



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools



Information for you and your Prep Child 2026

St. Joseph's Primary School

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Website: www.sjhawthorn.catholic.edu.au

Principal Mrs Sharon Kenyon-Smith

Email: principal@sjhawthorn.catholic.edu.au

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OUR VISION STATEMENT

*St Joseph's is committed to the protection of children in line with the Victorian Government Child Safety reforms.
St Joseph's School aspires to live the values of Jesus within a welcoming Catholic community that celebrates and integrates
faith, life, learning and culture; empowering our students to live together harmoniously in an ever changing world.*

BEGINNING SCHOOL



At St. Joseph's we recognize that starting school is a significant milestone in the life of your child.

We support his/her transition to school through a comprehensive program that develops partnerships between the child, parents, school and kindergarten.

We also appreciate that it is not your child's first or only experience as a learner.

The important role that you, as parents, play as the primary educators of your child is both recognized and valued.

When your child commences school, he/she will be supported to manage many new challenges that they will encounter. Your child is going to be learning many new skills and exploring a variety of rich concepts in a new environment. Children need time to adapt to this experience, to make new friends and to feel comfortable and confident in this new situation.

They need time to

- talk
- discover
- be a friend
- play
- choose
- absorb
- experiment
- practise
- interact
- take responsibility
- relax
- develop independence



2026 Key Dates

Term 1

Tuesday 27 January – Thursday 2 April
(9 weeks)

Australia Day Public Holiday – Monday 26 January
Labour Day Public Holiday Monday 9 March

Tuesday 27 January – Staff return (Student Free Day)

Wednesday 28 January – Staff return (Student Free Day)

Thursday 29 January – Students return to school

Thursday 2 April – Term 1 ends
Easter 2026 (Easter April 3 – April 6)

Designated Prep Rest/Testing Days:

- Wednesday 4 February
- Wednesday 11 February
- Wednesday 18 February
- Wednesday 25 February

Term 2

Monday 20 April – Friday 26 June 2026
(9 weeks)

ANZAC Day Saturday 25 April
King's Birthday (Public Holiday) - Monday 8 June

Monday 20 April – Staff return (Student Free Day)

Tuesday 21 April Students return to school

Friday 26 June – Term 2 ends

Term 3

Monday 13 July – Friday 18 September 2026
(8 weeks)

Monday 13 July – Staff return (Student Free Day)

Tuesday 14 July – Students return to school

Friday 18 September – Term 3 ends

Term 4

Monday 5 October – End of term date TBC
(9 weeks)

Melbourne Cup Day – Tuesday 4 November

Monday 5 October – Staff return (Student Free Day)

Tuesday 6 October – Students return to school

End of Term 4 to be confirmed

School Attendance Times

Classes commence:	8.50am
Recess:	10.50am – 11.00am eating time 11.00am – 11.40am recess
Lunch:	1.10pm – 1.20pm eating time 1.20pm – 2.00pm lunch
Finish:	3.30pm

Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) run by Kelly Club

M 0409 192 923
E stjosephs@kellycluboshc.com.au
W kellycluboshc.com.au

Before School Care: 7.00am - 8.30am

After School Care: 3.15pm - 6.30pm

2026 Commencement

The First Day

Thursday 29 January 8.50am – 12.00pm (early finish)

Preps arrive in the Prep Garden staggered times.

8.40-8.50am A-H, 8.50-9.00am I-P, 9.00-9.10am Q-Z.

The children will need a fruit or vegetable snack for morning tea

Reassure your child that you will be returning soon, and that school will be a happy place. If there are tears, please seek guidance from the teacher. Very rarely do tears continue for more than a few minutes.

Children soon feel safe and comfortable in their new surroundings.

If you have a positive attitude and look forward to the first day of school, your child will be more inclined to do the same. We encourage you to do all you can to help make your child happy and confident about entering the school environment.

On your child's first day of school, we will be serving morning tea in the Multi Purpose Room.

Please dress children in their summer uniform for the first day of school. On days where children have Physical Education, sport uniform can be worn for the entire day.

Staggered Start

Based on experience and an understanding of young children's needs, we have observed that many students benefit from a gradual transition to the demands of a full-time school schedule. The start of the school year can be both overwhelming and exhausting for our young learners.

To support a smoother transition, we have established Prep rest days. These rest days are designed to help students adjust to the school environment, easing into the routines and expectations of a full-time schedule.

The following dates are designated rest days where children do not attend school:

- Wednesday 4 February
- Wednesday 11 February
- Wednesday 18 February
- Wednesday 25 February

These days will be used by Prep teachers as an opportunity to gain further information on the Prep children during a one-on-one assessment session. A schedule for booking in an assessment time for your child will be made available at the beginning of the school year.

THE PREP YEAR

PREP IS A TIME FOR YOUR CHILD TO:

- ✚ settle into school
- ✚ become familiar with school rules/routines
- ✚ develop communication skills
- ✚ develop social and emotional learning skills
- ✚ develop a positive self-concept as a learner
- ✚ learn through play and “hands on” activities
- ✚ develop positive attitudes about school
- ✚ establish positive peer relationships
- ✚ gain rich, foundational experiences in:
 - Religious Education
 - English
 - Mathematics
 - Multi-Domain
 - Science
 - The Humanities
 - Technologies
 - Health and P.E.
 - The Arts (Visual and Performing)
 - Languages (Mandarin)



The staff at St Joseph's look forward to...

- helping your child make the transition to school
- getting to know your child as an individual
- providing rich learning experiences which are exciting, engaging and challenging

READING

Learning to read is one of the most important achievements of your child's schooling. It is vital for you to encourage, support and show an interest in your child's reading throughout their school years.

How do children learn to read?

Reading is an active, constructive, meaning making process and it is important that children understand that text conveys meaning.

Children learn to read in a variety of ways, at different times and at different rates. Teachers use a variety of reading experiences and strategies to cater for each child's learning style. During the Literacy Block, there is an explicit focus on developing phonological awareness (the awareness of speech sounds, syllables and rhymes) and phonics (the mapping of speech sounds to letters).

However, children need to also develop other effective reading strategies such as predicting, using picture cues and reading on. These are taught and reinforced throughout the Prep year.

Providing interesting, new and exciting reading materials will motivate children to read. Teachers use big books, poetry, rhymes, predictable stories and games to immerse children in the reading experience. Time is dedicated to reading every day.

How can I help my child with reading?

The home is an important environment where a child's love, interest and understanding of reading can be nurtured. As readers yourselves, you are an influential model of reading so it is beneficial to discuss not only your child's reading but also your own.

- Read to/with your child
Children love listening to stories. Mem Fox, Australian children's author reminds us to read with "real enjoyment for yourself and with great joy for the listeners."
- Listen to your child read
Children who love books will naturally want to read by themselves. Reading to an adult that they trust is a powerful learning experience for children.
- Visit the local library
St. Joseph's has a relationship with the Hawthorn Library.
- Provide opportunities for authentic reading
Children can read instructions for games, comics, football cards, shopping lists, letters, recipes etc.
- Practise
Children improve as readers and enjoy reading when they read regularly.
- Help your child by being relaxed and encouraging
Find a quiet place; one that is free from distraction when reading with your child.

WRITING

Teachers provide a variety of rich and authentic experiences to enable children to develop their writing skills.

Time and encouragement are the two vital components necessary for success.

Children need to receive positive responses to their attempts at writing. At first, teachers may need to scribe children's ideas for them and model writing. However they will progress from using random letters and shapes as a means of communicating ideas, to using more recognisable words and using beginning/ending letters and spaces between words.

How do children learn to write?

Phonics is taught- Children learn the sounds that correspond to the letters of the alphabet. In addition they learn word families/digraphs.

Modelling - Children are provided with appropriate demonstrations of the writing process.

Frequent writing opportunities are provided - Children write daily and are encouraged to use "invented spelling". This is where they are asked to "have a go" at hearing the sounds in an unknown word, then attempt to write those sounds down. All attempts are praised. It is important that children are given the opportunity to convey their ideas.

Frequent reading and writing opportunities are provided - Children are provided with good writing models. They become familiar with different text types and the purposes for each.

Conferencing - The teacher discusses the piece of writing with the individual child. Together, they talk about the ideas, sequence of the story, spelling attempts etc.

Sight word work - As many words cannot be 'sounded out', a variety of strategies are provided and discussed for children to learn to spell irregular words.

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WITH WRITING?

- Ask your child to help you by writing: shopping lists, messages, recipes, birthday cards
- Provide a variety of stimulating materials with which they can write (different coloured papers, pens, envelopes etc.)
- Write down your child's stories as they dictate them to you. Young children are eager to write but may need some help forming letters and spelling words.
- Write notes for your child and encourage them to do the same.
- Read often to your child.
- Be supportive of your child's writing attempts.
- Discuss why we write and its purpose.

MATHEMATICS

In the early years of schooling, the focus of Mathematics is 'learning through doing'. Practical, hands-on experiences enable children to experiment with mathematical ideas and concepts in a safe and secure learning environment.

Students are supported as they build upon their existing mathematical experiences and knowledge to extend and challenge their understandings of mathematical concepts.

Teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to guide students in a task and to further deepen their understanding of a concept. Children use a variety of concrete materials to assist their learning.

Recording is only introduced once the teacher feels the child is ready. Children are encouraged to develop their own method of recording. They are provided with a variety of models such as drawing, tracing, writing about their findings and using formal symbols. Children are encouraged to record their findings using conventional signs and symbols only after they demonstrate a very clear understanding of the concept.

How do children increase their knowledge of mathematical concepts?

'Exploration' of concrete materials – Children are free to experiment, explore, investigate and discover.

Sorting and classifying enables children to think analytically - Children begin to consider attributes such as shape, size, length and colour.

Patterns are the building blocks of Mathematics - Through patterning; children are sorting, classifying, matching 1 to 1 and working with number and properties of groups.

Articulating their understanding – Children share their understandings and the strategies used to solve mathematical problems with their teachers and peers. They begin to explain their thinking.

How can I help my child with Mathematics?

- Use the language of Mathematics in everyday situations (e.g. "That's a tall tree").
- Read books that explore mathematical concepts including time, counting, shapes, numbers and colours.
- Encourage children to learn and sing number rhymes and songs such as '3 blind mice', '5 little ducks' and '10 green bottles'.
- Encourage exploration of blocks, shapes and Lego.
- Play games that reinforce mathematical concepts such as dominoes, snakes and ladders and hopscotch. Recognising the patterns on dice is a useful skill.
- Encourage play with containers, water and rice.
- Find opportunities to practise counting forwards and backwards.

WELLBEING

Students requiring special assistance are referred to the Learning Diversity Leader, Mrs Tess Fowkes
tfowkes@sjhawthorn.catholic.edu.au

If you have any concerns about your child's wellbeing, please speak to the class teacher or the Deputy Principal, Mr. Jack O'Toole jotoole@sjhawthorn.catholic.edu.au

TRANSITION TO SCHOOL

We recognise that starting school is a significant milestone in the life of your child and support his/her transition to school through a comprehensive program that develops partnerships between the child, parents, school and kindergarten.

Features of our Transition Program include:

- Opportunities for you and your child to become familiar with the school environment, to meet members of staff and make new friends
- Multiple Transition sessions
- A Parent Information Evening
- Kindergarten visits/communication by the Prep teachers
- An interview with your child's Prep teacher

'BUDDIES'

Our 'Buddy' program involves Year Five and Six students being paired with a Prep student. Rich activities are planned where the students work together and support each other in their learning. Friendships are developed and authentic leadership opportunities are provided for our senior students.

RECESS/LUNCHTIMES

We understand that the playground can feel very large for Prep children as they transition from their Kindergarten. We put many strategies into place from the beginning of the year to support them on the yard.

- Initially, we play outside at a different time to the rest of the school, to allow time for the Preps to feel comfortable in their new spaces.
- We set up a 'quiet' area in the gathering space for quiet play (lego, drawing etc), for students who do not want to play on the playground and oval.
- The Prep teachers monitor the students during break times to ensure they are managing in their new environment.
- Lunchtime clubs are offered. Prep students may like to participate in the activities that are offered, including 'Prep Club, Drawing Club, Dance Club and Trading Club'. The Prep teachers will support them in learning about their options at break times.
- 'Big Buddies' support the students at break times too. They love 'checking in' and sometimes playing with their new Prep buddy.

HEALTHY EATING

Due to some of our students being anaphylactic to nuts, we ask that no nut products are brought to school. Please do not use peanut butter fillings/nut products in sandwiches.

We encourage healthy eating at St Joseph's.

We have a '**No Food Sharing**' policy.

Only water is permitted in drink containers. Glass bottles are not permitted at school.

Birthdays are to be celebrated creatively **without food items at school** (no cakes, lollies and chips are to be shared).

We encourage the idea of nude, or rubbish free, food. We encourage food to be brought to school in reusable containers to avoid single use packaging. This is in line with the school's and the Catholic church's sustainability practices.

As the school is not part of the local council FOGO program we encourage children to take all uneaten food home so that it can be placed in home FOGO or compost bins.

HEALTHY FACTORS

Your child's wellbeing is paramount and we have effective strategies and procedures in place to ensure that we can meet his/her needs, whilst at school.

It is vital, however, that we work in partnership to ensure that medical needs are clearly communicated and understood.

Please inform the school of any medical condition your child may have. Please contact the school office this year to speak to Bronwyn Pearce, our school nurse. She will arrange for you to complete any necessary medical forms and Management Plans (e.g. Asthma, Anaphylaxis and General Medical Alert).

If your child requires medication, please ensure that you provide this at the time of commencement, clearly labelled with their name and class.

If your child requires an external specialist to visit them for ongoing sessions during the school year (e.g. occupational therapist, speech pathologist) and they would like to work with your child at school, please advise us in writing as soon as possible.

Each request will be considered, taking into account, the class timetable and the availability of a learning space.

Please include:

- Your child's name
- Your child's class
- Your name and phone number
- Name of specialist and their area of specialty
- The organization that they represent and contact details
- The day and time that would be most convenient to them

Please address your email to the Learning Diversity Leader (Mrs Tess Fowkes)

Email: tfowkes@sjhawthorn.catholic.edu.au

BEGINNING OF THE DAY

School gates open at 8.30am. A teacher is on yard duty supervision from this time. The first bell will ring at 8.50am.

During the first few days of 2026, Prep students may be taken to the classroom at the beginning of the school day. Once they are more confident in the school environment, they will line up in the MPR and then on the basketball court with the other students in Years 1-6. You will be advised by the Prep Teachers when this will occur.

HOME TIME AND COLLECTING YOUR CHILD

Prep students (and siblings) will be dismissed from the Prep garden, at the front of the school. This is a safe area and the children will be dismissed in an orderly manner.

Please ensure that your child knows who will be collecting them at the end of the day. This eases their anxiety. If you need to alter your plans during the day, please contact the office and your child's class teacher will be notified. They can then inform your child of the new arrangements.

If you have previously arranged for another person to collect your child (e.g. your child is going on a play date), please inform your child's class teacher.

Children are not permitted to leave the school unless an authorized person collects them.

If you are collecting your child prior to dismissal time, you must sign out your child with an Early Leave Pass on the iPad located at the front office.

Children are not permitted to go outside the school grounds at any time during school hours by themselves.

Please ensure that the person collecting your child is aware of the importance of being on time so that your child does not become anxious.

For the safety of your child and other children, parents are asked to observe all parking regulations in the local area. We ask parents **not** to park in the staff car park.

EXCURSIONS

During the Prep year, there will be excursions to places of interest and incursions (where a particular group or organisation visits the school). Parents will be advised of upcoming excursions/incursions.

All students are expected to attend excursions/incursions.

As the Parish church is located at the corner of Glenferrie and Burwood Roads, Hawthorn, parent permission is required for children to walk with their class to the church. This will occur a number of times during the year to celebrate Mass and to prepare for special liturgical celebrations.

Permission slips are shared via Operoo before an excursion and it is a requirement these are completed before the day of the outing. Students cannot be taken out of the school without parents' written permission.

Parent helpers are invited to assist with excursions. You will be notified if parent assistance is required.

UNIFORM

St. Joseph's Uniform Shop co coordinator is Mrs Sue Berean.

Sue provides personalised service and attention, ensuring that purchasing your child's uniform is a pleasant experience.

Please contact Sue by email: uniformshop@shawthorn.catholic.edu.au

Please note it is advisable to pack a spare pair of socks and underwear for the occasional mishap in your child's school bag.

And so to school...

- Encourage your child to become independent and to be responsible for their belongings
- Give your child responsibilities at home. Start assigning jobs for your child to complete independently such as setting the table, helping with the laundry, and unloading safe items from the dishwasher.
- Let your child carry their own school/kinder bag and pack and unpack things for themselves
- Practise opening and closing their lunchbox/drink bottle
- Practise taking clothes on/off and identifying own name on label
- Build your child's social and emotional competence: play games that involve taking turns, provide opportunities for 'play dates', provide strategies for enabling children to join a group (e.g.: "Hello. I'm Jane. Would you like to play basketball?")
- Develop manageable after school routines. Do not schedule too many activities during Term One. Your child will be very tired when they first commence school.
- Develop/continue effective bedtime routines
- Talk to your child positively about school. Children are very aware if parents have anxieties or concerns
- Develop a relationship with the staff at St. Joseph's – speak to your child's teacher if you have any concerns. It is important that we are partners in your child's education

***THE TERMS 'PREP' AND 'FOUNDATION' ARE INTER CHANGEABLE AS DESCRIPTIONS OF THIS YEAR LEVEL**

