Dear Parents and Carers

A warm welcome to our new families. There are a number of families whose children have only just started school due to receiving late notification of their eligibility for WAS. We look forward to meeting our new families at school.

School Strategic Plan
Every Victorian government school has a three-year strategic plan designed in consultation with the School Council. This is the first year of our new strategic plan. In preparing for the new plan we took account of the Parent Opinion Survey conducted every year by the department and other feedback from parents. For example in 2015 we asked parents to tell us about their:

- Experience of transitioning to a new school
- Expectation of the educational program specifically with academics and homework
- View of the Wattle program.

We also undertook a School Self Evaluation. This was followed by a School Review conducted by an independent reviewer.

The School Review Panel outlined areas for school improvement in the new strategic plan 2016-2019. The school goals are aligned with the Department’s Education State Reform. Central to these goals is improving students learning outcomes within and beyond the classroom.

The WAS school goals for the next three years are:
- Academics
- Student behavior
- Curriculum planning
- Transitions and
- Parental engagement.

The School Council will discuss the new Strategic Plan at future meetings. The Strategic Plan is due for submission at the end of term 1. When complete it will be posted on the school website. We will let you know when this happens and will also provide updates in the bulletin.

‘Focus on Staff’
In this and subsequent bulletins we will introduce staff to our parents. In this edition our therapy staff introduce themselves and share a little about the therapy program at Western. There will be further opportunities next term to meet with the therapists at Parent workshops and learn about the work they do to support the teachers and students. Look out for those dates in future bulletins.

Mary Thomson
Principal

Bus Protocol
We are asking families that due to allergies and medical conditions, food is not to be eaten on the bus in the mornings and afternoons. If possible please try and pack your child’s lunchbox in the bottom of their bag so they aren’t able to access food whilst travelling. Children can drink water which can be packed somewhere easily accessible as this is allowed to be consumed any time. If children need breakfast please let class teachers know so this can be offered on arrival at school and all students will be offered afternoon tea at school prior to being placed on the bus. The children’s water bottles are also refilled for the bus trip home.

Last Day of Term
The last day of Term 1 is Thursday 24th of March 2016. School finishes on this day at 2:00pm. School resumes for Term 2 on Monday 11th of April.
Speech Pathology at WAS

Western Autistic School provides a consultancy Speech Pathology service for the teaching staff. The Speech Pathologists work with the teachers to support all of the children to participate as effectively as possible in their schooling, by ensuring the classroom program is tailored to each student’s communication skills and needs. We have a team of four Speech Pathologists at Western Autistic School:

Each classroom has a Speech Pathologist who visits the room every week. The Speech Pathologist uses this time to check how each student is progressing with their communication objectives (outlined in the Individual Learning Plan). The teachers observe and participate in the Speech Pathology sessions so they can then repeat the activities and strategies in their programs during the week.

The Speech Pathology team focuses on functional, independent communication skills. We want all of our students to be able to communicate independently across a range of situations. We also want them to be able to express themselves fully and confidently no matter who they are with, whether they use speech or other forms of communication such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), or a voice output device or application such as Proloquo2go.

The Speech Pathology team looks forward to meeting families throughout the year at different events.

Occupational Therapy at WAS

“The goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life.”

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists

The occupational therapists at WAS work closely with the teachers. Each classroom has an occupational therapist who visits the classroom on a weekly basis. We look at what a child is doing in the classroom, playground and other school activities. We support the teachers to develop programs that help each child reach their ILP goals.

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Parent Information

Asthma Australia has information for parents of students with asthma to help them prepare for school. Asthma Australia’s website and social media provide the latest information, including a checklist of what to do to help your child and a survey to complete to determine the impacts for parents/carers.

Asthma Australia recommends that you talk to school staff about your child’s asthma and the school’s medication policy, provide an Asthma Plan from the doctor and supply a spare reliever puffer and spacer for your child’s use at school.

Public Holiday

A reminder that there is a Public Holiday coming up on Monday 14th of March 2016. On this day Western Autistic School will be closed.