

### ***Latest communication***

19 January 2021

Dear parents and guardians,

Happy new year! - and a special welcome to our new families.

First, the exciting news: this year St Catherine's will be 165 years old, and in celebration we will be opening our long awaited RPAC (research centre, performing arts centre and aquatic centre), with a wonderful Gala Performance planned for Term 4. This year we will also be working on our 2022-2026 Strategic Plan and will be surveying our whole community early Term 2, so keep a look out for news about that.

Second, the more mundane news: although we were hoping that the 2021 school year would spring back to normality, it seems normality will return in a more gradual manner. We will keep you updated on government guidelines and requirements as we move through the term.

We received advice yesterday from Dr Kerry Chant PSM (she was named NSW Public Servant of the Year at the end of 2020) that the AHPPC (Australian Health Protection Principal Committee) is currently reviewing its advice for schools, which will be forwarded to us as soon as it is finalised. In the meantime, we will begin 2021 in much the same way we ended 2020. Please note the following:

- Parents should remain off campus for the time being, other than for reasons that comply with current NSW Health guidelines, such as visiting the uniform shop (appointment only) or essential meetings with staff. There is some leeway for the parents of students new to the school, and relevant senior staff will be in touch with you about our plans if this applies to you.
- There is no requirement to wear face masks at school, but staff and students are welcome to do so if they wish. However, when travelling to school, students over the age of 12 must comply with the Public Health (COVID-10 Mandatory Face Coverings) Order 2021.
- We will continue to keep year groups separated where practicable and promote physical distancing and hygiene practices. For the wellbeing of students, we will proceed with our house-based Big Sister/Little Sister program this year, with inter-year activities taking place outside where possible and with safety protocols in place. Our director of wellbeing will be in touch about this program.

Unfortunately, we will have to postpone our Welcome Cocktail party until later this term or early next term. We will advise you of the rescheduled date in due course. The relevant senior staff will advise you separately about the status of special events such as the swimming carnival and Clubs and Choirs nearer the time. We will go ahead with what we can, even if in a moderated form.

Please remember that students and staff with even mild symptoms of COVID-19 should not come to school but seek testing immediately. To protect our school community, we will ask families to collect their child immediately should we notice they have any mild COVID-like symptoms.

We look forward to welcoming your daughters to school on Thursday 28 January as we begin our 2021 school year. Hopefully, COVID is all downhill from here and an exciting year lies ahead.

Best wishes,

Julie Townsend

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**Headmistress Dr Julie Townsend**

BA (Hons) Cert Ed PhD MBA (Ed Ldship) GAICD

26 Albion Street Waverley NSW 2024 Australia | Email: [stcaths@stcaths.nsw.edu.au](mailto:stcaths@stcaths.nsw.edu.au) | Web: [stcatherines.nsw.edu.au](http://stcatherines.nsw.edu.au) | Telephone +61 2 8305 6200  
ABN 98 012 260 068 | CRICOS Provider No: 02322K