



## Principal News – February 2024

### Welcome back

What another great start to the year we have had. The students always start the year with a few weeks of 'Setting the scene', getting to know their new classmates and teacher/s, developing the classroom norms and expectations and routines. To walk around the school over the past week, you could mistake it for mid-year as the students were settled and busily engaged in learning. Year sixes head off to camp to Cave Hill Creek on Wednesday which is a great way to start the year and get to know each other in a different setting. The welcome picnic is a whole school event to celebrate the start of the new school year. The picnic will be on Friday 1 March from 6 – 8pm on the rear of the Brooke St site. BYO everything. This year we have a special student performances by students in years 2 – 4, so we would love to see as many families here as possible. More details will be shared on Compass closer to the date.

Last week we welcomed our 78 new prep students and their families, four returning from a year away and three new students and their families who have joined our school at different year levels. The new preps have a staggered start to the year, with half of each prep class attending for one day and the other half the following. We trust you will all have a great year and feel welcomed by our lovely Westgarth Primary Community.

I would also like to welcome our new staff, who have joined our committed team to provide a quality education for your children. New this year are Marianne Aiyelokun in year 1, Sally Forrester and Lucy Jayawardene in year 3, Sam Hynes in year 5, Trina Lin in prep, Cameron Howat in year 6, Paul Shields in year 4, and our new Library Technician Helen Disseldorp. While most of our other staff have returned there have been a few changes to the year levels they are teaching.

### Building works update

We are so excited to see that after many months of planning, designing, meeting and decision making, the building of our new competition grade gymnasium and classroom building is about to get underway. On Tuesday 13 February the builders, Building Engineering Pty Ltd, will set up their building compound. This will encapsulate the front oval, part of the asphalt area and the car park. It does mean that the only access via Clarke St will be via the gate closest to the kindergarten. The Newmarket Street gates near the art room and bike shed will remain the best access points for those coming from the north, north-east west and south-west. We have been informed that we will have drawings of the buildings to share with you in the coming weeks. While the works will cause a level of disruption over the next 12 – 15 months, the outcome will be worth it. We are so excited to be at this stage of the process and we look forward to seeing the build develop throughout the year.

### Parent Information sessions – NEXT WEEK

- Years P – 2 Tuesday 13 February 6 – 6.45pm
- Years 3 – 6 Wednesday 14 February 6 – 6.45pm

Each year we run an information session to inform parents about the classroom organisation for the year, some minor insights into the teaching and learning program and to answer general questions parents may have. This year the sessions will be run over two nights **via WebEx**, both starting at 6.00pm (until approx. 6.45pm). The years P -2 will be on Tuesday 13 and the Clarke St session for years 3 – 6 will be on Wednesday the 14 February. Details about session login details will be sent out via Compass newsfeed on Monday 12 February.

### WhatsApp and other social media use by parents and carers

Westgarth Primary School is committed to providing a safe and caring environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students, staff and parents. Effective engagement between Westgarth Primary School and also its parents is vital for the holistic development and academic success of our students. Parent chat groups, also known as parent forums or online communities, are used within our school community to foster communication and collaboration between parents. We have a policy for the use of these groups. The policy establishes guidelines for the appropriate use of parent chat groups within Westgarth Primary School. By participating in Westgarth Primary School's parent chat groups, you agree to abide by this Code of Conduct. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in a member being temporarily or permanently removed from the chat group or other necessary consequences as outlined in the Parent Chat Groups Policy. Westgarth Primary School takes safeguarding responsibilities seriously and will deal with any reported incidents appropriately and proportionately. The policy is available on our website [https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded\\_files/media/parent\\_chat\\_groups.pdf](https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded_files/media/parent_chat_groups.pdf)

### Yard Supervision Before and After School

The school provides staff supervision for students from 8.45am each morning and until 3.45pm each afternoon. Students who arrive at school prior to 8.45am are required to be in Before School Care (OSHC) or supervised by a parent. Students who require supervision after 3.45pm must be booked into After School Care (OSHC). Please help us to keep your child safe by adhering to this. If there are issues specific to your family that you need school support with, please contact assistant principal, Carolyn Shiels. Please note that all classrooms are locked at 3.45pm to allow teachers to meet and prepare for the following day, likewise the student toilets are locked at 3.45pm on the Brooke St site by the yard duty teacher.

### Dogs at school

We support the idea of your four-legged family member having their walk to and from school with your family, however School Council made the decision that dogs should not enter the school grounds. We have many people who have a fear of dogs and as the school and surrounding area is busy at the start and end of school, it can be stressful for the dog. Tethering a dog means it is not under the control of its handler and is also open to be approached by a child. If scared, it can bite. This has happened in the past. Boisterous dogs can also cause distress and fear in children. If you need/want to walk your dog to and from school, please say goodbye to your child/ren at the school gate. If you need to come onsite, please leave your dog at home. We also ask for your help to minimise the risk by:

- always having an adult in charge of any dog
- do not bring dogs on the school grounds
- do not tether dogs on the school side of the footpath
- if you need to come onsite, please leave your dog at home on that occasion.



### Asthma policy/practices

Parents of students who have asthma are reminded that they need to provide medication and an asthma management plan for their child. Each classroom has a first aid kit housed near the external door, which has a school supplied inhaler and spacer and used in emergency situations. While children will use their own medication when having an asthma attack, an emergency supply will be at close hand so no time is wasted locating medication in an emergency. Teachers will notify parents via Compass if their child has required medication during the day. While many students, particularly the older ones, manage their own medication, please encourage your child to let their teacher know when they need their medication and/or if they had some during a break time, so that it can be monitored, and they can be assisted by an adult. Our Asthma Policy is on our school website at

[https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded\\_files/media/1668736974asthma.pdf](https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded_files/media/1668736974asthma.pdf). If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to speak to your child's teacher, Nella or Marg at the office, Enise in the first aid room or a member of the school's leadership team.

## Anaphylaxis Management

### Potential allergic reactions to nuts, nut products, seeds & other food products

As you may be aware for some children, even a minor exposure to nuts or foods containing nut products or seeds can set off a severe allergy, which may cause loss of breathing.

The parents of children who may have a severe reaction would like you to help us make the school environment as safe as possible by exercising caution when packing school snacks and lunches. Whilst students with severe allergies can learn to manage and control what they eat there is no real way of protecting themselves from nut traces that may be present in the environment such as on clothing, furniture, drink taps and of course on other people's hands.

- Please avoid preparing school lunches with products that contain nuts, nut spreads, sesame products or chocolate that may contain nuts (e.g. Peanut Butter, Nutella and Tahini)
- Please do not send food to school for birthday celebrations. This stance is not due to allergies, but it does help us to manage possible exposure.
- As part of our policy, we do not encourage students to share food. All students will be encouraged to wash hands before and after eating.
- Please avoid packing any whole nuts as part of lunches for children under eight as they may get caught in small children's airways presenting as a choking hazard.

This year we have students who have anaphylaxis in Prep, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

## No food sharing (inc. on Birthdays)

There are many reasons why we do not allow food sharing at school. Dietary needs, religion, allergies, Covid-19 and parent choice are some. Some parents like to celebrate their child's birthday by sending treats to school to share with classmates, but we ask that you **do not send any food birthday treats** either homemade or packaged. It is difficult for your child to understand why the teacher must send them home at the end of the day.

## Ambulance Cover

We strongly recommend that all families take out ambulance cover. Though serious injuries are rare, we have a policy of calling for an ambulance when in doubt about a student's health. We will usually ring an ambulance first and then contact a family member, and we have found that in many cases it is safer for both the parent and the child to be transported in an ambulance. It can be a distressing time for parents when their child is injured and is often not the best time to be worrying about how to get to the hospital or doctor. Families are liable for any ambulance costs. There is now a significant call out fee even if they are not transported to a hospital.



## Mobile device use at school

Our policy on the use of mobile phones and other devices with cellular capacity (such as an Apple watch) must not be used during school hours including recess and lunchtime and at OSHC, unless an exemption has been granted. Please refer to our Mobile Phone Student Use policy and our Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement.

[https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded\\_files/media/1621915263mobile\\_phones\\_student\\_use.pdf](https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/uploaded_files/media/1621915263mobile_phones_student_use.pdf)

## Sun smart

We would like to remind all students that they are required to wear a sun smart hat and clothing until the end of April. Caps do not provide adequate sun protection so please make sure your child wears a broad-brimmed or legionnaire style hat. It is also recommended that students apply sunscreen to protect their skin. Singlet and tops with narrow straps are not suitable to wear at school. Hats are available for purchase at the office. The school does supply sunscreen but students are welcome and encouraged to bring their own.

**School Council Report****– Jacob Spencer (School Council President)**

The first school council meeting for 2024 will be on Wednesday 21 February. This will be the last school council meeting of the current school councillors. The first meeting of the new school council will be on 20 March at 7pm.

School Council assists with the governance of the school. The Westgarth School Council has 15 members including eight parents, four staff, the principal as executive officer and two co-opted members, one traditionally from our community and another from the Fun & Fundraising committee. Each year half of the council complete their 2-year term and vacancies arise. We have four parents retiring from council this year (plus a further 1 co-opted positions) so if you would like to be involved please collect a nomination form from the office or request a copy of the form to be emailed to you by contacting the office 9481 5577. The schedule for the process is below. We will host a Q&A/information session for those wanting more information via WebEx on Tuesday 20 Feb at 7.30pm (join via this link: <https://eduvic.webex.com/eduvic/j.php?MTID=me3ea57dd99cf6644bf5293944aae2f4e>) or alternatively you can call the school and talk to Jo. For information about school council [click here](#).

Nomination forms can be collected from the office or emailed from 19 February. Please contact the office if you would like the form emailed to you.

School Council Election Process and Timetable 2023		
	EVENT	DATE
a)	Notice of election and call for nominations	Monday 19 February 2023
b)	Closing date for nominations	Monday 26 February 2023
c)	Date by which the list of candidates and nominators will be posted	Tuesday 27 February 2023
d)	Date by which ballot papers will be prepared and distributed if election is required	Monday 4 March 2023
e)	Close of ballot	4.00pm Monday 18 March 2023
f)	Vote count	Monday 18 March 2023
g)	Declaration of poll	Tuesday 19 March 2023
h)	Special council meeting to co-opt Community members (the principal will preside)	Wednesday 27 March 2023
i)	First council meeting to elect office bearers (the principal will preside)	Wednesday 27 March 2023
j)	First council meeting with the new school council presided over by the newly elected president.	Wednesday 27 March 2023

If you would like to join a sub-committee, please contact the office so we can pass on your details to the convenors of the sub-committees so you can receive the correspondence and meeting invites.

**Working with Children Check & Child Safe training**

Parents/carers who wish to volunteer at Westgarth Primary School are required to have a current WWCC. Volunteering with reading in class, going on an excursion or helping out with sporting events or kitchen/garden will require a current WWCC. Once you have applied for your new card at [www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au](http://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au) you will need to bring your receipt to the school office to register. All volunteers must complete the Child Safe Training module and read the induction pack on our website. <https://www.wgps.vic.edu.au/page/333>

## School Payments

You will have received a Compass notification titled '2024 Voluntary Parent Financial Contribution Schedule' at the end of January, which outlines the payments for 2024. Details about how to make the payment are included in the attachment. School's preferred method of payment is via the Compass parent portal.

Families can opt to access the half yearly payment plan via their Compass portal or can contact the school to set up a more individualised payment plan within Compass.

All excursions/in-house activities/wellbeing & swimming payments, are charged as the activity occurs throughout the year rather than a lump payment at the beginning of the year.

If you are experiencing financial difficulty, please call to speak with Carolyn Shiels (Assistant Principal) or Victoria Cannata (Business Manager) on 9481 5577 or email [westgarth.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:westgarth.ps@education.vic.gov.au) (reference Parent Payments) to discuss possible support options or arrangements.

## Lost property

Apart from the enormous amount of waste created by unclaimed lost property, it takes precious time for staff to be managing lost items of clothing, toys and lunchboxes that could be otherwise used for educational purposes. Please help us by clearly writing your child's name on all removable clothing items, lunchboxes and drink bottles and toys. When collecting your children at the end of the day, please check with them to ensure they have all clothing, lunch and other items such as toys that they brought to school in the morning. You may even consider a reward system, so they take responsibility for their property. It is a great life lesson and will also reduce the waste of time and rubbish created.

Jo Wheeler  
Principal