FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

DEAR PARENTS/CARERS

Camp Fun
Over the last three weeks students in our middle and senior school have had the opportunity to participate in a school camp and camp activities. Our camp programs are designed to meet students’ individual needs and maximise engagement.

There is an incredible amount of work that goes into planning and organising a school camp, and of course the time staff spends away from their own families is a big sacrifice. I’m personally very appreciative of all staff who have been involved in camps this term and I know from conversations with families that their efforts are appreciated by you also.

I know from the feedback from students, staff and family that a great time and indeed a very busy time was had by all. There was certainly a few tired faces back at school this week – students and staff alike.

Car Parking
We’ve made some minor modifications to the car parking areas on the cricket ground side of the school to attempt to maximise space and improve access. Please be aware of these changes if you use this space and be mindful of other vehicles’ access and of course safety at all times.

DATE TO REMEMBER

P & C Meeting.
Monday 17th November, 2014, in school staff room at 11.00am. All Welcome!

Term 4
- Last Day Term 4 - 12th December, 2014.

Term 1 – 2015
- First Day for students - Term 1 – 27th January, 2015.

Toy Library Visit to School - 25th November, 2014. PLEASE NOTE THIS IS FOR RETURNING TOYS ONLY, NOT BORROWING. IF ANY TOYS ARE NOT RETURNED ON THIS DATE THEY WILL HAVE TO BE RETURNED DIRECT TO THE TOY LIBRARY. THANK-YOU.

Assembly Dates – All Welcome!
Undercover Area 2.15pm

Week 7 – Friday 21st November
Week 10 – Thursday 11th December
Chaplaincy Breakfast
On Monday this week I had the opportunity to attend the Redcliffe, Deception Bay and North Lakes Chaplaincy Support Breakfast, hosted by the Morton Bay Regional Council and Scripture Union Qld. The breakfast is an important fundraiser and community awareness raising activity for Chaplaincy in the local area. This term it has been wonderful to work with our new school Chaplain Tilla, and Monday’s breakfast was a terrific reminder of the positive impact school Chaplains have on our school and indeed all the schools in our local area.

Class groupings - update
Last newsletter I wrote a lengthy article on the process around setting up class groupings and school structure for the New Year. I’ve had some positive feedback from parents about that so I’ve decided to re-print it for this newsletter for those who may have missed it.

Just to let you know we are currently working on about stage 3 of this process. However, of course, there are some decisions in the first 2 stages that are yet to be finalised which is one of the reasons that this is such a complicated process. I’d like to particularly draw your attention to the section on how parents and families can help. Thanks.

Class Groupings for 2015 (repeated from last newsletter)
It is about this time of year that I start to field questions from parents and staff alike about class groups for the new school year. Below is a brief description of the process we use to develop class groupings and school structures.

Stage 1: Confirming the total student population
Each year we have a graduating class that finishes year 12, and a group of students who move to Redcliffe Special School. We also have some students whose families may or may not request an extension and these may or may not be granted. We also have some additional students who move for family reasons.

Balancing that we have new students enrolling in Prep and the early years, as well as other students who might enrol as their family has moved into the area. Within the next week or two we start to get a pretty good idea of who our students will be, but it will usually change as the year draws to an end and again in the New Year as families often move over Christmas.

Stage 2: Number of Classes and School Structure
Once we have a clearer picture of how many students we have the leadership team then identifies how many classes we will need in total, and how many in each sector of the school. Given the nature of our school this is never an even spread. Our numbers in the junior school are always much higher than our senior school student numbers.

Stage 3: Students in sectors and classes
The leadership team will look at the age and educational needs of each student and assign them to a ‘sector’. Teachers then meet in teams and construct a draft of class groups based on educational needs and program focus. Typically this process takes some time as we draft and redraft trying to achieve a good balance. At this point each class is drafted based on students’ needs (staff are not matched to classes at this point). We do however start to look at the most appropriate room for each class, considering the physical and educational needs of each class as well as striving to keep sectors together in the same area as much as possible.
Stage 4: Assigning Teachers, and Teacher Aides
From term 3, through to the end of the school year teachers and teacher aides may receive transfers out of the school while other teachers transfer in. We also have teachers who relocate, retire, take family leave and some who are on contract whose contract simply comes to an end. Although it would be great to know early, it is often very late in the year, (and sometimes even the following year) before we know exactly our full workforce. Next year we will have a higher than usual staff turnover.

Once we have a reasonably good idea of our staff, we ask each staff member to submit an expression of preference as to which area of the school they feel is the best match to their skills and experience. Not all staff get their preference of course, but we try to ensure we create the best fit for each class group.

How can parents and families help?
Firstly, prepare for change. With a higher than usual staff turnover for 2015 I’m expecting many students to experience changes in their teacher and or teacher aides. I know that change can cause disruption and anxiety but there are also many benefits.

New teachers, new staff and new classmates each year is an important part of the school journey as our young people build resilience, learning to work with a wide variety of people (as they will in other areas of their life), build their network of familiar adults and learn to make new friends. Special schools are often smaller and at times you may end up with some familiar classmates, teachers, teacher aides and staff. That’s nice too, but can’t be guaranteed for any length of time.

As you can see there are a great many variables, most of which cannot be controlled. We ask for your patience and support. We will endeavour to get all this in place to be able to distribute class groups in the last week of school but I cannot guarantee there will not be changes in the New Year.

Once school starts we have a final staffing confirmation after the eight day of school. At that time we review all our decisions and structures and sometimes, if need be, we will make adjustments.

The most important thing that our families can do is make a positive connection with new teachers and teacher aides each year. While we have processes to share information it is your unique knowledge of your child that we cannot replicate. Please take the time to get to know your child’s new teacher, pass on any information you see as most important and start to build that positive partnership that will support your son or daughter to have the best year they possibly can.

Ric Day
Principal

This term has been very busy on the social calendar for Senior 2! On Saturday 11th October, the Woody Point Special School formal took place at Redcliffe RSL. What a fabulous night of celebrating the graduating students!
Last week Caitlyn and Claudia from Senior 2 went on Camp. They stayed at Windward Passage on the Sunshine Coast. It was a fantastic 2 days, the girls were able to go swimming in the pool, have a spa in the room, go for a beautiful walk at sunset along the boardwalk at Bulcock Beach, go bowling and finishing off with some lunch and shopping at Mooloolaba!
Dear Parents/Carers

The P & C Executive would like to thank all families that participated in the Cent Auction that was held in September this year. It was great to see parents, family members, friends and the community attending this event at the Bramble Bay Bowls Club. Everyone had a great time with many winning multiple prizes (lucky them!) and we all enjoyed having Principal Ric as our M.C. This is a fun filled event and if you’ve never been to a Cent Auction we’d love to see you next year; it’s loads of fun, plus you may be lucky enough to win of the many prizes. We had approximately 70 prizes including a T.V., Samsung Tablet, children’s bikes and toys (great to put away for Christmas and birthdays), plus many great gift vouchers and lots more.

Congratulations, you all helped raise approximately $2,500.00, so good work everyone!

As the end of the year is fast approaching, it is now time for the P & C to start organising our multi-draw raffle which will be drawn at the End of Year Concert on Wednesday the 10th of December. It is once again time for the P & C to ask all families to please help us out by donating an item to go towards this fund raising event. It would be fantastic if every family was able to donate one item (or more if you wish). Some suggestions are listed below:

Christmas goods: e.g. Christmas tree decorations, cards, ribbons, tinsel, table decoations, wrapping paper.

Food: Any ‘special’ food you like to have over the festive season – nuts, shortbread, chips, lollies, Christmas cake, popcorn. Also every day food to stock your pantry e.g. breakfast cereals, spreads, pasta, canned good, packet food, softdrinks, condiments etc. Please check use by dates, as we cannot use out of date items.

Other suggestions include: Gift vouchers, children’s gifts – toys, puzzles, books, pencils.

Adult gifts: Homewares, hardware, kitchenware, personal items, aftershave, DVD’s, candles, glasses, towels.

Every donation helps no matter how small, we appreciate it all.

The last P & C meeting for the year will be held on Monday 17th November, at 11.00am. Please note there has been a change to the time for this meeting only. All welcome.

We hope to see you there.

Cheers

Sandra Turner
P & C President