Dear Parents and Carers

Welcome to the new school year. We have had an excellent start to 2016 with all classes very settled. Our school enrolments are at 755 students and this means we will have our current class structure of 29 classes, providing we don’t have too many in area students enrol before our cut-off date of February 10th.

I thank all parents who have contacted the school in the past week to provide feedback about class placements and structures. We welcome any feedback and will always listen to our community. It has been a positive start to the year to be able to talk to parents and have them congratulate us for how the school year has started, also to hear about how happy their children are. Throughout this year we will be conducting parent forums, both during and after school, providing information about what we do at Harrington Park and why we do it. Look out for a parent survey in the coming weeks, where you will be able to list topics of interest that we can cover at these forums.

Our newsletter has now moved to a fortnightly publication, that will be distributed on the Monday of each even school week. We will be using the Schoolbag App as a means of communicating with our community more frequently – so please ensure you have been able to download this on your phone. Our website will be improved over the course of the term and will be another form of communication media that can be accessed. Newsletters will still be made available via email and printed form for those families that request this format. It will still be a form of communication that celebrates school success and upcoming events. The Schoolbag App has a calendar so between newsletter publications please check upcoming dates for events.

Below I have addressed some items that are relevant for the commencement of our school year.

Meet the Teacher
This event is always well attended and a great way to understand the expectations of your child’s classroom teacher. The times are listed below, however if you are unable to attend our staff are more than willing to arrange another time to meet. Please contact the office and leave a message for your child’s teacher to contact you.

Date: Wednesday 17th February
Times: K-2: 6pm – 6:30pm
5-6: 6:40pm – 7:10pm

On behalf of the staff we look forward to meeting all parents and carers.

Class Structure
We always welcome constructive feedback around the process of class selection. The staff at HPPS take class placement very seriously and many hours of thought and discussion is directed towards this process taking into consideration academic, social and emotional requirements of students.

To determine whether the school would engage in extension classes was a major focus point during Term 4 2015. Professional development about the identification process was delivered by a staff member who is currently studying the latest research into Gifted and Talented Education at University. This identification process was a trial and a way for the school to determine the need (if any) for extension classes at HPPS – it has been a worthwhile practice for the staff to engage in. With any new process, there is always room for feedback and improvement and we have welcomed that from parents this week. The main areas of concern are associated with social connections and school to parent communication. These will be improved upon for next year and the process evaluated to determine its viability later this year when we look to form classes for 2017. Requests for class placements have been an integral part of HPPS over the years, however I believe with greater transparency and improved communication and understanding the community is trusting that our decisions are made in the best interests of the child, hence requests decreasing.

Staffing
We welcome some new members of staff to our school as listed below:
- Kirsty Perrin (permanent) on 4P;
- Skye Vella (temporarily until week 5 on 2N. Loretta Norris to return week 6);
- Marty Grylewicz on Kindergarten;
- Elana Kemp on Year 1;
- Karen Sitkowski completing various support roles.

At this point in time we have several permanent teacher vacancies – one of which will have a vacancy filled by an interested pool during Term 1. We also hope to fill our vacant AP position via merit selection also during Term 1. I am currently waiting on staffing services to fill a central vacancy within the next week. If available this vacancy will go onto class 2C which Nicole Schofield is currently taking until we receive confirmation. A full list of all staff and positions will be published in the week 4 newsletter.

Please turn over...
Collaborative Planning
Next week each staff member will be provided with a day to plan with their stage and year based colleagues. This process ensures consistency in program delivery and assessment techniques.

Learning Management and Business Reform (LMBR)
This year the Department of Education will roll out a new finance, human resources, payroll and student administration system. This system will create vast improvements to how schools operate. The implementation process will therefore cause significant changes towards how our school operates in these areas, particularly having significant impact in the front office. The new system does not allow for late payments of any description, excursions, camps, carnivals, etc. Families will be invoiced with a due date and will need to pay prior to this date. If payments are not made then students will not be able to participate in the event. In the past we have been able to demonstrate some flexibility in this area, however to prepare for this change that will start to occur later in the year, we will be enforcing cut off dates for all our activities that will require payments during Terms 1 and 2. We have been advised that during the changeover it is recommended not to accept payments during Term 3 to enable office staff to become familiar with the system and ensure it successfully functions at our school site. This reform also causes ramifications for school organisation and we have to change our structures too. We are working hard with all grades in these early weeks to lock in dates and costing for excursions, camps, etc. so that we can provide you with preliminary costs that may have to be paid before the end of Term 2. We understand this may have an effect on the family budget and will work closely with families to ensure that students have the opportunity to attend events; however cut off dates will be strictly adhered to in 2016. Please continue to read newsletters to be well-informed as we start to roll these changes out during the course of the year.

Out of Hours School Care
The expression of interest to tender for the OOHSC has been released. Interested organisations viewed the school today. The tender process will then take place with the panel to meet on Thursday 3rd March. After this date we will be able to confirm a start date for the before and after school care service.

School Contributions
Public Education is of course able to be accessed by any child free of cost. We welcome increases in Government funding through the Gonski findings, however as a school that does not attract significant funding in other areas, we rely on the charitable donations of our families to assist with providing funds so we can best resource our school and students are able to access the best possible educational practices through their teachers. Each year the school requests parents to make a small contribution of $45 for a student or $65 for a family. This contribution is tax deductable. We will distribute envelopes to each family next week. I thank you in advance for your voluntary financial contribution to our school. Please return the envelopes to the office.

Parents and Citizens (P & C)
Our P & C are a small group of enthusiastic parents who volunteer their time to work tirelessly for all the students at Harrington Park. During our meetings we discuss, in a supportive and welcoming environment, items that are of interest to the school from a parent point of view and the school also updates and consults the parents about possible changes and improvements to the school across a variety of areas, such as student learning, school processes and procedures, environmental improvements, resourcing, fundraising, etc. The P & C are present in our school as a voice for both students and parents. The more community members that attend meetings, the better it is for the organisation to function and the more beneficial it is for our school. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 7pm in the school staff room. The next meeting is Tuesday 1st March. This meeting will be both a general meeting and an AGM. Please come along and support your P&C and your school.

Upcoming Dates - February
Week 3: Teacher collaborative planning
Week 4: Tuesday 16th – Yrs 2 – 6 Swimming Carnival
      Wednesday 17th – Meet the Teacher

I wish each and every student and family a very successful 2016.

Yours sincerely

Ben Green
Rel Principal
5 February 2016