31st January 2017

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the 2017 school year, which promises to be a very exciting one. A New Year and a New Letterhead! The fresh modern feel should be a welcome addition to our school communications. I hope that you found the holidays and the break from school routines restful and relaxing but that you are also ready for the challenges this year will bring. This year we welcomed the students in Years 1-6 back to school down the red carpet with photos and interviews – it was a fun and different way to begin the year and will link with our theme of “On Screen in 2017” – more about our theme below!

The staff and I are very excited about the events planned for this year including many community events, including the Parish & School Fete, as well as opportunities for us to celebrate together as a Catholic community in the Rydalmere Parish.

Of course ‘learning’ is our core business and will continue to be a major focus throughout 2017. With this letter you will find some useful and important information that will help with the start of the school year – my apologies for the length of this letter but all the information is critical as we begin the year together.

A special welcome to our new families and students joining St Mary’s this year – it is our hope that your time with us is rewarding. Joining us this term are some new members of staff – Mrs Erica Rheinberger, Mr Edward Shaw, Mr Michael Wheaton and Mrs Adele Violaris. Mrs Maryanne Grewcock will be working in the office this term replacing Miss Kate Delbridge. We hope to finalise this position in the coming weeks. To commence the year please find below some important information:

On Screen in 2017 – this year while we continue to focus on learning as our core business we plan to share our learning both in and out of the school via screens. This could be an iPad, computer, Interactive Whiteboard or the Internet. On Screen will also give students a purpose for some of their learning and an opportunity for family and community members to see what happens in our school on a daily basis. On Screen could be sharing work with a peer, teacher or parent. Today’s event will be a springboard for learning, talking and writing – why not ask your child about the photo booth?

MAI – the Mathematical Assessment Interviews were completed for Years 1-6 last Friday and yesterday. Kindergarten will complete their MAIs by tomorrow. We greatly appreciate the time and effort of our families to allow the MAI to take place.

Parent Information Sessions – will take place in week 3 – I look forward to speaking at each session and meeting many parents on these nights. Details to follow.

Visitors to the School – including trades people, deliveries and parents are required to visit the school office before entering the school grounds. This procedure has been in place for many years and for the safety and security of all who work on the site will continue to be implemented. As part of these procedures it is a CEO requirement that the purpose of any visitor to the site be recorded via the iPad located in the Parent Foyer of the school office. All visitors, including parents, will be asked by our staff to indicate the reason for their visit – helping in the classroom or library are examples of reasons why parents may be visiting the school. Thank you for your understanding of these procedures as we ensure the safety of all who work on and visit our site.

Morning Arrival – Playground supervision commences each day at 8.20am and parents are requested not to drop children off for school prior to this time. If, for an unforeseen reason your child does need to be at school before 8.25am you may use the services of OOSH. School starts at 8.50am each day – please ensure your child arrives on time for school, as late arrivals can be very disruptive to the learning of all concerned! Remember the catch phrase of “Be On Time for Ten to Nine”.

Afternoon Dismissal – Students are dismissed from the Marist site. Parents who park and collect their children from the school grounds are asked to enter the school via the main gate on Pine St and exit via the double gates on Pine St. Children will be dismissed when the bell rings at 3.10pm. Parents who wish to pick up their children by car can drive into Myrtle Street, via Pine St and collect their children without leaving the car. Parents can apply for a laminated sign from the office, showing their child’s name. The sign should then be displayed in the front windscreens of the car, and the teacher on duty will call the child’s name and parent volunteers will help them into the car. We are looking for more volunteers for the afternoon dismissal – please contact the office if you can assist. Please do not use the Hotel Car park adjacent to the school for dropping off or collecting your children.

School Break Times – this year we have moved to a 2 hour session between recess and lunch and a shorter after lunch block. The starting and finishing times of the school day have not changed. This change has been made to make best use of our learning time.

- 8.20-8.50 - Morning Duty – children may play on the Ford playground
- 8.50-10.50 - Morning Session (2 hours)
- 10.50-11.20 - Recess (30 minutes)
- 11.20 - 1.20 - Middle Session (2 hours)
- 1.20-1.30 - Eating time (10 minutes supervised eating by teachers)
- 1.30-2 - Play time (30 minutes)
- 2-3 Afternoon Session (1 hour)
- 3-3.10 - pack up / movement to pick up places on the Marist Site

Limiting Interruptions to Learning Time – our teachers will be maximising every opportunity for learning this year and as such we want to limit interruptions as much as possible. Our friendly office staff will pass on messages, arrange interview times with teachers for you, have forgotten items (like lunches and hats) delivered to classrooms but will limit the number of interruptions to the learning spaces – this will benefit all our learners.

Student Attendance – your child needs to be at school every school day. If they are unwell they should be kept at home. Learning success is dependent on your child being at school, on time, ready for learning every school day.

Families are strongly encouraged to take holidays and trips in the designated School Vacation periods. If you wish to take your child out of school for 10 or more days you are required to write to me requesting leave prior to the taking of leave. These days will also be recorded as an absence in the Roll and on Reports.

Kindergarten 2017 – our Kindergarten children will begin on Thursday. All parents are invited to ‘Tea and Tissues’ on Thursday morning particularly those of children starting in Kindergarten (once they have dropped their child to the Kindergarten Learning Space) outside the office.

Communication – each fortnight the eldest child in each family will bring home the Newsletter – please make sure you spend some time checking the Newsletter for information, invitations and photos!! Our first Newsletter will be sent home this week. Skoolbag is also an easy way to keep in touch – please download the free app.

Our Website, SkoolBag & Twitter accounts – type http://www.stmarysrydalmere.catholic.edu.au into your browser to find us! Download the free Skoolbag app for access to notes, newsletters and absent notes. You can also follow me on twitter me @rblissenden. Look out for the launch of our own school YouTube Channel soon!

Who do I contact? If you have any concerns about your child throughout the year, your child’s teacher should be the first person you contact. Mrs Gosper, the Assistant Principal, is also able to assist you. Members of the Leadership Team can also be of assistance including Miss Boidin, Mrs Rheinberger, Mrs Atkinson and Mrs Jordan. Of course you are welcome to contact me at any time over the course of the year if I can assist you with the education of your child. I look forward to working with you and your child during 2017.

Peace and Best Wishes,

Richard Blissenden
Principal