



# ***Prep Handbook***



# ***2024***



# WELCOME TO PREP

Mt Whitestone State School offers a wonderful start for your child's learning. Developing a love of learning, celebrating success and establishing the building blocks for future learning are the core elements of a quality Prep curriculum program.

## *The Early Years Curriculum*



The Australian Curriculum, in conjunction with the Early Years Curriculum Guidelines, has been designed for use in all Preparatory Year classes. The curriculum is designed to provide all students with a solid foundation to their learning and provide the springboard to future learning success. The Preparatory Year is focused on ***child-centred learning, Inquiry-based learning*** and ***investigations*** are key elements of the curriculum.

Our teachers plan for children's learning using English, Maths, Science, History and Geography (HASS), Health and Physical Education (Australian Curriculum) through embedding age appropriate Pedagogy practices to support their learning.

These **Age Appropriate Pedagogies** are linked to our school's curriculum with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. In the Early Years, children learn through:

- Focused learning and teaching
- Investigations
- Routines and transitions
- Play
- Real Life Situations



Some of the learning experiences that your child will encounter include:

- Constructing using blocks, collage and manipulative equipment to develop early mathematical concepts and skills
- Initiating and participating in dramatic play to build an understanding of the world around them
- Drawing and painting to encourage oral language, reading and writing skills
- Writing stories and copying signs as part of their play, constructions and art
- Playing and investigating independently, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class
- Actively making choices about what and how they learn
- Investigating and learning how to inquire about their interests
- Planning collaboratively with the teacher using a plan-do-reflect model
- Participating in music and language experiences

These learning experiences assist children to:

- Develop early literacy and numeracy skills
- Understand and use language to group, sort and describe objects and to communicate ideas, feelings and needs
- Become independent thinkers and problem-solvers
- Learn how to co-operate with others
- Develop physical co-ordination skills
- Listen, respond to and give directions
- Become confident at taking risks in their learning
- Make good choices

The teacher's planning responds to the children's needs and interests. Teachers monitor, assess and reflect on children's learning by:

- Understanding children
- Building partnerships
- Establishing flexible learning environments
- Creating contexts for learning
- Exploring what children want to learn



## *The Preparatory Year of Schooling*

Prep is a **compulsory full time five day per week program**. Students born within the following dates are eligible to enrol in Prep.

- For 2024 - 1 July 2018 - 30 June 2019



### *Please Note*

The whole school information about Mount Whitestone State School, its curriculum, teaching, learning, policies and processes are detailed in the **Student Enrolment Handbook**. **The Prep Handbook** contains specific information for parents who are coming to our school with their child for the first time. If there are any questions after reading both of these handbooks, please do not hesitate to contact the staff at Mt Whitestone on 5462 6717, visit us at the Administration office or contact the Principal to further clarify any questions you may have.



## *What Your Child Will Need for Prep*

### **Classroom Items**

Mt Whitestone State School has a resource scheme which means we provide the children with the needed resources, and we invoice families. However, if you choose not to participate we can provide a detailed Booklist.

## Lunch

Each day children require a healthy morning snack, lunch and a water bottle. Please carefully consider the foods included in your child's lunch box as we **encourage children to eat healthy choices** first and leave 'treats' for later. Ensure your child knows what food has been packed and when to eat it. Supplying lunch in labelled, easy to open packages and containers will help to encourage your child's independence.

### Suitable healthy food choices include:

- ✓ **MORNING TEA** – Cut fruit or vegetables including apple, grapes, strawberry, carrots, beans, crackers, cheese, boiled eggs, dried or fresh fruit/ vegetables, natural popcorn, muesli bars or savoury biscuits, yoghurts, cake and dairy products
- ✓ **LUNCH** – Sandwiches, rolls, wraps, poppers

### Unsuitable food choices include:

- ✗ Lollies
- ✗ Processed snack foods like roll ups
- ✗ Soft drinks/ cordial
- ✗ Foods in containers children cannot open

We need to be aware that children at school may have an identified allergy. If a child does have these allergies, we as a school will support and *not have* those foods in our lunch boxes. At present, we are allergy free but if this changes we will personally contact families to make them aware. We also explicitly teach children not to share, swap, give away or take other students' lunches to alleviate any issues related to allergies. We appreciate your support in this matter 😊



## *Clothing*

All parents are requested to leave a spare set of labeled clothes, including underpants, in your child's bag. Second hand uniforms are available through the P & C if you require a set for this purpose.

## *School Bag*

Your child's school bag should be large enough to safely and easily carry their lunch box, water bottle, hat, change of clothes and reading bag. Please ensure that you practice packing the bag with your child and that they can open and close it so that all their items remain securely inside. Port racks are located outside the Prep classroom.

## *Personal Property*

Please ensure that **all** your child's personal items including clothing, hat, lunch box, drink bottle and backpack are all clearly labeled.

Although children may be excited by new or special toys and treasures they have at home, at school they can often become lost or broken. Therefore, the school **strongly recommends** that **all** these items remain at home to save both heartache and time for all involved.

# *What Your Child Wears at Prep*

Prep students wear the same uniform as all the students of Mt Whitestone State School. The uniform is detailed in the Student Enrolment Handbook and available for purchase from Infinity Workwear - Gatton. To comply with our Sun Safety Policy, it is compulsory for all children to wear a clearly labeled, broad brimmed hat for both scheduled lessons and play times. If your child does not have their hat, they will be asked to remain under the covered areas. Prep children are required to wear covered shoes, which may have Velcro straps to enable student's independence when dressing for school. The school strongly encourages black, plain shoes.



## *Arrival at Mount Whitestone*

All students are expected to arrive between 8.00am and 8.50am. Before school, students are welcome into the classrooms where they will have morning reading, phonics or high-frequency words practice. When the bell rings at 8.50am learning commences and parents are encouraged to say good-bye. It is important that your child arrives on time as important learning experiences are embedded in every activity in the day. As the year progresses, and when parents and children feel comfortable and confident, teachers will encourage children to organise their equipment themselves and walk to the classroom independently.

Please note that for health and safety reasons the Playground Equipment is not to be used by students or their siblings before or after school.

## *Lunch Times*

There are two lunch breaks for students at Mt Whitestone. At each break, students play first followed by eating time. Students are supervised at both breaks. During play time students are able to access the Playground Equipment, Oval, Tennis Court, Friendship Place or the Under Covered Area. When the bell rings all students collect their lunch boxes and proceed to their designated covered area to wait for their teacher.

The same procedure is followed at second break.

For the safety of students, the administration staff may announce a 'Wet Weather' break and Teachers or Teacher Aides may ask students to leave certain equipment or areas. A 'Wet Weather' break means that students will remain inside the classroom supervised by a Teacher and/or Teacher Aide.

Some Prep students may require support by staff during play time or by older student buddies. This support is focused on teaching students' skills for socialising with their peers through appropriate play.

## *End of the Day*

School concludes at 3.00pm each day. The students are escorted to the front gate to meet families. At the start of the year parents are expected to collect their child from the gate and gradually as time passes they will have the confidence to meet you at your car. Please ensure you inform the classroom teacher of your child's mode of transportation including: collection by older siblings or any other arrangements. As with arrival time, it is important that your child remains at school until 3.00pm each day.



# SPECIALIST SCHOOL ACTIVITIES FOR PREPS

## *Specialist Programs*

Prep students will participate in specialist lessons such as: Music, the Arts and PE. Students are engaged in one 40 minute lesson each week for both. Occasionally, Ma Ma Creek and Mt Sylvia State Schools will join prep children for specialist lessons such as Digital Technology.

## *School Events*

As the year progresses there will be several whole school events or year level activities for Prep students to participate in, for example Athletics Carnival, Book Parade, Under 8's Day and other school activities. As each event approaches information will be provided to parents via the newsletter and school sign. It is vital that parents read these notes to ensure children are fully prepared for every activity and parents and families do not miss an opportunity to see a milestone in your child's first year at Mt Whitestone.

## *Parades*

Parade is held every Friday morning at 11:40am. During Parade 'Student of the Week', 'Expectation of the Week Award', 'Gotcha Box' and other certificates and/or awards are presented. Students also sing the National Anthem and acknowledge Welcome to Country.

# EVERY DAY COUNTS AT MT WHITESTONE!

Regular student attendance in Prep ensures maximum opportunity to engage in the learning experiences essential for a successful start to each student's learning journey.

Detailed information about the processes for student attendance, late arrivals and early or emergent departures is available in the *Student Enrolment Handbook*.

## COMMUNICATION

### *Newsletter*

Mt Whitestone State School's newsletters are produced fortnightly on a Friday. Newsletters are published on the schools' website and are emailed out but if you prefer a hard copy, we are happy to print one off on request.

We also display upcoming events and reminders of our school sign and school website.

### *Meet and Greet Afternoons*

Meet and greet afternoons are held within the first four weeks of school every year. They are an important time for parents to meet with classroom teachers and be reintroduced to the learning program, timetable and reminded of processes in your child's class. Teachers value the opportunity to speak directly to parents about the year ahead and in doing so take another important step towards a strong teacher-parent partnership - one that benefits each Mt Whitestone student.



### *Parent Teacher Communication*

Effective communication between families and schools will help to foster and enhance the learning experience of all students. Mt Whitestone State School encourages parents to take the opportunities to speak with teachers to discuss your child, their learning and progress.

Teachers are generally available both before and after school for informal conversations regarding your child. If a more detailed discussion is required please arrange a mutually convenient time with the teacher. Please also consider that once the school day has started, teachers will be engaged in focused learning and teaching with the class and it will be difficult to speak to the teacher.

It is also important to discuss and share information with the teacher that may have an impact on your child and influence their behaviours. Events like family visits, moving house, accidents etc. need to be communicated to teachers so that we can work together to support your child.

Volunteers and visits are welcome once students have settled in. Each child is different but generally from Term 2. Please organise an individual discussion with the teacher to share how and when you may be able to assist in the classroom.

## *Reporting to Parents*

Informal assessment of students is ongoing and takes place throughout the year in Prep. Teachers will provide parents with information and feedback on how your child is progressing and developing. Teachers will provide the opportunity to have a formal interview in Term 1 and 3. Report cards will be sent home to parents in Term 2 and 4. In addition, parents are always welcome to discuss any learning concerns with teachers at any time throughout the year.

# STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

At Mt Whitestone, our Student Support Committee works in collaboration with families, teachers and other agencies to identify and address the range of learning, developmental, social, emotional and behavioral needs of our students. At your child's enrolment interview, it is vital to provide detailed and comprehensive information about your child, their development, health, behaviour and learning readiness.

## *Classroom Teachers*

Your child's classroom teacher identifies strengths and weaknesses of all students in relation to curriculum access and participation in the classroom program. This information is used to plan learning experiences targeted at the specific needs of all students.

## *Guidance Officer*

The role of the Guidance Officer at Mt Whitestone is to work collaboratively with the Student Support Committee to administer appropriate assessment and provide counselling services. The Guidance Officer assists in monitoring students' progress and appropriateness of placement and recommends appropriate pathways for students with learning needs or giftedness.

## *Supported Play*

At the beginning of Prep, some students require a higher level of support during unstructured play times. Teachers, in collaboration with parents, can recommend that a Prep student is provided support during their play time. The aim of the program will be to explicitly teach and develop the skills that are required for children to independently and successfully engage with their peers in the playground.

## *Advisory Staff*

Education Queensland provides access to Advisory Teachers in a range of areas. If required to address the needs of your child, the Advisory Teacher works collaboratively with your child's teacher to develop a plan and strategies for implementation as part of the classroom learning experiences.





## Giving a Head Start to Early Readers

# PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR PREP

Whilst we acknowledge that individual children are at several different developmental stages there are some simple things families can do to support your child's transition from home to Prep.

### **Encourage your child to be independent by helping and teaching them:**

- their full name
- to recognise their name in print
- the name of the street where they live
- to pack, open, close and carry their school bag
- to identify their personal property
- how to eat their packed food, recognising what to eat at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> break
- how to open packets and containers
- to use a tissue
- how to wash hands properly, that they should be washed before and after meals and after going to the toilet
- to go to the toilet independently
- to put on and take off clothing such as jumpers, socks, shoes and rain wear
- to put on school shoes
- to care for items and to put things away
- where to wait for you at the end of the day

Work with your child to develop his or her communication skills. Help and encourage your child to:

- make their own needs known
- use appropriate greetings
- respond verbally when spoken to
- practice listening skills and follow directions
- help, care and share with others

Children's oral language skills can be developed by:

- talking in sentences
- looking at picture books
- remembering little rhymes
- reading with parents
- listening to parents reading stories regularly

In today's world, reading involves more than reading books. Books are still very important, although viewing websites, television and movies, reading shopper dockets, street directories or junk mail provides great opportunities for families to encourage their children's reading.

There are always reasons to read – for pleasure, to follow instructions or learn something – and children quickly learn that reading is useful through watching people around them make sense of the world and to acquire what they need.

Reading print is still vitally important, but it is no longer sufficient. We need to be able to read much more than print alone. When viewing an internet site, you need to recognise and interpret icons to choose a pathway to follow, perhaps watch a video presentation, listen to a voice-over and compose some text to answer questions or send an email.

When supporting and encouraging beginning reading, the key word is '**TALK**' – talk with your child and talk about what they are reading or viewing.

- **Read** to your child and encourage discussion through questions such as: *What do you think might happen next? If you were ... what would you have done? Has anything like that happened to you? Were you puzzled or surprised?* Give the child plenty of time to answer.
- **Watch** a favourite television program or video together and discuss what you liked or disliked.
- **Play** computer games and talk about what is happening.
- **Read** books and **view** websites together. Talk about menus, index or table of contents and how these help identify specific information.
- **Explain** and **discuss** signs, advertisements and safety notices around us.

Tips for helping a young readers read independently:

- **Before reading**, talk about the cover, author and title, make predictions about the content, look for new vocabulary and have fun finding out the meaning of new words.
- **During reading** allow plenty of **WAIT** time for students to follow the sounds and 'make connection' between what they are sounding out and a word they know.
- **If** a reader substitutes a word that still makes sense – for example, 'house' instead of 'home' – let the reading continue.
- **If** the child makes a mistake in letter – sound relationships, ask *Does that look right to you?* Have them check their reading.
- **After** reading, discuss the text together. This is far more useful and enjoyable than comments such as 'Good reading' or asking the reader a series of questions.

## LITERACY – Parents make the world of difference!

### Parents are our children's first teachers!

Your child first learns how to speak and use words at home. Families answer questions about what things look like, what things are used for and when to use them. All the basic skills that are taught give the child a good start at school and stay with them. Many of the everyday activities that we do at home help our children to learn.

### Helping your child to learn can be simple!

- Read to them.

- Let them read to you.
- Encourage them to tell you the same story in their words.
- Ask them to talk about what they have learned at school.
- Ask them to talk about the things that interest them.
- Talk about events and activities that occur in your area.
- Write a shopping list together.
- Get a book out of a library together.
- Cook and follow a recipe together.
- Draw a picture, write on it and send it to relatives.
- Read comics, magazines and newspapers.
- Make a book with pictures and words.



Everyone has knowledge to share. Everyone has a story to tell. Parents are vital in helping children to make sense of their world. **Parents are our children's first and most important teacher!**

**Learning together is fun!** Sometimes, it seems that the way your child is taught at school is very different from your own school days. You may feel as though you can't help – but you can! What school children need most to help them learn is encouragement from their family – from parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends. **Giving support and encouragement to your child to learn is the most important way you, as a parent, can help them succeed.**

## *What can parents do at school?*

By becoming involved, parents can understand schools better and find new ways for our children to learn.

- Talk to the teacher about helping your child learn.
- Talk to other parents about how they are helping their children.
- Help with the Reading Programs at school.
- Attend parent meetings at the school.

Finally,

*Welcome to*



**MOUNT WHITESTONE  
STATE SCHOOL**  
*Bound for success*

