

All Saints Catholic High School

GROWING TOGETHER

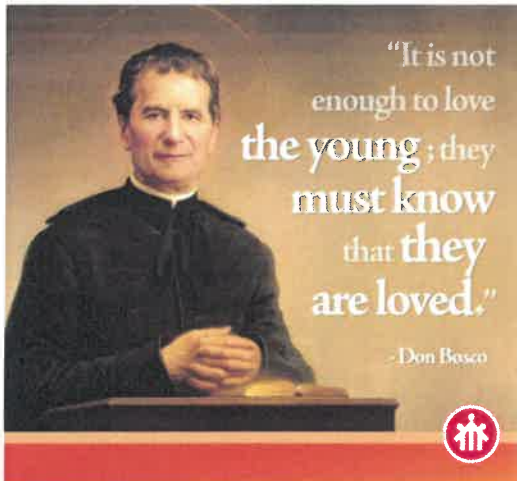


**Parents/Carers and teachers working together.
A new school is a new start for the whole family.**

Introduction:

STARTING A NEW SCHOOL IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A NEW START.

When a young person starts at a Catholic school they are joining a family that will care for them but also expect them to keep some basic rules. The new students will be expected to work together and with their teachers. Our school wants to help your child grow up well and enjoy a family atmosphere as they work hard academically. We want to join in partnership with you as parents/carers so that we can work together. This booklet says something about the schools' vision of care and the spirituality that inspires us. It is an approach that could help to refresh family life as well.



**LET THEM KNOW THAT THEY ARE LOVED!
THE CATHOLIC TRADITION OF EDUCATION
INVOLVES THE WHOLE PERSON. A HAPPY
PERSON WILL LEARN BETTER THAN A
STRESSED PERSON. OUR SCHOOL WILL TRY
TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF LOVING
KINDNESS.**

Maintaining a positive atmosphere between people is not easy. There are always times when people disagree, speak harshly to one another or misunderstand one another's intentions. That is all normal. In fact, it is helpful for adults and young people growing to maturity to disagree. The

disagreements only become a problem when people involved start to doubt that they are loved. The arguments are never really sorted out until there is confidence again in that care and kindness.

This booklet is an invitation to continue to believe in the goodness of all people you live with at home and the goodness of those with whom you work at school. Of course, you can't do that caring for long unless you are also learning to care for yourself. So, as an adult working with young people, you too need to know that you are loved. This booklet might help you to create an atmosphere within which everyone will know that they are loved.

EVERY FAMILY SHOULD BE:

- **A HOME;** make sure people feel at home and a sense of belonging
- **A SCHOOL;** catch the learning in all that happens
- **A PLAYGROUND;** have fun and relaxation together and often
- **A CHURCH;** stop and think about deeper questions



St John Bosco, known as Don Bosco, is one of the leading lights in the Catholic Church about working with young people. After the death of his father when he was a young boy, he grew up in a single parent home with a step brother and with lots of tension. Watching how his mother (Mama Margaret) managed the family inspired his approach to street children and orphans. His way of working grew out of a family experience and made his schools happy, healthy and successful environments.

HOME; Don Bosco knew that young people needed a strong sense of emotional safety if they were to grow in a balanced way. He had experienced anger and bullying at home and knew how much it might damage relationships. His approach put kindness at the centre of family life and maintained it by shared celebration, one to one emotional honesty, spiritual values and clear rules. The family does not need to be perfect and every family will need to share forgiveness regularly.

The family does need to work so that each person, adult and young, really knows that they are loved. That love can be tender and tough but each person needs to know that the other person has their best interests at heart. One of the ways to build a sense of belonging is through regular praise and encouragement. With adolescents this is often done best by a one to one where appreciation, praise and thanks can be received face to face. Without regular praise the necessary criticism shared in family life will be difficult to hear.

SCHOOL; Don Bosco was sure that everyone was a learner and that the young have much to teach the adults at times. No one knows it all and learning happens not just in school but throughout life in every experience and relationship. Living a family experience where everyone thinks about what is happening turns the family into the best school of life.

Most of the mistakes that young people make are, according to Don Bosco, due to thoughtlessness and therefore they are an opportunity to learn. So family members need to ask themselves regularly what they are learning about life and about themselves. Arguments often contain great lessons for living and Don Bosco was clear that we need to argue with reason and end arguments well if the learning is to happen. Every relationship teaches something about the world and about ourselves – we are all teachers and learners in every family.

PLAYGROUND; Don Bosco began his work by helping people to play together. He was keen that adults had fun together with young people and learnt to relax with them. Being present, aware of how young people are, seeing their personalities develop, was a key part of building confidence and a family spirit.

Play also eases the tension of work, exams and worries about the future. Play is about being in the present moment and enjoying life. For Don Bosco it was also the place where people can express their spirit, their soul, their joy in being alive. Therefore there should be time for noise and fun as well as some quieter times in family life. Parents/carers and children should all have some individual time for play whether it is in sport or hobbies or going out. For Don Bosco such play was sacred. Where possible families also need to relax and celebrate together. Shared meals and fun, led sometimes by younger family members, can help parents/carers relax and enjoy being together.

CHURCH; Don Bosco's approach to young people has a great trust in the ability of people to be spiritual, to sense mystery and explore the meaning of life at all ages. In an age where the pace of life keeps families moving from one event to another, Don Bosco wanted to create some peaceful spaces because it was there that the young people and adults could touch the deeper questions of life and meaning.

So for followers of Don Bosco's philosophy, those known as the "Salesians" (as Bosco admired the work of St Francis de Sales) every family is a kind of church, a place to celebrate life and be touched by a deeper spirit that moves in all people. To do this he opened up the Gospel as a way of living; "love your neighbour", "do not be afraid", "forgive one another", "I am with you always" etc.

The family becomes a church especially when reflection on the spirit at work in people leads to stillness, forgiveness and celebration. There are times when we can be overwhelmed by the goodness of those we live with because parents/carers and children can all be saints for at least some of the time in family life.

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION:

HOME. SCHOOL. PLAYGROUND AND CHURCH ARE FOUR KEY WORDS THAT CAN JOIN THE WORLDS OF FAMILY AND SCHOOL INTO ONE HEALTHY EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. KEEP THE GROUND RULES FEW AND CLEAR. REMIND YOUNG PEOPLE OF THOSE RULES OFTEN.

School will try to build these four aspects of spirituality into their work with young people. In doing so they will be reinforcing the values of your family life. The work of teachers in the classroom and the way that staff deal with problems will help parents/carers to work consistently with their young people. The use of praise and rewards in school will reinforce praise and encouragement at home and the use of prayer and reflection at school should encourage the spiritual life of the family at home. This partnership, built on a deep concern for the young, is part of a common vocation shared by teachers and parents/carers.

FINDING YOUR SPIRIT AS A FAMILY:

EVERY FAMILY HAS A SPIRITUAL DIMENSION BECAUSE OF THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER.

The word for 'Spirit' in Hebrew and in Arabic comes from the word **RUAH** which means 'breath' (of God). It describes the deep sense of life that moves in every person as they breathe in and out. In Christian tradition it is the soul of a person; that place in each life that is linked to God. When Don Bosco spoke of a 'family spirit', he wanted to emphasise that in relating to each member of our family, we are somehow in touch with the mystery that many call God. Taking the letters of the word **RUAH** we can build a formula for building up the spirit of a family and our school community at All Saints.

RESPECT: At All Saints we do everything with respect for others, our community and ourselves. It means recognising the sacred mystery of life, each member of the family and community, living alongside them in a way that does not damage their spirit but helps them to grow. It also means respecting your own dignity and not allowing yourself to be used or exploited in ways that breaks down your own spirit. People ought to be treated with reverence.

UNDERSTANDING: At All Saints we understand our differences and needs; we consider these in how we behave. It means using reason and consistency to deal with yourself and others. Reflecting on how others are behaving and what might be the reason for their behaviour. Listening to what others say and what they do not say. Seeking guidance and advice when things are not clear. Recognising the effort of others. Each of us is on a life-long journey of learning where mistakes and reasoned correction can be opportunities to bring life. We work together to grasp an appreciation of people's lives, not only their fears, insecurities, experiences and challenges, but also their hopes, wishes, ambitions and dreams.

AFFECTION: At All Saints we treat each other with affection, showing our care for those around us, our communities and the world. It means making sure that everyone knows in the

family and community that you do love them. Allowing others to know that you are hurt and disappointed with them. Being able to give praise and celebrate success in milestones on others journey. Being able to drip feed care and warmth into the lives of others. Education should be an encounter of hearts. It is when we engage with the heart that the best learning and growing occurs. We work together to build strong, positive and resilient relationships. Young people who know that they are loved can accept criticism and guidance because it comes from the heart. Then, sharing joys, as well as disappointments and failures can be endured.

HUMOUR: At All Saints we approach each other with good humour, loving kindness, gentleness. It means being aware that everyone makes mistakes and laughter can release tensions and dissolve a heavy heartedness that dulls the spirit. Being cheerful and resilient through the struggles of life by focussing on what is good rather than being taken over by worries and problems. Life's intensity, tension and pessimism can be overcome by a perspective of cheerfulness and a humble heart. Holiness itself consists of being cheerful. Genuine joy and laughter feeds the community and helps to celebrate life. For this reason, we always laugh with and never at individuals, but share in their journey and experiences.

We believe that young people do not thrive unless they feel secure. With a strong pattern of positive relationships, the genuine warmth from adults, as well as reasonable demands and the consistent maintenance of clear boundaries, these create an atmosphere where young people can feel safe and learn to relate to others. The educator is always modelling this when they educate with the heart, bringing a sense of belonging to the young.

A SALESIAN CREED:

We believe that God loves life
And has created people to explore that mystery

We believe that God is already present
Sharing life with us in every moment

We believe that God's spirit moves us
When we reach out in genuine love to others

We recognise that God is with us in relationship
Challenging us to self-sacrificing love

We believe that no one should be excluded,
written off or taken for granted
Because they all share the mystery of God's life

We believe that whatever happens to us
That God can weave the events of our lives
Into an eternal pattern of meaning

Therefore we look to the future with confidence
Because we believe that God is with us
Here and now and until the end of time.

**All Saints students: "You are young,
you are precious, you are loved!"**

This document is kindly modelled on a resource created by Fr David O'Malley of the Salesians of Don Bosco. Fr David is a friend of the school and leads on our Fellowship and friendship of Catholic schools.

