



Monday, 30 March 2020

Dear College Families,

Coronavirus Update – Plans for Term 1

I am so very thankful for each member of this community. This past week has been exceptionally challenging but as a community we have walked this tension side by side. I am consistently reading positive feedback from parents about the quality of learning that is happening in the online environment and I am so proud of our students who, in this new context, have demonstrated commitment and appropriate levels of independence. I am observing my staff embrace new digital technologies and provide the most exceptional learning experiences they possibly can for their students. And, I am hearing from parents words of encouragement to be shared with staff and receiving small tokens of parent appreciation.

Today, the Norwest parent body has generously provided a pizza lunch for staff. As I write, Mamma Mia's Mobile Pizzeria, owned by one of our College parents, is parked in our carpark making pizzas for staff to enjoy whilst practising social distancing. This was a wonderful surprise for our staff and a great personal boost as they navigate together with students, a significant change to their daily routine. This generous gift is another indication of just how wonderful it is to be a part of this community.

As you are well aware, the Coronavirus situation is rapidly changing which means that as a College community we have to be adaptable and flexible in our own planning. Whilst our plans may change I want to assure you that our planning objectives will not. In all of our planning, our focus throughout this crisis will be on delivering the following objectives:

- **continuity** of learning;
- **caring** for each member of our community; and,
- creating opportunities for **connection**.

Of course, we only have a few avenues now available to us to deliver on these objectives so I ask that you continue to consistently engage with communications sent from the College and seek out ways that you can be part of ensuring that together we achieve these objectives.

Online Learning

Whilst feedback has been primarily positive regarding the provision of online learning, we are eager to hear from parents about the impacts that this transition is having on students and families. This is a first for all of us and so we need to hear from parents regarding the quantity, quality and, complexity of tasks. Of course, each student will respond differently to the challenges of online learning but some general feedback at this stage would help us to make adjustments that would assist families juggling working from home, supervising online learning and the many other additional pressures that are currently impacting families.

I would therefore encourage you to provide classroom teachers with feedback regarding your child/ren's and family's experience of online learning. Please note that we are not expecting parents to be teachers but rather to encourage their child to continue to pursue their learning and it is our desire to work in partnership with you.

Prime Ministers Announcement 29 March 2020

The Prime Minister announced further restrictions agreed by the National Cabinet yesterday:

- Public gatherings will be limited to two people under tougher measures to slow the spread of coronavirus;
- "In addition, public areas – public playgrounds, outside gyms and skateparks – will be closed as from tomorrow ..." he said; and
- People need to stay at home except for:
 - Shopping for essentials
 - Medical purposes or compassionate needs
 - Exercise
 - Work and education if you cannot work or learn remotely.



School holiday changes

The College Executive has made the decision to rework the school holiday schedule in order to shorten Term 2 in anticipation that we will be required to continue to facilitate online learning and to allow teachers to prepare for online learning for a sustained period of time. Please note these revised dates in your calendar:

- Term 1 finishes - Thursday 9 April
- Term 2 begins - Monday 4 May.

The Term 1 holiday will therefore be three weeks (10 April - 3 May) rather than two. During the 3rd week of the Term 1 break staff will return to the College for three days of preparation prior to Term 2.

In order to ensure that we maintain the equivalent amount of teaching and learning days in the 2020 calendar the following adjustment has been made to the July school holidays:

- Term 2 finishes - Friday 3 July
- Term 3 begins - Monday 20 July.

The Term 2 holiday will therefore be two weeks (4 July - 19 July) rather than three.

Please note, that there may be further changes to these dates should the NSW Premier make decisions in this regard.

College Bus Service

Whilst the shift to online learning has significantly reduced the number of students attending on a daily basis the College is committed to continuing to run its bus service. We are currently working with families who have indicated their need to access this service to determine bus routes in order that this service runs efficiently for the remainder of the term. It is our intention to continue this service into term 2.

Skeleton staff from this week onwards

From this week onwards the College will be operating with a skeleton staffing plan. This will mean that we will have a small number of staff onsite each day to supervise students whilst the majority of staff will be working from home. This decision has been taken in light of the Prime Minister's announcement yesterday evening that urged those who can work at home to do so.

Conclusion

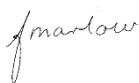
We appreciate that some of our College families will be immediately and deeply impacted financially and we want to talk with families about how we may partner with you at this time. Therefore, if you find yourself experiencing financial hardship, I would ask you to contact the College's Finance Manager in the first instance to discuss your needs.

For your encouragement

This morning I shared this verse with staff - *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert (Isaiah 43:19).*

It was an encouragement to me to realise afresh that when I can't see a way out or around a difficult situation that God is my way maker. Even in the midst of this health crisis God is making a way forward. This is evident in the way that I see families reaching out and serving one another.

Yours in Christ,



Felicity Marlow
Principal