Dear Parents & Friends of St. Mary's,

Welcome

We're all looking forward to welcoming everyone back to school on Monday 2nd February.
School starts at 8.45am and finishes at 3.15!

The purpose of this update is to inform you of a few important matters.

Firstly, the first Marian Newsletter for the year will be uploaded next Thursday afternoon 5th February. Copies of The Marian are available each week outside most of the primary classrooms next to the notice boards and also at the office.

Also, all staff will be taking part in a two day professional development seminar on Thursday 29th and Friday 30th January. The College will be closed on both days.

In the mean time, the following matters are listed for your information:

Week One

It's always a hectic and exciting time for the students and staff during the first week of school. Having had our Transition day in December 2014 we're all looking forward to renewing friendships and re-visiting the activities we did on that day including the important links we made in each of our classes.

On the first day, students and families who already know their child’s class are asked to please make your way to the classroom where your teacher will be waiting for you. Other new families are asked to visit the College Office or the Quadrangle where a number of staff will be on hand to greet you and direct you to your class/es.

Hopefully you can stay a while and have a cuppa at the canteen. New families, in particular, are encouraged to join us for a cuppa and spend some time getting to know staff and parents who can help answer some of the questions you may have.

During the month of February Prep students do not attend school on Wednesdays.
Hot Weather Conditions

The first weeks of term one are, invariably, hot. In accordance with our sunsmart/working in the heat policy, students will be encouraged to remain hydrated and to spend time inside at lunchtime if they wish to do so. For the younger students, their outdoor time will be monitored very closely and all students will be brought inside if needed.

It is of the utmost importance that everyone wears a hat during the first term and particularly on these extreme days. Parents are asked to talk about this important matter along with the other sun smart practices of applying sun screen and drinking/hydrating regularly. Students are encouraged to bring along their drink bottle (pop tops are great because they don’t spill as much) but water only please!

Also at this time of the year, the threat of bushfire is high and whilst St Mary’s College is considered a low fire risk area it is important that we’re on alert and prepared to act in case of an emergency. During the coming weeks we may be required to care for students after hours if, for example, one or more bus/train routes are affected by a bushfire. For us at the College, communication via a text alert is the first form of communication so be sure that your mobile phone details are accurate and known to the school. You will be contacted immediately by text message if your mobile phone number is correctly recorded on the College data base. Obviously, in these circumstances the students would be cared for by staff until parents/carers are able to collect their children. This care would include food and suitable activities provided onsite.

College Swimming Sports (Yr. 3 – Yr. 10)

Don’t forget the swimming sports are scheduled for Friday 6th February. Permission forms will be distributed on Monday 2nd February.

College Assembly

Our first College Assembly for 2015 will be held at 2.20pm on Monday 9th February in the M/P Hall. Everyone is most welcome to attend. At the Assembly we intend to formally welcome all new students and staff along with a special welcome to our Preps and an acknowledgement of our Senior leaders.

Opening Mass (Prep – Yr. 10)

This is always a wonderful occasion when we all come together to celebrate the beginning of the school year. Many students will be formally presented with their leadership badges. Mums, dads, grandparents and carers are all invited to this very special occasion on Friday 13th February commencing at 9.00am.

Parent/Student/Teacher Meetings – 10th February

Parent/Student/Teacher meetings will be conducted on Tuesday afternoon and evening on 10th February. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure each student has settled into their class for 2015. Teachers and parents are able to exchange contact details and set up appropriate protocols for good communication throughout the year. It also provides an opportunity for the parent/student to share important information or concerns with their teacher. Please mark this important date on your calendar.

Family Night (25th February)

Each year we kick off with a family night in the gardens at St Mary’s, starting with a BYO Dinner or BBQ (BYO Meat). This is an opportunity for parents and carers to meet staff and for the children to have some fun together. There will be a Primary Disco and a Secondary Social. More details will follow in next week’s Marian newsletter.

Mr Peter Kelly
Welcome back to all families and a special welcome to all those who are new to the College. Families should have received a Fee Information Pack in the mail prior to the beginning of the school year. If you did not receive the pack or have any questions relating to fees and levies, payment options or Conveyance, please do not hesitate to contact me at the College.

Please be aware of the due dates for Fees and Levies. Some of these have been altered slightly since last year so I do urge all families to make a note of the new due dates. These due dates will also be outlined on the fee statements.

The balance of VET/VCE charges (Yr. 10 only) and Laptop Installments for Years 8-10 are due by 1st March.
Curriculum Levies and Secondary Levies are all due for payment by 1st June.
The next Laptop Installment will be due for Year 8 & 9 students on 11th September.
All remaining levies and charges are due in full by 31st October unless alternative arrangements have been arranged by contacting me personally at the College.

We encourage the electronic delivery of fee statements. This saves paper, mailing charges and ensures the statement gets to the right person on time. If we have a fee payer's email address on record, we will begin to send statements electronically from 2015. If you have changed your email address recently, please send your new details to accounts@smseymour.catholic.edu.au. Please note that fee statements will be sent out next week.

**Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)**

Families may be aware that from 2015 the Government is no longer providing Education Maintenance Allowance and parents will no longer be able to apply for this allowance. However, at St Mary's College we understand the difficulties some families may have in meeting their financial obligations. Concessions may be available to those who have either short term or long term financial hardship and difficulty paying fees. Parents who experience such difficulties are urged to contact either myself or Mr Peter Kelly as soon as the need arises so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Conveyance Allowance**

This allowance is payable to those families who reside more than 4.8 kms from the College or nearest free bus service. Families who wish to claim this allowance for the first time are asked to contact the College office for an application form. Those families who received Conveyance Allowance last year need not re-apply. Please note, however, that a new form must be completed if there has been a change of address or if there has been a change in circumstances which may affect the payment of this allowance. Please return applications to the College by 13th February. Thank you.

Mrs Meryl Connell