Dear Parents, Carers and Guardians,

Sawasdee, Kon’nichiwa, Mahlab, Ciao, Kia Ora, Xin Chao

Welcome to this last edition of the bulletin for 2016. We have ended 2016 on a high note with the celebrations of the children’s achievements at school concerts at Niddrie and an Arts Show celebration and Family Day events at Laverton. These events warmed the hearts of everyone who attended.

As the year comes to an end it is the time to reflect on the contribution of all the members of the WAS community. Our staff - admin, the leadership group, teachers, therapists and support staff. They are a caring, creative group dedicated to achieving the best outcomes for our children. Our children - in Playgroup, Prep to grades 3, and the adolescent groups - have benefitted from the expert staff at WAS.

Our students have benefitted from the fine work of the Junior School Council in providing a student voice. Congratulations to students in the JSC and the lead teachers.

Our parents have made the school stronger. A big thank you to Alyssa Spargo and Stella Lillywhite and the parents groups for bringing the parent community together for different events, the highlight of which was the Through Their Eyes Art Show and the community viewing of the film Life, Animated.

We return for Term 1 next year on Tuesday 31st of January 2017.

Classroom Readers and Library Books; Laverton
Please return readers or library books which have gone home with your children throughout the course of the year.

End of Term/Year
Please note the following time and date for the end of Term 4. School will finish at 1.00pm on Tuesday 20th of December 2016. Please ensure you are waiting at your child’s bus stop 2 hours earlier than normal.

Looking ahead to 2017...
Next year we will continue to work toward achieving the school goals in the School Strategic Plan, with a focus on improving our literacy and numeracy programs. We will continue to provide support for students who are moving to new schools, and building on the work achieved this year on parent engagement, student wellbeing and staff professional learning. A more detailed account of our achievements in 2016 will be placed on the school website early in the New Year.

Finally, to you and your families our very best wishes for a happy and safe holiday season. We look forward to hearing how the children moving from WAS settle into their new school next year, and to seeing the children and families who are returning to WAS in the New Year.

Season’s greetings to all,
Mary Thomson.

End of Term/Year

Classroom Readers and Library Books; Laverton

Playgroup End of Year Celebration

Variety Day
On Thursday 2nd of December, a few classes participated in the annual Variety Children's Christmas Party held at Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. It was great to see the students who attended, enjoying the rides, photographs with famous characters, concert and food! It was a very successful day enjoyed by all.

Last week we were unable to share photos of Variety prior to the bulletin being distributed, we are happy to be able to share some of the children’s experiences now.
Parent information activities and events

Santa gets sensory at Pacific Werribee
Having a photo with Santa can be tough when your little one isn’t in the mood to pose for a happy snap. It can be even harder when your child has autism or other sensory challenges.

Pacific Werribee has been giving the families of special-needs children a helping hand this Christmas by offering a ‘Sensory Santa’ photo experience, where kids can get their Santa snaps before the centre opens without having to encounter the usual hustle and bustle of Christmas shopping.

Pacific Werribee will run the Sensory Santa sessions until December 18. For more information; contact centre management on 9749 5111

PARENTS, do you have these cards?
The information below has been kindly provided for our parent community by Leanne Hogan. Leanne is a past parent of Western Autistic School and now leader of a MyTime program.

We Care
This is a Victorian Government Carer Card Program. This card comes with a free public transport on Sunday’s card. It also can be used as carer value card to many participating businesses.

Carers Victoria Membership Card
03 93969500 or 1800 242 636
www.carersvic.org.au
membership@carersvic.org.au
This card is free. You receive nice newsletters. Entitles you to vote. Occasionally they do nice things like offer $1.00 movies at Highpoint. They hold events such as Mingle.

Respite Connections
Ask Carers Victoria to put you in touch with Respite Connections.

Companion Card
This is a card for our kids. Not all of our kids will be eligible. It is for those with a lifelong/permanent condition. It allows your child to have a companion with them free of charge for most outings. Your child will pay (but should have a healthcare card) and you, as the companion will enter free. The best time to apply for this card is when your child is nearly ready to start school. You need to have supporting documentation of your child’s condition when applying for this card, and I found that I had it all at my fingertips with the assessments Ben underwent for school.

I know that it is easy to think, well, they are young and I would need to accompany them anyway, and may feel guilty about applying. But have a think! How often have you taken your child somewhere and he/she has lasted 5 minutes and wants to leave? This has happened many times for Ben and I (especially at movies or concerts!). It restricts me taking Ben to costly events as I don’t know if he will cope. I will be more prepared to challenge him with new exciting activities if I don’t need to worry about wasted money.

Pensioner Concession Card
Some of you may be eligible for a blue Pensioner Concession Card. Speak to Centrelink if you are struggling and have been unable to work due to your child’s needs.

Amaze (Autism Victoria) Membership
Amaze can offer important information including counselling, and FACHSIA information.

Other Services
Your local council; Ring your local council to discuss respite options available to you.

MacKillop, Baptcare and Melbourne City Mission provide respite services.
Depending where you live, one of these services can provide case management.

Association for Children with a Disability
Provides telephone support and advocacy for your child, and has a comprehensive website which features publications, tip sheets and other useful information.

Disabled Car Parking
Your paediatrician can give you a letter to request consideration for a disability car parking permit. Take the letter to your local council or ring them. They will probably give you a form to complete. Please don’t feel guilty. I did until Ben had a few lucky escapes in the parking lot! If your child is a ‘flight risk’ it is a good enough reason to apply.

Did you know that our disabled car parking permit allows us to park in an area for double the time allocated- for example, it is 2 hour parking around Uncle Bob’s but we can park for four hours if we have the permit! Of course, we need to have our child with us but it certainly takes the pressure off!!

If you are parking in a disabled car park that has a time limit e.g. 1/2 hour, then that time does apply.
It also entitles us to park for free in metered car parks.
Make sure you only use this sticker when you have your child with you. You may be fined otherwise.

If parents and families know of any cards/services that you think should be added to this list, please let the office know and we will resend an updated information list in 2017.

Local Government Resources

Shire of Melton
Phone: 9747 7200
www.melton.vic.gov.au

City of Moonee Valley
Phone: 9243 8806
www.mvcc.vic.gov.au

Wyndham City Council
Phone: 9742 8114
www.wyndham.vic.gov.au

Disability Services & Respite Care DHS Disability Intake & Response
Phone: 9412 2741 or 1800 783 783

Commonwealth Respite & Carelink Centre Respite Connections
Phone: 9396 9550 or 1800 059 059
www.commcarelink.health.gov.au
www.respitenorthandwest.org.au

Interchange Western
Phone: 1300 300 436
www.vic.interchange.org.au