Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians, Namaste, Hola, Sawasdee, Kon’nichiwa, Mahlaba, Ciao, Kia Ora, Xin Chao

A warm welcome to the new school year to all of our returning children and families. We trust that you have all had a good summer break with family and friends. We know that the long break can be stressful for families so with the children back at school I hope you can take some down-time!

This week is Orientation Week at WAS. The new preps have made visits to both the Niddrie and Laverton campus with their parents for a play session to orient to the school environment while parents, teachers and therapists have an information-sharing meeting. No doubt you’ll remember when your children started their first year at WAS. The parents come with a sense of anticipation - perhaps relief, and of course a degree of nervousness as the children take the big step to ‘big school’. The preps start school next week three days per week (Monday to Wednesday) for the first five weeks of term.

We have another busy year ahead.

The school wide improvement goals in 2017 build on the work done last year. We received an excellent score card from the region for the work we achieved against our improvement goals last year (see text box below).

In 2017 we will implement fully the Victorian Curriculum as mandated. At WAS each student will still have an Individual Learning Plan with 4-5 objectives that specifically address communication, language, social and functional independence skills. Teaching teams will devise the ILP through observations, assessments and input from parents and therapists. The first Student Support Group (SSG) meeting with the Grade 1-3 students will focus on understanding the child, and identifying the ILP goals as well as discussing learning areas of the Victorian Curriculum. More information on the Victorian Curriculum at WAS will be made available to parents at a later date.

Redevelopment of Niddrie campus
Meetings begin next week to build momentum to implement planning for the re development of the Niddrie campus. Building redevelopment programs do take time. An update for parents will be provided near the end of this term.

Wattle
The Wattle Unit caters for a group of adolescent students who have had problems at mainstream schools. Last year the program moved from Laverton to the Flemington campus of WAS. All students now travel independently to and from the school. The Principal is meeting with representatives of the Department this week to discuss the future of this valuable program.

ATI
The Autism Teaching Institute offers training courses for qualified teachers specific to ASD in Victorian government, Catholic and Independent Schools. In 2017 the ATI has 54 teachers doing its training courses. The ATI is trialling a new model of delivery in 2017. Its aim is to ensure the viability of the program into the future. On-the-job training, coaching and mentoring is the foundation of the ATI courses. An experienced teacher of students with ASD act as trainer/assessors and visits the ATI teachers in their own classroom with their students with ASD in mainstream primary, secondary and special schools. For more information go to: www.autismteaching.institute.org.au

PLAYGROUP
Playgroup continues this year at the Laverton campus for pre-schoolers with autism or like developmental challenges. Playgroup operates on a Monday. There is a morning and afternoon session. Playgroup provides an option for families with very young children with autism to share and learn strategies to support their children’s learning at home, and also for parents to meet for support and information sharing.

I hope to meet up with many parents and family members at Niddrie and Laverton during the term.

Until then, Mary Thomson Principal
USEFUL WEBSITES

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS)
The NDIS is a new way of providing community linking and individualised support for people with a permanent and significant disability, their families and carers. To keep up to date on what is happening visit or call:

🌐 www.ndis.gov.au
📞 1800 800 110

THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
Offers learning and development support, services and resources for all Victorians, from birth through to adulthood.

🌐 www.education.vic.gov.au
📞 03 9637 2000
    (general enquiries)
📞 1800 809 834
    (information and referral service)

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES
Supporting people with disability through programs, benefits and payments. Providing Information about Disability Support Register (DSR Register)

📞 1800 783 783
    (Intake and Response Services)

BELONGING MATTERS
Aims to inspire people with a disability, their families and allies to have opportunities and pathways typical of other citizens in the community – lives that are personally fulfilling, unique, socially inclusive and empowering.

🌐 www.belongingmatters.org
📞 03 9739 8333

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY (ACD) RESOURCES FOR PARENTS
ACD is the leading advocacy and information service for children with a disability and their families. Easy to access a range of resources. Translated resources are available in Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese.

🌐 www.acd.org.au/resources
📞 03 9818 2000

POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS
Supporting school-aged children on the Autism Spectrum, resources for C.A.L.D and Aboriginal Communities.

🌐 www.positivepartnerships.com.au

THE COMPANION CARD
Companion Cards are issued to people with a significant, permanent disability, who can demonstrate that they are unable to access most community activities and venues without attendant care support. Visit or call:

🌐 www.companioncard.org.au
📞 1800 650 611

VICTORIAN CARER CARD
Eligibility criteria and information about the Victorian Carer Card program is available by visiting or calling:

🌐 www.carercard.vic.gov.au
📞 1800 901 958

CARERS VICTORIA
Provides a range of services for caring families

🌐 www.carersvic.org.au
📞 1800 242 636
📞 03 9396 9587 (TTY)