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29/01/2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to 2020! I hope all families enjoyed the holiday break with their loved ones. I am, however, mindful that this holiday period was less than stress-free for many of our families, who were impacted in a variety of ways by the bushfire crisis that gripped our region in the lead up to Christmas and beyond. The thoughts of our entire school community was, and still is, with one another during this tragedy. It is heartening to know that all our staff, students and families join us for the beginning of the year, injury free and with their lives and hopes ahead of them. We are also grateful that our school site was not directly impacted by the fires, which I know has not been the case for other schools in our area. It is important that we continue to keep a close eye on one another now and into the future. We are a close-knit community and rely on the support of one another to get us through challenging times such as these. I would like to reassure our community that we, as a school, are here in support of you if the need arises. We will also have an increased school counsellor presence at school during the first few weeks, to support any students who were impacted by the fires. Please let us know if you feel this service may benefit your child/ren.

As I am sure you are aware, another international emergency has been well publicised in the media and it is concerning to hear about the impact the Novel Coronavirus has had in multiple sites across the world. While we are confident that our community will not be impacted by this issue, the following information was released by NSW Health as advice for parents and schools.

“The NSW Government has today requested that children who have visited China in the past two weeks not attend school or childcare services until 14 days have lapsed from their date of departure from China.

Parents with concerns can contact their local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055 for advice or visit the dedicated NSW Health information page at:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/diseases/Pages/coronavirus.aspx ”

Today, students were placed in their 2020 classes. While we are hoping there will be no need to change or restructure classes, this is always dependent on student returns and new enrolments at the beginning of a school year. We will spend the next few days closely monitoring student numbers and let you know if any changes or restructuring is needed. I thank you in advance for your understanding. As you may realise, we have a number of composite classes across the school this year. Determining classing structures and the makeup of particular classes involves many contributing factors. School staff consider all options and possibilities when putting together classes for the following year. Always at the centre of our minds and our decisions, is what is in the best interest of the students. While I know some families have reservations regarding composite classes, I can assure you that there is no research to suggest that students are at a disadvantage when they are in a composite class. Multiple studies conclude that it makes no difference to performance whether students are in a straight year group or in a composite class.

Often, composite classes are formed due to the number of students in a particular cohort, however, they are also often formed for educational reasons where it is felt that the mixing of students of different ages is educationally and socially advantageous. I ask for your trust and know that the decisions we make are in the best interest of your children.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome a number of new families to the Picton Public School community. I know our families will make you feel as welcome as I felt this time last year, starting at a new school. 2020 is shaping up to be a very exciting year and I am looking forward to sharing many memorable events with our students and community. As always, teaching and learning is our main priority, and we look forward to settling into our educational programs quickly and smoothly. Over the coming weeks, information will be sent home regarding school fees, voluntary contributions and our Meet the Teacher afternoon.

Wishing you all a wonderful 2020!

Kind regards,

Mr Nathan Neilson

Proud Principal