To the members of our school community,

Welcome back. It has been terrific to see the children after the long break come back refreshed and excited for a new year. It was also lovely to reconnect with parents on Monday and talk about our plans for the year, show off our new facilities and have morning tea together.

It is like having a brand new school. The children and teachers have been really excited in their new classrooms with their new furniture and new teachers. It has been impressive to see all the positive attitudes to start the new school year.

Our Staff have had to come back early and have been working really hard since Monday January 25 to get the school ready for the first day. They have done a brilliant job and I would like to thank them for all their hard work. I know you will agree the classes look very inviting and are excellent environments for learning.

This Friday we will have our beginning of the year school mass at 9.00am in the church. All parents are welcomed and encouraged to attend. Next week marks the beginning of Lent with Tuesday being Shrove Tuesday. For $1.00 your child will be able to purchase a pancake at recess. Pancakes are a tradition on Shrove Tuesday to signify the cleaning out of the larder and preparing a feast before the beginning of Lent the next day. Ash Wednesday follows Shrove Tuesday and our students will attend Mass in the Church at 9.00am. Ashes will be distributed as always and we will begin our Lenten journey. Once again parents are welcomed and encouraged to join us.

On Saturday February 13, 6.00pm at Parish Mass we will commission our School Student Leaders, School Board members and P&F Executive as we begin the school year. Our whole community is welcome to attend and show their support.

As with anything new there will be teething problems as we try to see what procedures will work best with our new building. We will communicate these to you in due course. Until such time I would just like to point out a couple of items that people need to be aware of:

- Our duty of care does not start until 8.30am. Once our fences are finished there will be no way into school until the gates open at 8.25am. This is an important time for staff to be able to prepare for the day ahead and we cannot have students onsite unaccounted for.

- Camp Australia operate before school care at our school if you need to drop students off earlier than 8.30am. Please contact the office for or go to our website for details.

- Choir students and instrumental students before school will have special passes to show the before and after school coordinators so that they may enter school early.

- In the afternoon please wait in the undercover area, unless you are in Alness St or Ardross St drive through, for students to be brought down to designated pick up areas. Having parents waiting outside classrooms on our top storey will create congestion issues.

- Please notify teachers as to what pick up point your child needs to be at.

- In the morning if you are walking your child into school you are welcome to walk your child to the classroom door from 8.30am.

All of us here at St Benedict’s thank you for your patience and understanding as we work through these issues that will be rectified in the very near future. We also would like to thank you for all your positivity around our new facilities and for seeing the big picture while they were being built. We certainly feel very blessed.

Our Canteen will be open for business this Friday. Please see the information on our website and also what has been emailed earlier in the week.
Starting next Tuesday at 7.30am I will be training our year 6 students down at Shirley Strickland as we prepare for the T20 Blast Cricket Carnival on March 1.

Swimming Trials are happening next Friday and training will be happening Wednesdays and Fridays from thereafter. We have come second two years in a row in the swimming, let’s go one better this year.

Next Wednesday night is our first Board Meeting for the year and we will also have our first Merit assembly for the year next Friday.

Parent Information Nights will be held on Monday of Week 3. Remember if you would like to meet your child’s teacher to discuss your child’s needs please make an appointment to speak with them (after the first week of term).

Thanks again for a great start to the year. At St Benedict’s we have much to celebrate and look forward to as we charge into 2016.

Remember to “Always celebrate what is right with the world and not dwell in what is wrong with it”.

~ Dewitt Jones

God Bless

Darren McDonald
Principal

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**Sports News**

**St. Benedict’s is a SunSmart School**

We are a SunSmart school. This means when we go outside to play we wear hats and put on sunscreen. Please ensure your child’s hat is packed in their bag each morning. The school does provide sunscreen; however, if your child is sensitive to regular sunscreens please ensure you place a bottle in his/her bag for personal use.

**Swimming Trials**

Year 4, 5 and 6 will be travelling to Melville Water Polo Centre next Friday for Faction Swimming Trials. Students will travel to the centre by school bus. Please ensure your child has a faction coloured swimming cap for this day. These are available from the uniform shop on Thursday mornings.

**ALTAR SERVERS’ TRAINING**

Calling all current servers and those who would like to become an altar server to a training session here in the Church, Tuesday, 23rd February from 3.30pm to 4.30pm. If you are interested, please contact the Parish office on 9364 1120 to register your interest.

**SCHOOL BANKING**

Commences tomorrow morning from the Canteen counter in the undercover area. New members Welcome!

**P & F News**

On behalf of the P&F, I would like to welcome you all back to a new school year and extend a very warm welcome to all our new families!

Our school is looking wonderful with the new editions and our wonderful lawn! A BIG thank you to Mr McDonald for all his hard work over the holidays and the teaching staff for the wonderful preparations and time they gave getting all the class rooms ready. The children seem to have settled well and are loving their new space!

We already are starting the year full steam ahead, with Shrove Tuesday this coming Tuesday the 9th. Due to the increase in numbers of school children we will be doing one pancake per child @ $1.00. Please send this to school on Tuesday and your class teacher will mark it off and your child supplied with a pancake. Thank you to Pre-primary for taking on the first event of the year! We will send out a reminder on Monday.

I would like to thank Kristi Bates, Christine Blake and Nicole Chapman for taking standing their roles on the exec this year and all our class parents who have taken on their roles. As I have said on many occasions, you are the glue that keeps our wonderful community together!

Wishing you all a wonderful Term 1!!!

Best wishes,
Tanya Dowse-Kerr, P&F President
St. Bene’s

Counselling Corner

Week 1 Term 1 – Welcome back!

Hi there, my name is Mrs Bolton and I am the part time School Social Worker, working alongside staff to support the needs of our students and families. Together we aim to provide a safe and positive learning environment. I can see children individually (on referral) and in groups for discussions on various topics — so stay tuned for my page! If you think your child may benefit from some additional support please do not hesitate to contact me.

Back To School – a time of Change, Excitement and sometimes Worry.

Reuniting to school can often be accompanied with mixed feelings of excitement, worry and sometimes anxiety. These feelings are normal and expected during times of change (like returning to school, and especially true for those starting school for the first time or starting at a new school). Some children may report physical symptoms (stomach, headaches), others show regressive behaviours (thumb sucking, bedwetting), while others may act out (fighting with siblings, answering back). As parents there are some things we can do to make the transition back to school easier for our children.

Some Strategies:

1. Look after the basics – establish good routines, prepare the night before, ensure as much predictability as possible for your child. Anxious children often will forget to eat so frequent nutritious snacks are also useful.

2. Acknowledge and allow space and time for children to discuss what in particular they are afraid of? (their teacher, who to play with, if the homework will be hard...). For younger children try a quiet place as they are likely to want your undivided attention (bedtime, bathtime). For older children some distraction is sometimes useful (going for a walk, mealtime). Don’t bombard your child straight after school with questions about the day — allow time for them to “chill out” — talk will flow easier later.

3. Normalise fears (“most children feel nervous like you”). Children also enjoy stories of when you experienced something similar, so sharing stories from your school days helps reassure and normalise their worries. Provide Problem Solving Strategies, ie “Let’s think of some ways you could handle that situation...” Role play the situation with your child. This gives you the opportunity to coach your child on how to cope (and interpret) both real and imagined scary situations. For example if the fear is having no one to play with practise with your child how to ask another child to play. This gives your child a plan and the strategies to cope with an unexpected situation should it arise. Having strategies on hand also increases a child’s confidence in being able to cope with a situation far more than being told “it will be ok.”

4. Focus on the positives by re-directing your child’s attention from their worries to what they enjoyed. “What was the best thing you did today?”

5. It is also crucial to keep attending school as avoidance increases and reinforces a child’s fears in the long term. Being at school provides an opportunity to develop and practise social skills, and master them, forge friendships and provides for parents an opportunity to acknowledge and praise our children for their effort and talents.

6. Pay attention to your own behaviour – handing over our children can also be anxiety provoking! As parents we need to remember our children take cues from us so it is important to be confident (and model to your child there is nothing to worry about). Be supportive yet firm at any protests “I can see you are worried about going to school, but given you have to go perhaps we can talk about what you’re worried about and I could try and help you with that”.

Lastly some words of wisdom from Maggie Dent regarding what children need on returning to school..... “lots of reassuring safe touch, have fun, bake familiar favourite foods, lighten things around the home by wearing the odd tiara, fake teeth, super hero cape or weird wig!”

Contact: Stephanie Bolton
St Benedict’s Primary School (Monday and Tuesday 9-2.30)
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