater Dei School Newsletter and additional flyers are added to the Mater Dei website each Friday ie www.materdei.org.au.

Mater Dei also has in place an SMS Alert/Reminder for staff, parents/carers and taxi drivers which is a means of communicating appropriate information to relevant personnel. In no way does this system replace our usual means of communication with staff such as communication/staff meetings, correspondence etc or with parents/carers such as the student diaries, weekly newsletters and telephone calls.

HOMEWORK

The Mater Dei School day is carefully planned to ensure that all Key Learning Areas (KLAs) are relevantly time tabled, taught, assessed and evaluated. As students experience a very busy day, Mater Dei School has a "No Homework Policy" and does not send homework home with students however home reading based on the student's individual needs is encouraged.

STUDENT ABSENCES

Parents/carers are asked to advise the school by telephone on the morning of a student's absence having already advised the taxi driver if applicable. Upon the student's return to school, parents/carers are asked to send a written note explaining the student's absence as the school is legally required to sight, sign and store notes of absence as well as record each absence in the Class Roll.

ASSEMBLIES

Principal's Assembly

A full school Assembly is held on the first Monday in each Term in the Hall at 1.45pm when the CEO/Principal presents the Principal's Awards ie one each for Infants, Primary, Secondary and Years 11 and 12.

Weekly Assembly

Primary classes attend the Primary Assembly in the Hall at 9.45am each Monday. Secondary classes attend the Secondary Assembly in the Hall at 1.45pm each Monday. Pastoral Teachers prepare and present Academic, Uniform, Citizenship, Transport and Swimming Awards at Assemblies each week. The Assistant Principal presents the weekly Stewardship Award to a class who exemplifies the Rule of St Benedict. The names of students who receive awards at the Assemblies are included in the weekly Newsletter.

INDIVIDUAL PLANS (IPs)

An Individual Plan (IP) is written for each student from Kindergarten to Year 11 and involves a collaborative process with the student, parents, carers, Pastoral Teacher, FRP staff (if applicable) and advocates directly concerned meeting to discuss and determine relevant, achievable outcomes for the student to work towards during the following twelve months. The IP is a written plan of action specifying agreed priority outcomes for the subsequent year and its aim is to provide consistent support, education and training across all areas of the student's life.

Newly enrolled students have their IP meetings before the end of Term I whilst progressing students' IP meetings are facilitated in Term II. Every student's IP is reviewed annually or earlier if deemed necessary. Students in Year 12 have their final IPs reviewed at their meeting in Term II when Mater Dei School facilitates their application for their Post School Programs that are funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability & Home Care (ADHC).

POST SCHOOL PROGRAM (PSP) FUNDING

Graduating Year 12 students are eligible to make application for Post School Program Funding in Year 12. PSP funding is provided by the Department of Ageing, Disability & Homecare (ADHC) and provides ongoing training for graduating students for two or more years after they leave school. A Post School Program Information Night is held at the beginning of Term II each year to explain this funding and the Assistant Principal facilitates the application process with each Year 12 student and his/her parents, carers and advocates. Students in Years 12, 11 and 10 and their parents/carers are invited and strongly encouraged to attend this very important Information Night in Term II.

MEDICATION POLICY

Many students are on daily or occasional medication for a range of reasons. All staff will be familiar with each student's medical history. Students bring their medication to school either weekly or monthly in a sealed Webster Pack via the Taxi Drivers who forward it in their relevant taxi collection bag to the School Assistants on morning Taxi duty who immediately hand it to the Registered Nurse (RN) or First Aid Officer on Duty. It is passed on directly to Pastoral Teachers if students travel by bus or are dropped off nby parents/carers and then immediately forwarded to the RN or First Aid Officer on Duty.

All medication is stored in a locked cabinet in the First Aid Room and may only be administered by the RN or First Aid Officer on Duty at specified times during the day. The student's Medical Practitioner and parents/carers must complete the Mater Dei Medication Schedule before medication may be administered. In addition, Mater Dei's Medication register must be signed and dated as students' medication is passed from home to school to Residence, to Respite, to Before and After School Service Providers etc (if relevant).

STUDENT ILLNESS/ACCIDENT

If a student arrives at school unwell or becomes unwell and basic care does not see improvement, parents/ carers are contacted by a member of the Primary or Secondary Coordinators or the Assistant Principal to collect their son/daughter. If the parents/carers are unavailable or are unable to come to school directly, then the emergency contact is informed and suitable arrangements are made by a member of the School Executive to care for the student until they are picked up from Mater Dei School.

INCLUSION PROGRAM

All students are involved in Mater Dei's Inclusion Program that involves Community Access, Inclusive Schooling Program and Structured Work Placement Program (SWP) with social inclusion prioritised in each case. A new, innovative model of Inclusive Schooling will be trialed during Term II with whole class groupings being welcomed into neighbouring mainstream schools. Inclusion in mainstream schools provides students with the opportunity to learn with and from their mainstream peers as well as giving them the time and place to gain the attitudes and skills necessary for living in regular communities where everyone is included as a valued and equal member.

Mater Dei's Higher School Certificate Program offers post-compulsory education and training for students in Years 11 and 12 through an accredited curriculum that addresses social, recreational, work and living skills for a successful life after school.

All students in the post-compulsory Years 11 and 12 participate in the Structured Work Placement Program both in school and in the wider community. The skills developed during this regular work placement will be recognised as part of the student's portfolio of life on leaving Mater Dei School. Ongoing assessments address the issues of work skills, attitudes and self-esteem as well as interpersonal, leisure, recreational, decision-making and problem-solving skills. Each student, parents/carers and the Pastoral Teacher collaboratively plan, assess and evaluate the Structured Work Placement Program which is coordinated by the Secondary Coordinator.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Mater Dei School's Religious Education Program underpins all teaching and learning at Mater Dei and we celebrate important occasions in the Church calendar with Masses and Liturgies including our annual Opening Mass, Mothers Day Mass, Feast Day Mass, Residential Mass and End of Year Mass. Each class grouping is involved in a Religious Education Program on a daily basis with prayer, spirituality and Bible stories incorporated into the students' teaching and learning. We also prepare students for their First Holy Eucharist and Confirmation in alternate years.

SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Although Mater Dei is a school committed to meeting the educational needs of students with mild to moderate cognitive disabilities, we recognise that students often present with much wider needs than those indicated by this measure and may include communication and sensory impairment, mobility, emotional and behavioural problems. We welcome each student as an individual, each with his/her own strengths, stage of development, abilities and needs that will be recognized and honoured in a community that is supportive and committed to addressing individual strengths and frailties.

Each student's program will be modified, adjusted and facilitated through the student's Individual Plan (IP). Each student will access a broad, balanced, relevant and differentiated curriculum. Many of the areas of the curriculum are interlinked and should not be seen as totally separate. Each course of instruction is a mixture of individualised teaching and learning with an emphasis on literacy, numeracy and personal development.

There is an educational focus on the process of learning, the four macro-skills (listening, talking, reading and writing), physical fitness, personal hygiene, safety and independence, the development of interpersonal relationships, the affirmation of values and attitudes, the development of life skills, the ability to make safe, wise choices in all settings and the enrichment

students will acquire as they take stewardship of their own environment thus ensuring it is there for future generations to enjoy. The development of each student's communication skills is paramount.

As each student's needs are assessed, programs are written and implemented for individuals or small groups and communication between home and school is fostered. The progress of each student at Mater Dei will be closely assessed and monitored by his/her Pastoral Teacher. A Mid Year Report will be forwarded to parents/carers at the end of Term II and a comprehensive review of each student's progress will be formalised in the End of Year Report.

We strive to work closely and collaboratively with parents/carers to ensure a mutually consistent approach to key issues throughout each student's school life. In addition to the formal opportunities offered for parent consultation, we will meet with you and respond to your questions, concerns, comments and requests at the earliest opportunity.

All students are able to benefit from the close links that we maintain with local colleges and employers during the Year 11 and 12 students' transition from school to work or further education. We consider it vital that parents/carers are presented with the latest information to facilitate successful Post School decisions and choices. Students will grow in self-esteem being able to take their rightful place in society as they progress through mainstream work placement, recognizing, tackling and dealing with individual challenges.

Kindergarten-Year 6

Religious Education permeates all aspects of each student's teaching and learning programs. In addition, students in Kindergarten to Year 6 receive instruction in the following Key Learning Areas (KLAs)

- English
- Mathematics
- Human Society and Its Environment (HSIE)
- Creative & Performing Arts (CAPA)
- Personal Development, Health & Physical Education (PDHPE)
- Science & Technology

Year 7-10

Students in Years 7 to 10 receive instruction in Religious Education as well as the following Key Learning Areas (KLAs)

- English
- Mathematics
- Creative & Performing Arts (CAPA)
- Human Society & Its Environment (HSIE)
- Languages
- Personal Development, Health & Physical Education (PDHPE)
- Technology & Applied Sciences (TAS)

Mater Dei has accreditation for the Year 10 School Certificate Life Skills Course. Students may access a combination of courses that will reflect the Key Learning Areas for the School Certificate. Students in Year 10 will receive a School Certificate Testamur, a Record of Achievement listing all courses that have been completed and a School Profile describing the student's achievements.

Year 11 and 12

Students in Year 11 will undertake the Year 11 Preliminary Life Skills Course then progress to the Year 12 Higher School Certificate Life Skills Course or a Year 12 Record of Achievement from the Board of Studies incorporating courses which range from functional programs to mainstream Board Developed Syllabuses. We believe that all young adults have the right to engage in meaningful employment that will enhance their individual abilities.

The skills developed during Structured Work Placement will facilitate the students' transition from school to the next phase of their lives whether it be employment, continuing education, personal management, mobility in the community, full or part-time work, TAFE or independent travel. Students in Year 12 are eligible to apply for Post School Funding Program in Term II in Year 12 and commence this program the following year.

To meet each student's individual strengths and needs we include the following:

- a holistic education based on the ethos of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan and their Benedictine tradition
- an understanding, acceptance and living of the Good News which is the Gospel
- educational programs in child protection and protective behaviours
- the celebration of Mater Dei traditions through Assemblies, Masses, Liturgies, Multicultural Day, Swimming and Athletics Carnivals, Country Fair, Ex-Students' Reunion etc
- intensive literacy, numeracy and personal development programs in smaller, cohesive groups based on each student's age, stage of development, cognitive ability and needs
- community access programs encompassing literacy, numeracy, travel training, social skills, and community awareness and safety
- a greater understanding that we are Australian – "We are one but we are many"
- the stewardship of our classroom, our school, our community, our country and our world
- the development and extension of computer skills
- an extensive physical education program to strengthen health, fitness, coordination, team work, dignity, trust, resilience and cooperation
- personal development programs to enrich each student's understanding of individual feelings, emotions, physical and sexual development, relationships, moral issues and protective behaviours
- an Inclusion Program in mainstream schools and the wider community, and
- a Structured Work Placement Program in the wider community.

In our final Year 11/12 program, we also offer the Satellite Class for students who access a mainstream program at John Therry Catholic High School on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week whilst attending Mater Dei on Monday and Tuesday each week, thus an academic and a functional strand are offered. However, we point out that the structure of both strands is identical, although the content of the functional strand is focussed more heavily on basic day to day literacy and numeracy skills including oral and written communication. Where appropriate, social and work-related skills and functional independent living skills are emphasized as each student's stage of development, abilities and needs area assessed.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Mater Dei School expressly forbids the use of corporal punishment by any member of staff and does not and will not delegate or approve the use of corporal punishment by any providers or outside agencies associated with Mater Dei School.

Mater Dei strives to uphold the Gospel values of peace, respect, fairness, social justice and the dignity of each person. We also believe in the rights and responsibility of each member of our community. We foster the traditions and self esteem our students so evidently value at Mater Dei and believe that their high standard of behaviour is only achieved as a result of a positive partnership between students, parents/carers and staff.

Staff are mindful that they are role models to all students at all times and hold this responsibility in high regard as they work with – and for – your daughters and sons. Staff actively seek out students exhibiting positive behaviour and acknowledge it as they are praised for behaviour which exemplifies a peaceful, caring and respectful attitude to their peers and to members of staff. Just as all members of the Mater Dei community have the right to be working in a secure, respectful and friendly school, they also have the responsibility to uphold these values and treat each other as they would like to be treated.

With this in mind, bullying and any form of aggressive behaviour will not be accepted at Mater Dei School. This includes swearing. Any student who displays this type of behaviour will immediately be asked to move from the classroom or from the playground until he/she chooses to display appropriate behaviour that is acceptable at Mater Dei. Parents/carers will be advised of these incidents if they occur and asked to speak with their sons/daughters at home to reinforce the student's rights and responsibilities in our community.

If a student's behaviour is willful and/or causes harm to another student, a member of staff or to school property, parents/carers will be called immediately and asked to collect their son/daughter from Mater Dei – in other words, the student will be suspended from school. The student may return to school with his/her parents/carers to meet with the CEO/Principal, Assistant Principal, Primary or Secondary Coordinator to discuss the reason for suspension and to write and agree upon a Behaviour Contract for the student. In order to maintain such a climate at Mater Dei – a caring, tolerant and safe environment – we ask for your cooperation and support to encourage and promote positive behaviour from all students at all times.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Upon commencement of employment, all members of Mater Dei agree to respect the confidentiality of information and documents which he/she has access to in the course of, or arising from, their employment.

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to:

- information about the former, current and future students of Mater Dei
- students' names and addresses
- computer data bases and computer software, and
- all other information obtained from, or in the course of staff members' employment with Mater Dei that is, by its nature, confidential.

Mater Dei members of staff will at all times, respect the Organisation's policy of confidentiality, that includes the following practices:

- only information that is deemed relevant to providing effective programming will be gathered
- all information pertaining to a student will be kept in a locked file both at the Residence and at the school
- copies of information not written by Mater Dei staff may only be released with written permission from the author

- students are able to receive personal mail and to have private telephone conversations and meetings with family, friends etc at the Residences
- students/families may see their own Student File on request, and
- staff sign a confidentiality agreement upon commencement of employment.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mater Dei is committed to ensuring that it complies with the requirements of the following Child Protection Legislation which resulted from the 1987 Wood Royal Commission including

- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
- Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998
- Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection and Community Services) Act 1998
- Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2003, and
- Commission for Children and Young People Amendment Act 2005

This legislation is intended to view child protection as providing a safe and supportive environment for children and also all members of staff by ensuring that systems and processes are in place for preventing, identifying and investigating reportable conduct.

Hence at Mater Dei we aim to

- ensure that students, families and all members of staff are informed of the implementation process that has been designed to meet the requirements of the legislation. This includes the formation of a committee to formulate policy and internal procedures to deal with these legislative requirements in an appropriate way;
- ensure that students, families and all members of staff are given the opportunity to obtain accurate information and clarify their rights and responsibilities in relation to the legislation; and
- ensure that we answer questions on relevant issues relating to these relevant legislative requirements.

***We respect and honour our privilege to work with you and for you
as we provide a happy, holistic, welcoming and successful educational program
for your sons and daughters.***