



Lyrebird

totem of the Tharawal people

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES ACHIEVING SUCCESS

ISSUE 16 | TERM 2 | WEEK 10 | 2021

Principal's Message

My apologies for distributing this Newsletter late. I have been waiting for Covid updates to settle down, but they keep changing. This has a direct effect on how students learn (Naidoc week, excursions, Parent-Teacher night and community tour of the school. I will post the latest information on Facebook when I get it.

Our first term in our new school is over and although not completely smooth sailing, overall, most of our students handled the transition very well. As there was no transition time, we were making up processes and practices as we have been going along and our students have been very flexible. This work is ongoing, and we will continue streamlining our practices over time.

Last term we introduced lunchtime detentions. These were conducted by our Deputies. This term we have been focusing on poor behaviour in and outside of class. Next term this will continue and "out of uniform" will now be included as a reason that students can be placed on detention.

You are aware we have been going through a process of designing a new uniform in line with our new surroundings. This process will continue into term 3 and we will communicate our findings. For that reason, and until we have a new uniform approved and made, I have asked staff to concentrate on students not in school colours, including shoes and clothes with signage displayed on them (such as Nike etc.). We have been speaking to students in this situation and providing them with a new black warm top before we take any detention action. We will continue to do this over winter. Only students who choose to not cooperate with our requests are placed on detention.

We have run our first parent night for some classes in year 7 where they displayed some of their work. It was a great night. Though students have only been working on their material for 5 weeks, we were desperate to start inviting parents into the school to see how their children were progressing.



Our Koori dance group have also been in demand for our local Primary Schools. They have looked great and have been fantastic performers as well as ambassadors for Public Education and PHS.

It is with sadness we say farewell to Robyn Ronan, a long-term member of our staff. Robyn has worked with our students since 2006 and has reached an age where working is now a choice and she has chosen a greener more peaceful option. We wish her well.

We welcome another Ms Baxter to our staff. She will be part of of year 7/8 Literacy teaching team. Parents of these students will be hearing more from Ms. Baxter in the near future.



Mr. Warren Parkes
Principal

Lockers update

Since our mid term Newsletter there has been some progress on this matter. We have now identified all lockers and their respective keys. We are now printing labels for all lockers to allow students to locate them. This will include a location key to help students find each locker. It will take a few weeks to place this on each locker but after that we should be able to start distribution.

We do not have enough lockers for every child and sadly some students are not respecting property enough to be entrusted with one. For those who are interested in obtaining a locker you will be supplied with instructions and rules and there will be a holding deposit. For students who lose their key a replacement key fee of \$15 will be charged. This is the current cost to have one re-cut. Priority will be given to students with a BYOD laptop, students with physical impairment (short or long term) and other appropriate needs.

Finally, lockers are inside buildings and junior students will only be able to access them at certain times of the day. Seniors will have greater flexibility.

Build progress

The new covered basketball courts are fully open for student use. We are setting up three half courts adjacent to the main court this term so that many more students can play there. I initially allowed students to play ball games on the Softplay and Astroturf areas during break times however despite repeated warnings students continued to play in an unsafe manner and were hurting staff and students around them. These areas will again return to passive play areas.

All of the portable classrooms are now gone and the space is being redeveloped for our renovated oval and active play spaces. These should be completed in term four allowing our active students access to another court and larger spaces to burn off energy.

We are expecting our new flagpole, front of school digital signage and internal digital signage to arrive in term 3.

NAPLAN and Attendance priorities

This year and for every year that follows, The Department of Education has identified areas that they want Picton HS to make further improvement. NAPLAN has been a priority for many years however Student Attendance has now been added to the list. The indicator they are asking us to reflect upon is the percentage of students that attend more the 90% of the time. The state average is well over 80%. For PHS, this figure is around 37%. An embarrassing figure from anybody's point of view. This means that on average, all students fail to attend about 1/3 of the time. This is not true of many students however others are not coming at all. It all balances out.

This figure counts any students not at school learning. It does not count, excursions, work placements, Tafe and Work Experience because they are completing their school work but off-site. Suspensions, illness, travel etc are all counted as an absence. When it comes to student attendance, think of it as a paid job. If you're ill, stay at home however if not, how often would your employer tolerate you being off from work.

Learning From Home does not count. Especially if your children complete the online attendance form and participate in the Learning From Home program.

Thank you to all parents whose children are attending regularly. The Department will be asking us to speak further to parents of children not attending regularly. We are well aware of almost all specific cases and needs.

Now NAPLAN results do indicate that a larger number than average of our students are still operating at Primary school levels in Reading and Numeracy. We have already begun to redress this situation and I have just begun working with Primary Schools to see what we can do together.

Learning From Home

What was initially a 4-day program has now been extended until July 30th. Depending on the extent of contamination still in the community, that date may be extended. No matter the date, once we return to school, restrictions will still apply. Specifically, no outsiders can come into schools.

While we are Learning From Home, we have set up a new timetable for students and links to their online learning material. You will find details on our PHS website as well as updates as we receive them on our Facebook pages.

Last year we learned that there were a couple of weaknesses with our online learning programs. Specifically, a lack of student feedback, as well as problems with material teachers produced, such as quantity, difficulty and links. I have spoken to the staff several times on these topics about my expectations and hope you will let me know if you are still having concerns.

Lastly, I have introduced more and more of my staff in using a piece of software called Microsoft Teams. This allows teachers to do many more things including face to face contact with students and classes. I hope your children begin to share MS Teams experiences with you.