



April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are now well into our second week in this new form of educational delivery.

**Remote Learning:**

On balance our roll out of remote learning has been very successful, and your conduit of information for details of online learning is from the Deputy Heads of School in both primary and high school, Liz Nevieve and Dani Finch, who along with all our teachers, have been doing a remarkable job in very difficult circumstances.

You as parents have been doing a remarkable job in difficult circumstances, and we are deeply appreciative of the many messages of support and feedback that are helping our teachers refine and develop their online delivery.

Our work has been informed by the experience of other schools, other systems, and indeed other countries which have been working in remote delivery mode for longer than NSW schools. The evidence is that over time the methods and materials of remote delivery will change and so I urge you to follow the communications from Liz and Dani and the teachers. If you have not done so already, please complete the Glennaeon Remote Learning Agreement.

**For Castlecrag and the Primary Years:**

For our younger years, this method of providing education is as much a philosophical challenge as a technical challenge. Our teachers emphasize the need for human connection and natural play, and here we are relying on a connection through technology. How do we reconcile this paradox?

Bear in mind that one of the key aspects of TV, online video and movies is the content they contain. Disney cartoons, even G rated movies and most TV bring an older, more adult consciousness to the child. They wake the child up and bring on an older mentality which compromises the child's right to an unsullied, natural childhood. They put fixed images into the child's mind which then work through the child's imagination and limit his or her own free working of imagination. These fixed images particularly limit the child's capacity for free, creative play which is the core central task of the younger years of childhood.

Yes, we are using technology for teachers to communicate with their students, and this is not what we would normally wish for in any way. But when each child sees and/or hears his or her teacher, the warmth of the connection with the teacher will limit the impact of the technology. The important thing missing in remote learning is the direct connection of

human relationship, and this is one way of providing that most important aspect of learning. Our healthy, life-giving curriculum will continue to nourish the children in the class, and the content of the screen meeting will not be the often distorted imagery of TV but the warmth of a direct connection with the class teacher.

For Kindergarten, the main focus is on audio so the child maintains a connection through the teacher's voice. Catherine Pilko told me that one mother mentioned to her how her child smiled immediately she heard Catherine's voice via audio file, a lovely affirmation of how the warmth of relationship is carried in our voices. There are also the packages that the Kindergarten teachers are preparing and delivering directly to homes that carry the work of school into the home life.

Our School Chaplain Lisa Devine's advice is that whatever time your child spends on a screen, encourage them to spend double that time in some artistic pursuit, in creative play, or in nature. This advice is helpful to all our students, and indeed to all of us teachers and parents as well.

### **The Future**

Teachers are most of all missing the physical presence of our students and the daily rituals of meeting and greeting, classroom interactions, and of course the always uplifting sound of children's laughter. As I put in my Newsletter piece this week, we're all grieving for what has passed and trying to find meaning in an uncertain future, while hoping for a return to normal.

This return will not be for some months. As announced on Friday by the National Cabinet, schools will remain in this restricted mode after the Easter term break, and there is no indication of how long this phase will last. Our task over these future months will be maintaining the wellbeing of all our students and families in the face of social distancing and physical isolation. Healthy social relationships are fundamental to wellbeing and also important for physical health. Your child's teachers will be working very hard to maintain and enhance their relationships with all the students in their classes.

School Chaplain Lisa Devine is available for a supporting conversation for any parent or child who would like to reach out to her. Please feel free to contact her on 0401 367 808.

Rudolf Steiner's social motto, spoken at the beginning of every Glenaeon Parents Association meeting, suggests a way to work:

*The healthy social life is found, when in the mirror of each human soul, the whole community finds its reflection, and when, in the community, the virtue of each one is living.*

If each of us can be a mirror reflecting and holding our community, then the virtues that we each bring will live even more strongly in the school, and we will look forward to surmounting this most divisive human challenge together.

Yours,

Andrew Hill  
Head of School