



No 18: 7 October 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.”

RETURN TO SCHOOL PLAN – MONDAY 12 OCTOBER We Will Welcome Back All Children – Prep to Year Six

Dear Parents and Families,

Following on from the Premier’s announcement on the 27 September, “*students enrolled in all primary year levels (Prep to Year 6) in metropolitan Melbourne will return to onsite learning from Monday 12 October with all Year levels back onsite by Friday 16 October.*”

However, having referred to the CECV Updated Operations Guide and DHH&S Guidelines and after much consultation and discernment, **we have agreed to welcome back our entire school community this Monday.** We’re confident that parents will agree that it’s imperative for all children to return to onsite schooling ASAP and will put a number of protocols in place to ensure the continued health and safety of our children, staff and members of our school and local community.

Each of us has experienced the joys and at times frustrations associated with remote and flexible learning from home and gained valuable insights into our children as learners within our thinking culture. In a true sense of partnership, teachers, staff, parents and families have supported the children with their learning and just as importantly, helped to maintain their wellbeing.

While a large number of children were able to cope and display resilience for the majority of the lockdown, a smaller proportion of children experienced difficulties in engaging fully with the learning tasks on a consistent basis.

It’s also important to recognise that this has been the longest time period at home for our children since they were toddlers. Therefore in anticipation of the fact that our children (and families) will need to be reassured and gently coaxed back into school life, we have implemented a number of initiatives to support families with their transition.

SWELL Day – This Monday 12 October

Children are requested to wear their SPORTS UNIFORM.

As in previous years, we will commence the new term with a **special SWELL Day (Student Wellbeing)** to provide our children with the opportunity to gently immerse themselves in to the life and culture of our school and to physically and emotionally reconnect with each other after such a long absence.

The focus of SWELL Day will have a focus on strengthening relationships through their participation in a variety of inclusive and engaging activities designed for children and staff to reacquaint themselves to the routines and expectations of our school culture. There will be no testing or formal learning on SWELL Day.

SWELL Day will be a catalyst for further discussion with the children and staff about our shared expectations as responsible, collaborative, respectful and resilient learners. To support our children during their initial transition back to onsite schooling the children over the first few days, the children will participate in our prayer reflections, our social skills program and mindfulness sessions to ensure that all children feel safe, affirmed and supported.

Our six School Community Groups (comprising children from Years Prep to Six, their siblings and staff leaders) will meet regularly to develop broader school connections, challenge children with different perspectives, provide opportunities for leadership and create supportive relationships.

As an additional support, children, families and staff are able to access the services of Jenny McCormack, our school counsellor funded by the school and through the National Schools Chaplaincy Program. As school counsellor, Jenny will continue to work closely with school staff and with our Student Wellbeing and Learning Diversity Leader Geraldine Crowe, Helen Timmons our Learning/Teaching & Literacy Leader and Cass our School Psychologist to enhance wellbeing and connectedness to our community. This dynamic team will provide resources and support for teachers during this important return to school transition period.

UPDATE: Return to School Protocols for Monday Restrictions on Access to the School site

Families should be most familiar with the Return to School protocols which we followed in our previous return to school earlier in the year.

Anyone other than immediate school staff and students will need to refrain from entering the school site for before and after school drop-off and pick-up times unless there have been separate arrangements made with the school office. If arrangements cannot be made through phone calls, emails and zoom, parents and visitors will be permitted onsite during school hours for appointments to visit the school office.

These parents and visitors will be screened through the appropriate questions, have a temperature check taken and need to sign the register on entering the school site to ensure the continued safety and wellbeing of our school community. There will also need to be adjustments to the way we conduct parent meetings and interviews until further notice.

An Additional Recess for the initial transition back to school period (Morning Recess, Lunchtime & a shorter Afternoon Recess)

In recognising that our children have experienced the additional freedom to take a break from their learning routine at home, we have decided to incorporate an additional break for the children to assist them ease back into the routine of school life over the coming days. We have incorporated an additional Afternoon Recess for the first two weeks back at school.

Literacy, Numeracy, PE, RE & our Inquiry Units – Main Focus Areas

The CECV Updated School Operations Guide state that for *“Year levels returning to onsite learning (Prep to Year 6), the focus of curriculum planning should therefore be literacy and numeracy together with time allocated to physical activity, with schools able to determine the extent to which other learning areas are included in the teaching and learning program at the local level.”* Therefore after careful consideration we will also be focusing on Religious Education and through our Inquiry Units designed to extend our thinking.

Staggered Starting and Finishing Times

Schools have been directed to manage drop-off and pick-up times to minimise the risk of congregation at school entry and exit points.

Therefore to minimise congestion with all of our children returning, we will continue with the Staggered Timetable for Drop-off and Pick-up, further enhancing our very successful and well supported staggered school starting and finishing times to date.

Staggered DROP-OFF & PICK-UP Timetable:

Before School

- **8:30am to 8:44am - SPA SINGLE CHILD in Years Prep - Six ONLY**
- **8:45am to 9.00am - SPA FAMILIES in Years Prep – Six ONLY**

After School

- **3:10pm - SPA SINGLE CHILD in Years Prep – Six ONLY**
- **3:25pm - SPA FAMILIES in Years Prep – Six ONLY**

NB: Of course there will be some families who due to other pressing commitments may not be able to adopt the staggered times which we can appreciate. However if the vast majority of our families can comply, this will ensure the continued health and safety of our community.

Parents Should Watch their Child Outside School from a Distance

It's understandable that Prep parents feel the need to wait at a safe distance near the gate for easy access to their young preppie.

However to lessen the impact of COVID19 and to adhere to social distancing, all other parents and guardians are requested **not to walk their children to nor congregate at the school gate** before and after school. Staff will be outside to help welcome the children and to direct them to their waiting parents across the road or in their cars after school.

Anxious Children Returning to School

Returning to school especially during COVID19 Remote Schooling from home can be an anxious time for our children, a little apprehensive in returning to school however parents have been most supportive by adhering to our drop-off and pick-up during this past fortnight.

If a child is reluctant to enter into the school grounds on their return, parents are requested to **remain with their child outside the school grounds until 9.00am when the staff will be able to assist you during this transition phase for our children.**

REMINDER: Children Not Required to Wear a Mask

While the Chief Health Officer has advised that **primary school children will not be required to wear a mask, (however this is optional)** there will be a number of important changes to our school operations, consistent with health advice to all schools. Children will practise physical distancing where possible. Maintaining a physical distance of 1.5 meters will not always be practical in the school environment and this may be particularly challenging in the younger years of primary school. In these contexts, a combination of health and safety measures will be utilised to reduce risk. These will apply until further notice.

Using our mobile furniture and flexible open spaces, our classrooms and learning areas have now been re-arranged to limit close physical interaction between the children and also the staff occurring unnecessarily.

NB: If your child is ill or is feeling unwell, they must not attend school. They must remain home and seek medical advice.

Staff and Visitors are Required to Maintain Physical Distancing

To ensure that we maintain social distancing restrictions, it remains important that physical distancing for adults and strict hygiene measures continue to be observed. Adjustments have been made to teaching and learning environments, including maintaining distance of 1.5 metres between adults, bringing in more furniture to separate the children. **Any member of staff who is unwell must not attend school onsite and following our normal protocols will be sent home.**

Procedures when Entering School through our School Gates

Daily Temperature Checks

Although this is no longer a mandated requirement for schools, we have decided that, **all children, staff and visitors will continue to have temperature taken on arrival** in the **Welcome Court** before proceeding on to their learning areas.

Temperatures will only need to be recorded if they are elevated and require the child or staff to return home and not proceed onto the learning spaces. Temperatures will be taken again in the afternoon and hands will be washed before eating and after recess and lunch.

Washing of Hands

The children will continue to enter the buildings at designated Entry Points where they will be supervised **washing their hands using anti-bacterial soap liquid** before entering their classrooms.

Cleaning and Hygiene

All wet areas and learning areas have access to a thermometer, hand sanitiser, gloves, masks (if required) antibacterial liquid hand soap, paper hand towels and a hospital grade disinfectant spray bottle.

To support the health and wellbeing of all students and staff, our school will continue an enhanced cleaning routine. Following on from normal classroom protocol, wiping down (wearing disposable gloves) of equipment, tables, door handles with hospital grade disinfectant will be conducted throughout the day, especially before and after recess, lunch and end of the day.

As an added precaution, additional cleaning staff have been employed from 12.00pm – 1.30pm daily to sanitise surfaces.

Drink Fountains Unavailable – Children Asked to Bring their Own Drink Bottle

Children are requested to bring their own drink bottles as our bubble taps will not be available. However the children are now permitted to refill their bottles from selected taps within their learning areas.

Play Areas 1, 2 & 3 Now Open including the Adventure Playground & Slides.

From this Monday, to accommodate the whole school population, children will be able to access Areas 1, 2 & 3 including the Adventure playground and slides. To lessen the potential for the spread of COVID-19, the children and staff will continue to clean their hands before eating and after returning from the play areas. **The Adventure playground and slides will also be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each day.**

Although social distancing rules do not apply to children at school, children are encouraged to bring their own equipment, clearly labelled. Sports equipment including balls will also be provided by the school and will be sanitised daily.

Summer School Uniform Update

With the onset of the warmer weather, children are required to be dressed in their full Summer School Uniform including the school hat. There will be a one to two week phasing in period into summer school uniform before it becomes compulsory.

NB: Shorts are now permitted to be worn during term four. Families are requested to ensure that the children wear only items purchased through the School Uniform Shop (which remains open via online orders) **with the school logo** at all times. **All uniform items should be clearly named.**

Unnamed items of lost property or those with names that are indistinguishable will be located in the in LOST PROPERTY BIN outside the school office.

Tips for Helping Children Transition Back to School **(Jenny McCormack – School Counsellor)**

Returning to School: 7 Tips for Parents to Help Children Cope **Adapted from: Parent zone**

After months of remote learning and a range of COVID19 restrictions, children will be returning to school routines, classrooms, classmates, teachers, expectations and, in some cases, even new school settings.

Amid the anticipation and excitement many children are feeling, for some, leaving the home learning routine and environment may create anxiety for a range of reasons including: the ongoing uncertainty of COVID19; social distancing and hygiene measures in place; family circumstances related to health; grief associated with a recent loss; or economic circumstances.

To prepare and support students' return to onsite learning and the school/classroom environment, consider the following tips:

1. Talk to your children about how they feel

- It is important to encourage children to discuss their feelings about returning to school.
- If they feel anxious or worried, help them understand this is perfectly normal, and that you and their teachers are there to support them.
- Although difficult, try not to share any anxiety you may be feeling with your children.
- Bear in mind that your child may be returning to a pre-existing issue from before remote learning – for example, a bullying or relationship issue, or difficulty with school work – or they may be preparing for the transition to secondary school.
- Try to give them a non-judgemental and supportive place to share any worries. Younger children, in particular, may not always have the words to express their feelings, so try to find a way of bringing up the conversation without putting pressure on them – for instance when you're playing with them or going for a walk. This can help them to open up naturally and identify what they're worried about.

2. Pack right, pack light

- Your school will have been in touch to let you know what your child should and shouldn't bring on their return. Eg. bring an individual water bottle.
- Make sure you have checked with your school about what they need in order to make your child's day easier.

3. Support children to understand the school procedures

- Your school will also have been in touch to explain various procedures in place – such as entry points, break times and hand washing routines.
- It will be important for your child to understand social distancing and hygiene rules and, importantly, why they are in place.
- Read school communications with your child and make sure they are prepared and know what to expect when they arrive at school.

4. Familiarise yourself with school procedures

- You'll need to know where and when to drop children off and pick them up, as well as what parts of the school you can access.
- If your child travels to/from school independently, talk to your child about getting to and from school, observing the directions of Victoria's Chief Health Officer (ie. social distancing,).
- Your child will be expecting you at the end of the day so make sure you, or whoever is collecting them, are there in the right place at the right time.
- If your child travels home independently, make sure you, or another carer, is there to welcome them home and check-in about their day.

5. End of day emotions

- For younger children in particular, a school day can require a lot of self-regulation or compressed behaviour, which can lead to tired and emotional outbursts later on in the day.
- Given the length of remote learning and new school safety procedures in place, these emotions may be hard to cope with when they return home.
- It is a good idea to keep this in mind, and allow some time for 'letting off steam' by encouraging children to unwind and play outdoors.

6. Stay informed

- Given the long absence from school, there may be a period of readjustment.
- Discuss and affirm familiar routines and school expectations regarding uniform, grooming, attendance and participation to help your child reconnect with their school community.
- There may be fresh challenges for your child, from working with new classmates and teachers, to coping with their work and school expectations / 'rules'.
- Try to stay informed about how they are getting on – but if you are concerned, contact the school office about speaking to the class teacher.

7. Sleep and rest

- Your children may have been getting used to some unusual hours during the remote learning period and that may have extended into the school holidays.
- Make sure children are getting a good night's sleep for their return to school.
- It might be introducing some earlier bedtimes than they have had recently & limiting screen time.
- A good night's rest will help them cope with the return to school and the new routines.

The following is a link to an 8 minute clip in which Dr Jess Richardson, clinical psychologist, provides straightforward, important suggestions for parents and teachers to deal with any potential apprehension or anxiety children may experience on returning to school.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H96X6zw7rqE&feature=youtu.be>

Congratulations on all your amazing efforts in supporting your child/children with remote learning and I look forward to welcoming them back next Monday. Please get in touch if you have particular concerns with your child's wellbeing: jmccormack@spadoreen.catholic.edu.au Warm regards, Jenny

SCHOOL PHOTO DAY – WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER - TBC

In light of the current restrictions in place, we have been informed that **school photos will now remain on hold until further notice from the State Government**. This remains a contentious issue on social media at the moment as families would like a lasting keepsake of their child's 2020 school year. In the meantime we will keep the current booking for our Annual School Photos with Arthur Reed Photography which is scheduled for the 18 November. Fingers crossed and please stay tuned for further updates.

NB: Luckily we do have a contingency plan if external school photographers are not permitted in schools in 2020. We will still be able to have quality individual photos of each child taken by Sonya Chindamo, one of our dynamic Learning Support Officers who is also a highly regarded professional wedding photographer.

Keep safe and well and I look forward to welcoming families back over the coming days.



Phil Doherty (Principal)