



WELCOME TO THE 2022 SCHOOL YEAR

No 1: 26 January 2022

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,

Welcome back to SPA Doreen as we eagerly anticipate the start to a very exciting school year, a year which promises great hope and fulfilment despite the uncertainties of our global pandemic.

Our staff have returned to school refreshed and have been busily planning together in their respective teams over the past few days and are looking forward to establishing a close relationship with the children and their families throughout 2022.

Over the coming days, the whole staff will gather together will unpack our new learner disposition, our new school theme and our staff manifesto for 2022. They will then use their insights to support the children who will then be invited to unpack their understandings and thinking during our SWELL Week (Student Wellbeing) activities which will continue throughout next week.

We will also spend some time helping the children to shift their focus from the enormous challenges of living through and enduring the limitations of the COVID pandemic, to recognising the unexpected, unforeseen benefits presented to them during 2020 & 2021. These benefits may have included spending more quality time with their parents at home during lockdown, developing their resilience and empathy, family walks, playing games, picnics or learning a new skill. As parents and teachers, we have been given the gift of being purveyors of Hope for our children, hope in a better future so vital for their wellbeing, resilience and developing a healthy outlook to life.

Our main priority is for our children (staff and school community) to enjoy an interruption free school year and we will ensure that our COVID Safe Plan is strictly adhered to, ensuring their ongoing safety and wellbeing of each member of our school community.

Victoria's Back-To-School Plan

The measures set out in the Victorian Government's Back-To-School plan released last week will ensure every possible effort is made to ensure staff and children are safe and that schools remain open throughout 2022. The plan maintains the importance of the 3Vs: Ventilation, Vaccination and Vital COVIDSafe steps and introduces some new measures.

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) (Voluntary)

Free rapid antigen tests will be made available for all staff and students in Victorian schools for **the first four weeks of Term 1 2022**. Rapid antigen **testing will be voluntary** for all primary, secondary and specialist school students and staff.

Distribution of Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) to Schools

Rapid antigen test kits will be distributed directly to schools for the commencement of Term 1 2022. They have as yet not been delivered to SPA and we will inform you as soon as tests are available for distribution.

Tests will be provided in packs of five individual tests, one pack for each child at the start of week one and one pack for each child at the start of week three. **Children and staff will be required to do the RAT at home** and must report any positive test results to their school.

Student Attendance

All children are expected to attend onsite **unless they are formally registered as being home- schooled**. The Victorian Government states that parent preference is not an approved reason for students to be absent due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Children who are required to isolate or quarantine will be supported in the same way as children with an extended absence due to illness or injury, with learning materials provided to support their continued learning. Schools are not expected to provide a full remote learning program in these circumstances.

QR code check-in

The use of Service Victoria QR codes for electronic record keeping is now mandatory in all schools to enable the effective contact tracing of any COVID-19 cases.

Employees are not required to check in with a QR code.

Other workers are required to check in with a QR code.

Visitors (including parents and carers) are only required to check in with a QR code when entering school buildings, but not our school grounds.

Verification of Vaccination Status (visual verification only)

All **visitors** attending schools, including for drop-off and pick-up, must adhere to physical distancing, density limit and face mask requirements, and practise respiratory etiquette and good hand hygiene. When visually verifying the vaccination status of a visitor, **no information is required to be recorded or retained**.

In addition, **visitors** who enter school buildings must be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have a valid medical exemption, with the following limited exceptions:

- when attending to administer medical treatment to their own child when the treatment cannot be administered by the school
- when attending to collect their child who is unwell and cannot leave the school building unaccompanied by their parent/carer
- when attending for a momentary period that does not involve any sustained contact with staff or students, for example, to collect a completed art project or similar.

Visitors

Visitors attending any event or activity inside a school building including, but not limited to, tours, graduations, kindergarten transitions and whole-school events are required to show evidence of vaccination. Meetings and other discussions (such as Student Support Group meetings) with visitors who do not meet vaccination requirements will be held virtually. Visitors attending school sites for drop-off and pick-up who do not enter school buildings do not need to comply with vaccination requirements.

Face Masks

- Teachers will be required to always wear masks indoors when not actively teaching or communicating with students. Masks are not compulsory for teachers and staff outdoors.
- Children in Years Three to Six must wear a face mask indoors at school, including specialist schools), and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) programs, unless a lawful exception applies. Children must wear face masks even if vaccinated. Children are not required to wear masks outside.
- Children in Year Prep to Two are recommended to wear a face mask indoors at school or at Camp Australia's OSHC program.

- School staff must wear a face mask in all indoor settings, except where removal of a face mask is necessary for effective communication.
- Visitors to schools aged eight and above must wear a face mask in all indoor spaces, unless a lawful exception applies.

NB: A face mask must cover the nose and mouth. Face shields, scarves or bandanas do not meet these requirements.

There are a number of lawful reasons for not wearing a face mask, including for staff and students who are unable to wear a face mask due to the nature of their disability, medical or mental health condition.

Parent/carers of a child who meets the criteria for an exception must provide their approval in writing for their child to not wear a mask to the school.

Outside of lawful exceptions, schools must treat any deliberate and persistent non-compliance with the face masks direction as a serious matter. Usual school procedures for dealing with non-compliance with school rules should be followed.

Parents and Carers Not Permitted to Enter the School Buildings

During the first four weeks of the school year, **parents and carers will be unable to enter the school buildings** with their children to ensure the safety and well-being of all children and staff here at SPA. We will revisit this restriction after we journey through February and have a clearer insight into the impact of children resuming onsite schooling in Victoria and Australia during this COVID pandemic.

STARTING TIME CHANGE: Preps First Day of School: Wednesday 2 February @ 9.30am

We are very aware that a large group of parents, grandparents and families will be bringing their young Preppies to school this Wednesday 2 February to provide them with the love, support and reassurance so necessary for Preps on their first day of school.

As parents and families will not be permitted to enter the school buildings with their young Preppies during the first month, we have decided move **the commencement time for Preps to 9.30am.**

This change in time will allow families to gather with their Preppies in the Welcome Court without the rest of the school community as the school day would have started for the other classes. This will give families plenty of time to take the happy snaps and videos, smother them with hugs and kisses and pass on last minute words of reassurance and then pass them into the welcoming arms of their teachers. The teachers and Learning Support Officers will meet you in the Welcome Court and take them into their learning areas.

It's reassuring to note that the children (and their parents) are very familiar with this procedure and should be quite resilient as these were the same procedures that they experienced during their four Prep Orientation sessions last term due to the COVID restrictions. NB: While entering the school grounds, parents and visitors must adhere to physical distancing, density limit and face mask requirements when indoors, and practise respiratory etiquette and good hand hygiene.

NB: A Comprehensive COVID Update will be sent home to families next week.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

Friday 28 Jan:	Staff Return
Monday 31 Jan:	Staff Planning Day
Tuesday 1 Feb:	Years One to Six Commence @ 8.55am – 3.25pm (Classrooms open @ 8.40am)
Wednesday 2 Feb:	Preps Commence @ 9.30am – 1.30pm (Families gather in the Welcome Court)
Thursday 3 Feb:	All Classes @ 8.55am – 3.25pm (Classrooms open @ 8.40am)

We look forward to welcoming families back to SPA over the coming days. Enjoy this hot Australia Day.

Warm regards,



Phil Doherty (Principal)