



1 April 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers of Prep to Year 6 Students

As our staff use this week to continue planning for next term, please find below for your perusal, updated information relating to Term 2. **Finer details will be provided by relevant staff to all families in the week of 13 April prior to the commencement of Term 2.**

Our main goal in moving forward is to deliver structure and consistency, in addition to warm familiar faces, to provide students and families a sense of stability amid so much change. This will play out in the form of a rigorous, fun, meaningful and purposeful learning program, which will incorporate some unexpected surprises to maintain student motivation.

STAFF

Unless government-mandated restrictions call for alternative arrangements, staff will remain on site in Term 2. By remaining on site, staff have access to necessary resources including quality hardware and commercial-grade NBN. Further, given St Paul's is a deeply collaborative workplace, we believe our staff's mental health and wellbeing is enhanced by maintaining connection and social interaction as much as possible. Of course, social distancing practices have been responsibly implemented, and this is easily achieved in a workplace the physical size of ours.

Some of our teaching staff are parents of young children. In the event that new restrictions are enforced, mandating school staff to work from home without access to childcare services, we will work alongside staff on a case-by-case basis to understand their unique circumstances and specific family needs. If this results in the need for a relief teacher for your child's class, we expect to be able to fulfil this with existing staff in order to maintain familiar faces.

Online Learning

St Paul's is strongly positioned to enter this realm of learning on account of staff and student affinity with online learning tools.

In Term 2, teachers will actively deliver our online learning program in a full-time capacity **if this is what's required**. It will take place via an online platform which we are already familiar with, namely SeeSaw (Prep-Year 6) using either an iPad or similar device. Teachers will engage with students online, with your child able to engage and/or speak with their teacher every day. In the event that students are permitted to attend school on a closure model whereby children of essential workers are permitted to attend, these students will be under the care and supervision of our teaching teams and Learning Assistants as they also participate in the same online learning program as their peers at home.

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The initiative, resourcefulness, optimism and passion of our teachers is to be applauded. That said, we absolutely expect there will be teething problems under these unprecedented circumstances. We expect families may experience challenges transitioning to an online model. We expect that, despite staff's sincerest efforts to create something that has not been created before, there may be aspects of the program that require fine tuning or complete readjustment. Nonetheless, our goal is to support every family through this transition, and we seek your continued patience and understanding as we troubleshoot when expected and unexpected challenges arise. We are all on this journey together.

WORDS OF INSPIRATION

The following was originally written to parents by a teacher in New Zealand. We think it perfectly sums up our own encouragement towards you, our St Paul's parents and caregivers.

You might be inclined to create a minute-by-minute schedule for your kids. You have high hopes of hours of learning, including online activities, science experiments, and book reports. You'll limit technology until everything is done! But here's the thing...

Our kids not only can hear everything that is going on around them, but they feel our constant tension and anxiety. They have never experienced anything like this before. Although the idea of being off school for weeks sounds awesome, they are probably picturing a fun time like summer break; not the reality of being trapped at home and not seeing their friends.

Over the coming weeks, you will see an increase in behaviour issues with your kids. Whether it's anxiety, or anger, or protest that they can't do things normally - it will happen. You'll see more meltdowns, tantrums, and oppositional behaviour in the coming weeks. This is normal and expected under these circumstances.

What kids need right now is to feel comforted and loved. To feel like it's all going to be okay. And that might mean that you tear up your perfect schedule and love on your kids a bit more. Play outside and go on walks. Bake cookies and paint pictures. Play board games and watch movies. Do a science experiment together or find virtual field trips of the zoo. Start a book and read together as a family. Snuggle under warm blankets and do nothing.

Don't worry about them regressing in school. Every single kid is in this boat and they all will be okay. When we are back in the classroom, we will all course correct and meet them where they are. Teachers are experts at this! Don't pick fights with your kids because they don't want to do maths. Don't scream at your kids for not following the schedule. Don't mandate two hours of learning time if they are resisting it.

If I can leave you with one thing, it's this: at the end of all of this, your kids' mental health will be more important than their academic skills. And how they felt during this time will stay with them long after the memory of what they did during those weeks is gone. So, keep that in mind, every single day.

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In summary: extend forgiveness to yourself and to your children when, not if, things don't go as planned. As we say at St Paul's, "It's okay to make mistakes!"

St Paul's is well supported for the journey ahead by many entities including Lutheran Education Queensland, Independent Schools Queensland and fellow Lutheran schools. Things are changing rapidly and our school routines are about to look very different, but we are prepared and we are ready to walk you through this modified future.

Thank you again for your ongoing support and understanding in this process.

We look forward to communicating with you again in the week before the commencement of Term 2.

Stay safe, stay calm and God bless.

Yours in Christ.

Anton Prinsloo

Principal