



St. Margaret's
Primary School

NEWSLETTER

Term Four, Week 1
October 8th, 2020

From Brian's Desk

Dear Parents, Friends and Students,

Welcome back to Term Four. I trust you have had some time for rest and rejuvenation.

There is a reason for optimism as Covid-19 cases have significantly reduced in regional Victoria and we welcome our students back onsite over the coming weeks. Let's hope that more than some state of normality returns to our school this term.

The following adjustments to the recently updated School Operations Guide permits the following in Regional Victorian schools:

- Excursions
- Camps and overnight stays
- Kinder transition programs (small groups)
- Liturgies (single class only)

These adjustments will allow our Year Six children to attend their annual camp on October 21 – 23 and provide scope for our students to further support their learning by participating in excursions. While our Year Prep orientation program will most likely take on a different format – provision of small group transition programs allowing us some scope to bring our 2021 Year Prep children into the school.

With the easing of some school restrictions, our teachers are currently looking at some extra curricula activities to further provide our students with some engaging and fun activities in this final term of 2020.

We will once again be reinforcing COVID Safe Behaviours that were in place last term. It is important to note that entry to the school is restricted to staff, students, essential service personnel and those who have a special requirement. Good hygienic practices will be followed, physical distancing strategies put in place and interactions in close spaces avoided.

The most important action school communities can take to reduce the risk of transmission of coronavirus, is to ensure that any unwell staff and students remain at home, even with the mildest of symptoms.

We will once again be dismissing students on a staggered timetable to assist in a more fluent departure at the end of the school day:

Staggered Pick Ups

- 3.15pm Year Prep & siblings
- 3.20pm Years 1-2 & siblings
- 3.25pm Years 3-6 & siblings

Education has been very different in 2020 and this may cause some concern for parents or carers. Some students have been better able to progress in their learning in the remote and flexible learning environment, others have maintained their rate of progress, and some have, despite their best efforts and those of their families and teachers have not achieved the required standard.

Leadership and Management News



Leadership and Management News

St Margaret's School continues to do all we can to meet the needs of students and to provide targeted support. In every grade, at every year level, students have a range of needs and progress at different rates. Teachers work to understand their students and how they learn. This was the practice before COVID-19 and will continue to be teacher practice into the future.

The academic progression, particularly for young children, is not linear; that is, children do not learn and progress one step at a time in equal steps, equally paced and achieved over a consistent timeframe. Some learning progressions are achieved at a slower pace for a period of time and are followed by a period of rapid growth, achievement and maturation. This is typical of the learning journey, especially in the early years. For this reason, teachers track and monitor progress regularly so that they know and understand the learning of each student over time.

Teachers plan to meet these specific learning needs for all students at all year levels. In making these decisions, teachers are guided by the research so that they can be informed to make the best possible decisions. Some parents have expressed concern that their child may have fallen behind, missed learning opportunities or disengaged from school due to lengthy periods of remote learning in 2020.

Many parents are thinking about the best way to help their child happily return to school and some are worried that their child may need to 'catch up'. A few parents have asked the school if repeating the year will help. Repeating a year of school is also called retention. Parents may believe that their child has 'missed out' and will learn more academically or catch up on lost learning by repeating a year of school. So what do we know about repeating?

There has been a great deal of research about repeating a year level for students (also called grade retention) and many studies to summarise the findings of this research (Hattie 2009; McGrath 2006). Very few studies of students repeating a year have shown it to be effective and students do not catch up. The research shows that in most cases the impact is negative and could be considered detrimental to a student's overall academic success and confidence (Mathys et al. 2019).

Respected researcher, John Hattie (2009) reviewed all the research on the topic of repeating a grade and found it difficult to find any studies that showed a positive effect for repeating. Overwhelmingly, the impact for the students was negative at all year levels. In fact, even when the studies looked at students who were at the same academic level (e.g. for reading and mathematics) at the time of making a decision to allow the student to progress with their peers or repeat a grade, the longer term impact was poorer for the students who repeated. The negative effect of repeating was consistent and it didn't seem to matter if the student was repeating kindergarten, Prep or a higher year level, had learning difficulties or a disability, or was repeating because they were younger than the other students. Of greater concern than the failure to make academic progress or to 'close the gap' is the association of repeating a grade with harmful outcomes for students, including lowered self-esteem and emotional distress.

Advice to schools regarding students repeating a year of school (Page 2 of 4 Hattie's analysis of the research) found that students who repeated a year made an average of four months less progress academically and fell even further behind compared to their peers who did not repeat. 'Retention was also found to be associated with negative effects across a range of subjects, work skills, study skills and social outcomes. Students who repeat tend to perform lower on assessments of social and emotional adjustment, and report more negative attitudes towards school. These negative effects appear to increase with age.

Furthermore, retention is strongly linked with not completing school – students who are retained are twice as likely to drop out' (Evidence for Learning 2016). Hattie has also provided advice as to approaches that have demonstrated accelerated growth for students who require additional targeted teaching, with phonics instruction being noted as having potential to considerably accelerate student achievement and Response to Intervention also likely to have a highly significant impact.

Leadership and Management News

Dr Helen McGrath, from Deakin University's Faculty of Education, also looked at the research over the last 75 years and found no evidence that it helped a student's academic progress. She commented that, in fact, repeating a year confirms to a student that they have failed. Repeating a grade often 'creates low self-esteem and a negative attitude to school and places students at risk of further failure, increased anti-social behaviour and dropping out of school' (McGrath 2006, p. 39).

They experience stress from being taller, larger and more physically mature than their younger classmates. They miss their friends who have moved on to the next year level. They also experience boredom from repeating similar tasks and assignments. Their self-esteem drops. All of these factors ultimately lead many to drop out (McGrath 2006). 'Students who repeat have a 20% to 50% higher likelihood of dropping out of secondary school compared to students with similar levels of achievement or behaviour who were promoted to the next year level with their same-age peers' (McGrath 2006, p. 40).

Any decisions about retention should be considered very carefully because of the risk of negative effects both academically and on the wellbeing of the child (Peixoto et al. 2016). Retention should only be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is strong evidence that it is in the best interests of the child. All decisions should be made in collaboration with full knowledge that the research does not show that it is helpful and could be harmful.

Any decision about retention should take into account all of the possible negative effects, the social-emotional toll it may take on the wellbeing of the student, the cultural background of the student and the possibility of a much larger age-span of students in the class. Teachers know that they will need to carefully monitor student progress and provide additional targeted support to some students for the upcoming return to onsite learning in Term 4, 2020.

The transition back to school will start by focusing on students feeling comfortable, confident and happy at school. Teachers know that some students will need extra help to settle back into school routines. They will work with the support services available to provide the care needed, especially for students who find coming back to school difficult. Teachers carefully assess progress to fully understand exactly where students are in their learning and will use this information to provide families with an end of year report. Students who need targeted support will be identified and schools will put strategies in place to meet their needs. Educational practice promotes the use of differentiation and targeted intervention for those students who are at risk of not progressing academically in favour of retention. We are very confident that this is the best strategy and that we will continue to do all we can to ensure that we work together to make the best decisions for our students.

Regards
Brian

School Photos

School photos were scheduled to take place on Wednesday, November 11th. Latest information from the School Operations Guide states that school photos are currently not permitted. Parents will be advised if there is any change to this directive.

Term Four School Closure Days

Please note the following school closure days for Term Four

Friday, October 23	Grand Final Public Holiday
Monday, November 2	School Closure Day
Tuesday, November 3	Melbourne Cup Public Holiday

Leadership and Management News

School Assemblies

As our classes cannot gather as a whole school, this term's assemblies will once again be recorded and viewed by children on Friday (assembly) afternoons. Parents will be provided with access to a YouTube link (distributed through PAM) for each assembly item.

Term Four Assembly Timetable

Year Level/s	Date
1/2	16 October
Prep	30 October
5/6	13 November
3/4	27 November
Specialists	11 December

End Of Year Dismissal

The final day for students will be Wednesday, December 16. Please mark this date in your diary.

Smith Family Appeal 2020

St Margaret's school will continue to support The Smith Family Christmas Toys and Book Appeal 2020. The Smith Family's Toy & Book Appeal is your opportunity to help bring a smile to a disadvantaged child's face this Christmas.

Sadly, thousands of Australian children will go without receiving a gift this holiday season simply because their families can't afford it. Your generous support will help children in need to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to build a better future and help them to create a sense of belonging this Christmas.

During this pandemic, the children and families we support remain at the heart of everything we do, and more than ever before, it's so important that we help them end 2020 on a brighter note. With your help, we are aiming to support 32,550 Australian families with children living in disadvantage for the 2020 Toy & Book Appeal.

This week our year 1-2 students only will be kick starting their fundraising efforts by dressing up in colourful rainbow clothes and donating a gold coin. This fits in with our wellbeing unit for returning to school.

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Do you enjoy cricket? Well, who doesn't? Whether you play cricket or not, [Thomson Cricket Club](#) welcomes all new players to participate in skill development activities and modified games, make new friends and learn new skills including catching, throwing and teamwork. All kids get their own *Blasters Pack* and wear the colours of their favourite Big Bash Team + parents can join in the fun too!

Junior Summer Season 2020-2021 Details

Junior Blasters for ages 5-7yo (\$75pp)

Master Blasters for ages 7-10yo (\$30pp)

Training for both will be held at Godfrey St, Thomson Cricket Club this season.

Commences Friday 27/11 at 5pm.

For kids who are ready to play games

Under 11 training on Monday nights 5-6pm, commencing 12th October.

Under 13 & Under 15's training on Wednesday nights 5-6pm, commencing 14th October.

Registration on line www.playcricket.com.au For further information, please contact Kate Dew Thomson CC Junior Coordinator

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