St Gregory’s College plans to open up a co-ed primary school

By Ben Chenoweth
Feb. 18, 2016, 11 a.m.

Primary school coming: Students David De Vecchis and Jack Alcorn with headmaster Damien Miller. Picture: Simon Bennett

For the first time in 90 years, primary school students – both girls and boys – will be able enrol at St Gregory’s College Campbelltown.

The school signalled its intentions to open a kindergarten to year 6 campus on land next to the current high school in 2018.

It’s another significant change for the private school, headmaster Damien Millar said.
"There have been a number of changes here (since the school was established)," he said.

"It was the brothers who taught here originally, but now we have lay teachers – that's one notable change.

"In 1926 it was known as a country school for boarders, then went to 50 per cent boarders and 50 per cent day students and now it's about 90 per cent day students.

"To see this development (a primary co-educational school) is pretty exciting because no one would have contemplated this 20 years ago."

It will be the first time female students will be able to enrol under the St Gregory's College banner.

Mr Millar said the decision to cater for both sexes was made to minimise the impact on existing local schools.

"It's important to go co-ed for kindergarten to year 6 so it doesn't affect other schools," he said.

"If we just opened it up to just catholic (boy) enrolments other surrounding primary schools would probably lose boys so they could just transfer to the secondary school.

"That is why the co-ed side has been retained."

Plans for the school are in the "infant stages", with the tick of approval from several organisations, including the Board of Studies, still needed.

Should approval be granted, the school would likely to be a two class per grade facility, with a capacity of about 420 students.

Whether the school caters for students up to year 6 in it's first year of operation has also yet to be decided.

However, Mr Millar said the population boom in Macarthur – particularly in areas like Gregory Hills was proof that another primary school was needed.
"Being able to offer primary school education is a bonus for the Gregory Hills area which has just exploded," he said.

"You would have run your cross country race to the back gate (15 years ago), but you can't do that now."

While boys from the primary school will be able to transition into the neighbouring high school, the headmaster "envisioned" girls could make the transition to the St Patrick's College in Campbelltown, or St Benedict's Catholic College in Camden, for years 7 to 12.

Traffic at the high school during morning and afternoon peak hours would likely be unaffected with access to the new school to be provided through a different road.