Dear Parents, Carers, Staff, Students and Friends,

A very warm welcome to the 2015 school year!

The past week has been very exciting for our students and staff as they settle into new grades, new routines and new ways of learning. There have been many changes to our learning areas as teachers continue to work on effectively utilising the space and ensuring that they are addressing the learning needs of each student. Your children may have come home this week buzzing with how fabulous their day has been - others may have come home concerned about change and how different learning has been. Either way it is important to reassure your young person that change is good and designed to improve and challenge us. Both great life skills.

We are putting a lot of effort into promoting school and learning as a positive experience where challenges are viewed as opportunities to develop our skills and knowledge - not something to sidestep. As parents and guardians of our students we are expecting that you will adopt a similar mindset and work with us to assist all students to achieve the very best they are capable of.

A very warm welcome to Erin Wolfe and Annie Forrest who join our staff this year. We are thrilled to

Lord God, your Spirit of wisdom fills our lives and teaches us your ways. Look upon our young people. May they enjoy their learning and take delight in new discoveries, help them to persevere in their studies and give them the desire to learn all things well.

Look upon our teachers. May they strive to share their knowledge with gentle patience and endeavour always to bring the truth to eager minds.

Grant that students and teachers alike may follow Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life, for ever and ever. Amen.

IMPORTANT DATES

**FEBRUARY**

- **Mon 9th** Parent Information Night
- **Sun 15th** School Mass @ 10.30am
- **Wed 18th** Ash Wednesday – liturgy 10.00am
  - P&F meeting 6.00pm
- **Thurs 19th** Introduction to the Sacraments for parents evening
  - Dunworth Centre @ 7.00pm
- **Fri 20th** Assembly 2.40pm
- **Mon 23rd & Tues 24th** Pupil Free Days
  - OLSEL Professional Learning days
- **Wed 25th** School Council @ 7.30pm
- **Fri 27th** CRT Induction session @ 9.30am

**MARCH**

- **Fri 6th** Division Swimming @ Portland
- **Mon 9th** Public Holiday
- **Tues 10th** PSG meetings
- **Wed 11th – Fri 13th**
  - Gr 5/6 Camp @ Melbourne
  - Fri 13th Regional Swimming
  - Mon 16th & Tues 17th Learning Conversations
  - Tues 24th – Thurs 26th
    - Sacrament of Reconciliation
    - Tues 24th ACMA Cybersafety presentations
have these dynamic educators as members of our teaching team! We also welcome Emma Currer back to St Mary’s after a period of parental leave. It’s great to have Emma back with us one day each week.

Our 22 Prep students have settled smoothly into their education journey and are enjoying all that school brings. It will be exciting to watch these little ones grow during the year.

A very warm welcome to the families who have begun their school journey with us this year. We hope that the St Mary’s community is able to provide you with a positive educational experience. We are also very pleased to welcome a number of new students and their families in other classes throughout the school. I have been impressed with the welcome other students have provided for our newcomers – they have displayed great enthusiasm and warmth. Welcome to: Chloe Byrne (grade 6), Ellen White (grade 3) and Charlize Wiffrie (grade 3).

Student testing
Holidays were finally over when students undertook their Literacy testing last week. The data that we gain from this testing, as well as the Numeracy Interview at the end of last year, is invaluable in assisting the teachers to plan their programs in order to gain maximum teaching and learning from class time. Thanks for your support of these two programs by having your child attend punctually.

School Mass
As a Catholic community it is fitting that we begin our school year with the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist together. In doing so we are able to give thanks for the many blessings provided for us in the world of education and learning and to ask God for guidance and energy to make the most of all that we have been provided with.

➢ All students are expected to attend our whole school mass and be actively involved in the celebration. Our mass to mark the new school year will be held on Sunday 15th February at 10.30am at St Mary’s Church.

➢ Students are required to wear their correct school summer uniform and sit with their class during the mass.

Important Dates!
Please make sure that you keep up to date with school activities by placing relevant dates on your home calendar. This helps everyone to be prepared and supportive of each other. These dates are included and updated on the newsletter each week.

Consent Forms
Parental Consent Forms were posted to you during the holidays – yellow paper! The Parental Consent Form is completed and signed at the start of each school year. It provides permission for students to participate in activities outside of the school where it is possible to walk as well as other permissions. This note does not cover activities that involve bus travel or those that carry a higher risk factor – such as swimming. The form also ensures that we have current information for each student. Please complete one form for each student. Spare forms are available from the Office. A big thank you to those families who have already returned their forms.

Please return this form to school by Friday 13th February.

School Rules
This year we continue with our three main school rules:

Respect your school
Do your best
Help others to succeed

During our day, and in all that we do, we try to remember these rules and make choices that support our expectation to ‘treat others the way you would like to be treated’.

Thanks for a great start!
God bless you 😊
Jo-Anne
A few reminders!
Please be aware of the following information regarding bell times and supervision. It is important that you support us in these ways so that we can ensure the safety of all students.

8.45  Organisation time
8.55 – 11.00  Learning time

(fruit time @ approx. 10.00am)
11.00 – 11.20  Play time
11.20 – 11.30  Eating time

It is important that all students have a sufficient and healthy snack at this time. This food should sustain children and give their brain energy for the next period of learning. The challenge is not to send food that is high in sugar and preservatives as these do not provide our brain and body with the correct nourishment for optimal learning.

11.30 – 1.30  Learning time
1.30 – 1.40  Eating time

Students will have another eating time which may be a smaller version of their main lunch meal for the day. Again it is important that students do not have food that is high in sugar.

1.40 – 2.20  Play time
2.20 – 3.15  Learning time
3.15  Dismissal bell

- Supervision is provided by members of staff for students from 8.30am until 3.30pm.
- **Students should not arrive at school before 8.30am.**
- At least two teachers are on duty at recess and lunch times.
- No child is to leave school before the dismissal bell unless permission has been granted. In these circumstances the student/s need to be signed out in the register at the Office.
- All students are to wear their correct school uniform each day. The uniform shop is open each Monday after school. If a student is not able to wear their uniform a note addressed to their classroom teacher is required. Please remember that jewellery is not part of our uniform with the exception of a watch and small stud/sleeper earrings. Long hair is to be tied back at all times and ribbons and other hair decorations should be in the school colours. All students must have a school hat each day in terms 1 and 4. Our policy is ‘no hat – no play’. Your assistance and support of our uniform policy is greatly appreciated.
- A note of explanation is required each time a child is absent from school. It is a legal requirement of teachers to keep an accurate roll of student attendance. A sheet of absence notes is included with this newsletter for your convenience. You can also find these slips on the website or report an absence via e-mail to Meg.

- Please take careful note of the information provided in the ‘Travelling to and from school’ handout attached to this newsletter.
- The newsletter is our main source of communication with parents. It is sent home with students each Friday.

Parents and Friends
All parents and friends are invited to come along to our first meeting for 2015 to be held in the school meeting room starting at 6.00pm on Wednesday 18th February.

Information Night
Parents are invited to attend our Parent Information Night on Monday 9th February.

- The evening will begin with a session for all parents at 6.30pm. Staff will present information on our restructured learning spaces to provide you with an understanding of the purpose and intentions. It is hoped that your attendance will assist you in understanding what is happening at school so you can best support your child/ren.
- Classroom sessions will be held in the classrooms and presented to parents twice on the night – 7.00pm and 7.30pm. Teachers will present information on content to be taught during the year, housekeeping news about their classroom and things you need to be aware of as your children journey through the school year.
- This allows families with more than one child to attend two classes. Apologies to those with more than two students – teachers will be presenting their information in a handout and this will be available to you.

Sacramental Program
Parents wishing to enrol their children in this year’s Sacramental Program for Reconciliation, Confirmation and/or First Communion are invited to attend an Introduction to the Sacraments evening on Thursday 19th February at 7.00pm in the Dunworth Centre. The program is for baptised children in Grade 3 but if your child has missed out on any of the sacraments please come along if you wish them to participate. Please complete and return the slip attached to this newsletter if you wish to participate in the Sacramental Program this year.
**Learning Conversations**
These conversations between parent/carer, teacher and student are an important opportunity for sharing of information and engaging in a positive way with the learning process. Learning Conversations this term are scheduled for Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th March at the end of the school day. Please let the Office know if you have a preferred day by next Friday. **NB:** Prep Learning Conversations will take place on Monday 16th March after school and Wednesday 17th March between 1.00 – 4.00pm.

**Centacare Programs**
Please take special note of the Programs being offered at our school for parents by Centacare. These sessions are free! Please contact Marea (see flyer) to express your interest in participating.

**Head Lice**
That time of the year when all sorts of bugs are going around, including head lice. Please remember to check your child’s hair regularly, treat if any eggs or lice are found and let the school office know.

**Gr 6 Leaders**
Congratulations to all of our Gr 6 students who have shown such wonderful enthusiasm and organisation in preparing their speeches for the election of our school leaders today. They should be very proud of themselves. We also thank parents for their ongoing support in assisting students with this task.
This year there will be two school captains, eight house captains and six school councillors. The environment group will be available to all Gr 5 and 6 students on a termly basis.
Voting will occur later today. Those elected will be announced at the Opening School mass on Sunday 15th February.

**Tennis**
District Tennis will be running on Thursday 19th February at the lawn courts starting at 1.00pm. If your child is in Grade 3-6 and can competently play tennis and keep score please contact me to enter them by Wednesday 11th February.

**AFL Player Clinic**
This year ESSENDON is conducting the AFL Player Clinic. It is a clinic for children in Grades 4, 5 and 6. It is being held on Tuesday 24th February at Melville Oval, which is a Student Free Day for St Mary’s. However, Jock Whiting has given us a spot in the 10.45am-12.00pm clinic. If you wish for your child to attend, you will need to take them and supervise them yourself. Please let me know if you wish to attend by Monday 16th February, so I can give Jock our approximate numbers.

**Swimming**
Division Swimming is being held on Friday 6th March in Portland. I will be in contact with the parents whose children have qualified for this event in the next week.

**Next week stay tuned for Athletics updates.**

I’m looking forward to a wonderful year of sport at St Mary’s. Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any sport related queries at school or email me at: ecouchman001@smhamilton.catholic.edu.au
Thank you in advance for your terrific support this year!

**Elise Couchman**

**Grade 6 shirts**
Each year Grade 6 have their Sports T shirt printed with each student’s name and the teachers of Grade 6 on them. If you would like a grade 6 shirt please hand your t-shirt into Meg or Helen at the school office. The cost will be $10.00 each. It would be appreciated if the money can be handed in with the clearly named t-shirt, in a plastic bag. These need to be handed to the office by Friday 13th February to ensure that students have their shirts for sports days. We will not be able to accept late shirts.

**St Mary’s Basketball**
St Mary’s Basketball Club is looking for interested players for 2015 season. We would like children of all ages and abilities but particularly if your child is 8 or turning 8 in 2015 we would love to have them come and play with us.
For more information please email St Mary’s Acting Secretary Cheryl Casey on jemnoc@hotmail.com or call her on 0458567508