No 4: 16 March 2020

"Be the Hands, Heart and Voice of Jesus"

School Theme 2020

Our Commitment to Child Safety:
"At St Paul the Apostle Catholic Primary School we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of our school. Our commitment is drawn from and inherent in the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the gospel."

Dear Parents and families,

LATEST UPDATES (Since last Friday 13 March 2020)

Our first priority at St Paul the Apostle School is the health and safety of our school community and I need to reassure you that the school is well-prepared for the impact of COVID-19.

Today we have been provided with the latest advice from the Australian and Victorian Chief Medical Officers via the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd to ensure that our school practices are helping to keep our school community safe from the outbreak. Any incidents that arise will be addressed in accordance with our Critical Incident and Emergency Management Plan. We will also have access to resources and support from Catholic Education Melbourne and the Department of Health and Human Services.

School Closures – No Government Directive

You will be informed directly if there is any prospect that the State Government requires that our school be closed, either as a standalone school closure or as part of a local or area-based closure, however the Governments will continue to take into consideration the impact that school closures will have on the families, our work force and our health system before making such a decision.

Parents' Discretion – Home Learning Tasks

At this point in time, school continues as usual however there were a few more absences than normal (4 per class) today with parents deciding to keep their children at home, seven for the remainder of the term. *Families can continue to support their child's learning at home with daily reading, daily journal writing, arts and crafts, physical activities, puzzles, mindfulness and games and activities around building resilience – our current school inquiry.* Apart from our current home learning arrangements, our teachers will not be setting additional home learning for children who are absent for extended periods. We believe our learning and teaching is better facilitated by the teachers within a collaborative school environment, interacting within their classes.

School Photo Day - Postponed

As a growing number of our families are keeping their children at home, some for the next two weeks, in consultation with members of our School Leadership Team, I have made the decision to postpone our Annual School Photo day, scheduled for this Wednesday 18 March to ensure that all children have the opportunity to have their photo taken on the day.

Sacrament of Confirmation – Suspended Until Further Notice – Year Six Level

Today we received notification from the Archdiocese of Melbourne that all Confirmations will be suspended until further notice. This includes the upcoming Confirmations for Christ the Light Parish. This is a section of the letter from Most Rev. Terence R. Curtin:

> *'This afternoon Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli advised that he has now suspended all Confirmation Masses in the Archdiocese of Melbourne until further notice.*
>
> *While this decision will cause come inconvenience in our various communities, it is part of the Catholic Church's effort to co-operate with the whole of our country in seeking to protect our people and prevent the spread of the Covid-19 Coronavirus. We also seek the intercession of St Joseph, Guardian of the Universal Church, whose feast day we will celebrate this Thursday, as we pray for the protection of all of our people.'*

As schools in the parish we will continue to be guided by the information sent to us by The Archdiocese as well as Catholic Education Melbourne.

School Sports - Interschool Sports Suspended

School sport is considered an excursion, which means that all **inter-school** sporting events and competitions (including the District Schools Cross Country) from Tuesday 17 March are postponed immediately until further notice.

School International Arrivals - 14 Days Self Isolation

Everyone arriving in Australia from overseas from midnight last night - Sunday 15 March will be required to self-isolate for 14 days. This obviously includes students and staff who may be returning from overseas holidays or other travel.

Importantly, it also includes parents, carers and any other relatives or friends of students who are returning from overseas travel. ***NB: As they are required to self-isolate, all returning travellers must not visit the school to pick up children or for any other reason.***

Organised Gatherings of more than 500 people – School Assemblies

The Australian Government has announced that mass gatherings of more than 500 people are now prohibited. This explicitly does not include schools running normal teaching and learning programs. It does, however, apply to any school event that involves attendance by community members who are not students or staff (where 'staff' includes support staff) and where total attendance will exceed 500. On any given school day, we will have a student maximum population of 340 children and 42 staff plus any visiting teachers which still places us at 400. As an added precaution we will refrain from holding our whole school assemblies until further notice.

SPARKLE Donut Order Day – Last Day of Term - Cancelled

Due to the current uncertainty of school life which changes daily, Belinda Galloway and her SPARKLE Parents' Team Executive have recommended that we cancel our proposed Donut and Prima drink playlunch scheduled for the last day of term. Families are asked to send along playlunch snacks as normal on the last day of term which concludes at 1.30pm on Friday 27 March – no lunch required.

Professional Learning – Will Not Proceed

We have been informed that all face-to-face professional learning provided through Catholic Education Melbourne between now and Friday 24 April will not proceed.

2021 Enrolment Information Night No 1 & School Tours - Cancelled

Please spread the word that our 2021 Enrolment Information Night No 1 scheduled for Wednesday night and school tours have been cancelled as a precaution. **Families can still enrol online** and **our next 2021 Enrolment Information Night will be held on Wednesday 29 April.**

Good Hygiene Practices

All the above steps are part of our efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19. I'd therefore request that you pay extra attention to the health and hygiene measures employed across our school, in particular the provision of soap in school toilets, changing rooms and bathrooms.

We are obviously aware of the current challenges facing supply of personal hygiene products (toilet paper, soap and hand sanitiser) however we currently have adequate supplies for our children and staff.

I've included a poster, ***"Ten ways to reduce your risk of coronavirus- communicating good practices"*** which was downloaded from the Department of Health and Human Services' website. This poster will be displayed around our school to reinforce good hygiene practices at our school.

As parents, you have a critical role in helping the school manage this situation:

- Exercise good judgment by keeping children home if they are feeling unwell for any reason
- Talk to children about the situation, as they may be feeling anxious or stressed and perhaps limit the exposure to the Media Hype and Information generated by the corona virus. You have the key role in helping your children feel prepared and safe and we are committed to supporting you.
- Encourage your children to be proactive and committed to their school learning, and to stay connected with the school and their teachers.

The Department of Health and Human Services has a number of resources on its website, which explain the virus, detail risk-reduction practices and behaviours, and answer frequently asked questions. These are available at www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus.

You can also find information about Catholic education's response at http://www.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Coronavirus-information-for-parents.

This is an evolving situation, but we will keep you updated as things change. I ask that you continue to work closely with the school and to contact the school should you have any concerns.

Now for the Good News – Working Bee, a wonderful success

Saturday brought a hive of activity to SPA as a group of dedicated and hard-working mums and dads, grandparents and children, including our SPA children and their teenage siblings, worked together to begin and complete a number of valuable tasks and projects. Such was the enthusiasm and commitment of these families that many remained into the late afternoon.

When wandering around our environment this morning families may have noticed the splash of colour added to our new cubby house (panels have been left incomplete to allow some of our children to compete the painting), preliminary works for our new synthetic grass area (to be laid over the coming weekends), new outdoor furniture located outside the classrooms and gardening, landscaping and weeding to the garden beds, general maintenance and new soap dispensers. Congrats to Jeremy Oakey, the SPARKLE Maintenance Team and to the families and SPA staff who supported our first Working Bee for 2020.

Thank you for your support as we work to keep our children, staff and community safe.

Warm regards,

Phil Doherty (Principal)

Ten ways to reduce your risk of coronavirus

- **WASH** hands often with soap and running water, for at least 20 seconds. DRY with paper towel or hand dryer.
- **TRY** not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **COVER** your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If you don't have a tissue cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow.
- **ISOLATE** yourself at home if you feel sick. If you take medication ensure you have adequate supplies.
- **PHONE** your GP first if you need medical attention. They will tell you what to do.
- **CONTINUE** healthy habits: exercise, drink water, get plenty of sleep, and now is the time to quit smoking. Call the Quitline 137 848.
- **DON'T** wear a face mask if you are well.
- **BUY** an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with over 60 per cent alcohol.
- **GET** the flu shot (available April).
- **SHAKING HANDS** is optional!

Find out more
www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus

If you are concerned, call the

Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 (24 hours)

Please keep Triple Zero (000) for emergencies only

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