

Given the pandemic began during the Term 2 holidays we have been kept busy with managing learning at home and at school. Having experience at this during 2020 has served us well and we were able to launch into an online learning situation during the first week back to school. The key principle is that whether learning at home or at school, the children learn using the same mode.

The other principle is that children should stay at home where they can and only come to school if there is a genuine need. All members of one of our families were identified as positive recently. We are grateful that the children were at home taking part in online learning when they contracted the virus and so nothing major was needed in relation to St John's. The effect of this situation was to make our families realise how close the virus is to each of us and how important it is to follow the NSW Health orders and the numbers of children attending school dropped to average about 45 per day.

There is a constant need for pastoral care within our community. Our Family Liaison Officer and our Psychologist have been kept busy checking in on children and parents who are having issues. Our teachers are working long hours to teach this way but have established a very good routine. Two thirds of our staff are working from home on any one day. Like everyone they are missing contact with each other and their classes. We are doing regular check-ins, providing lots of morning teas and lunches and ensuring they are cared for as they care for others. CSBB has been very supportive of our schools and staff and have regularly contacted us to see how they can assist.

We have a staff day allocated to take a breather and do some planning. This will be a welcome break for our children and our staff during an extremely demanding time. We are grateful for the support and cooperation we are receiving from our parent community overall.

In other news, repairs and maintenance have been done on the fences around the property. The WHS people from Catholic Schools required all fences to be 1.8 m in height and several repairs were needed. In order to render the pumps near the water tanks safe, one had to be removed and a new cover placed on the other. The gateway posts from the Parish to the school needed securing. We are required to use preferred suppliers for these jobs and so they have been completed and paid for. A team from head office will be attending the site before the end of term to look at all necessary repairs. They will organise contractors and the work to be done. This process is being done throughout the diocese beginning with the Central Coast then moving to the North Shore then the Northern Beaches schools. \$18 million has been set aside for necessary repair and maintenance work on diocesan schools.

I have interviews our 41 families for Kindergarten during the holidays and these first few weeks back at school. We have been working running online playgroups and sending support materials to them as well.

Mark Bateman – Principal