



Bethal Primary School No. 5186

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Dear parents and carers

On behalf of our school, I want to say a big thank you to all our students, parents and carers for your continued resilience and support during Term 3. I know remote and flexible learning has not always been easy, but through our collective efforts, our students have continued to make valuable progress in their learning. You can be confident that our school will support any student who has fallen behind to catch up.

Term 4 is important for every Victorian student, and our teachers will strive to deliver high-quality learning for everyone. Whether we're teaching remotely or face-to-face, our focus for Term 4 is on making sure that every student is supported in their wellbeing, learning and transition needs.

The Victorian Government has outlined the staged return to on-site schooling as part of its gradual roadmap towards reopening.

All Victorian schools will continue to provide remote and flexible learning for the remainder of Term 3, except specialist schools in rural and regional Victoria, who will continue on-site schooling consistent with current arrangements.

Term 4 on-site schooling arrangements for students

Subject to the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, the Victorian Government has released a staged approach for students to return to on-site schooling.

The purpose of the plan is to get students back in the classroom as soon and as safely as possible without putting at risk all that has been achieved through the period of restrictions to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

To achieve both these aims, the return to onsite learning needs to be staged, just as the easing of all other restrictions is staged.

There are two reasons for this.

The first is that in metropolitan Melbourne, health authorities need to monitor the impact of students and parents beginning to move across the city again before schools move to a full return. Having one million students return to school all at once could compromise the ability to monitor this impact.

The second reason is that VCE students must return in week one of Term 4 and must be able to complete the three-hour General Achievement Test (GAT) that week. In order to ensure the focus is on these students and the appropriate safety measures are in place, this means no other students can be on-site on our secondary or P-12 campuses the week before the GAT.

This is the best way to ensure the ongoing safety of the whole community.

For our school, the following arrangements apply:

5–9 October (first week of Term 4)

- remote and flexible learning will continue for all students
- on-site supervision for children of permitted workers and vulnerable students will continue to be provided, consistent with existing guidelines.

From 12 October (second week of Term 4)

- students in Prep to Grade 2 will return to full-time on-site schooling. The existing remote learning program will not continue for these year levels
- remote and flexible learning will continue for all students in Grade 3 to Grade 6
- on-site supervision will remain available for students in Grade 3 to Grade 6 who are the children of permitted workers and vulnerable students.

This will continue until a date is set for the return of all students to on-site learning, based on health advice.

Health and safety measures

The Term 3 remote and flexible learning arrangements were put in place to significantly reduce the movement of more than one million students and their families across Victoria, to help slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Thanks to you and your family for contributing to this on behalf of our school community.

As on-site schooling resumes, we will continue to have in place strong measures to protect the health and safety of students, staff, families and the community. This includes staggering start and finish times, restricting parent access to school grounds and continued emphasis on hand hygiene and physical distancing where possible.

Whether your child is, or children are, returning to face-to-face learning or will be continuing with remote and flexible learning, please be assured we will be focused on three key priorities in Term 4:

Mental health and wellbeing

Our highest priority will be the wellbeing, particularly the mental health, of every student and member of staff. This means effectively mobilising all available resources to support our most vulnerable students and enabling staff to access the relevant support services.

Learning and excellence

Some of our students have thrived in the remote and flexible learning environment, others have maintained their learning progress, and some have fallen behind, despite their best efforts and those of their families and teachers. Our priority will be supporting both those who need it to catch up and those who have progressed to continue to extend their learning.

Transitions

We will make every effort to ensure successful transitions for children moving from kindergarten into Prep, the Grade 6s moving into Year 7, and the Year 12s moving into employment or further education and training.

We know some families are worried that their child may have to repeat a year due to the disruptions of coronavirus (COVID-19). There is little evidence to support the benefits of repeating a year to catch up. Instead, schools will use teaching strategies that draw on the best evidence available to help students meet their learning needs.

Parents, families and carers can be confident that the best option for almost every child is to stay with their peer group, whether that is moving from kindergarten into Prep, or moving from Grade 6 into Year 7 at secondary school, or students moving up any year level in between.

Our school, working with you, has shown it can be flexible and adaptable in responding to the challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19) and will continue to meet student needs as we look towards the end of the 2020 school year and ahead to 2021.

Kind regards

Mrs T. De Mercurio

Principal
Bethal Primary School