Dear Parents

In the last decade, government slogans aside, there have been many “revolutions” in education. They have come in all shapes and sizes, from the adoption of a variety of forms of communication technology such as notebook computers, tablet devices and even (shock, horror) students using mobile phones in the classroom, to the increased focus on “snapshot” exams (such as NAPLAN) as measures of learning. Even the physical structure of the classroom itself has changed as open plan learning consumes Primary Schools in particular and, as quite a few parents put it to me after the Year 7 Open Night, our classrooms “more and more resemble an office environment” with comfortable seating, bright colours, flexible arrangement of desks and walls that enable displays of work and information.

But the nature of the students has also changed. Many of us will remember that there was “no such thing” as a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD 20 years ago in classrooms (they were often just the “naughty kids who couldn't keep still”). Similarly, anaphylaxis was so rare it was nearly invisible in schools. But the real sleeper is increased anxiety levels in children to the point where it is quite debilitating. Educators Australia-wide have noted the phenomenon with increasing numbers of students unable to cope with setbacks, disappointments or face challenges or even come to school at all. It does not seem to be a product of race nor class nor gender but a societal change and something that parents and schools should be in partnership on, particularly in the younger years.

As adults, we model resilience and perseverance to our children. Our children pick up cues from us about stress and our reactions to it. We like to think that anxiety is a modern problem. In reality, worry about food and clothes and shelter is as old as history. Sages in every age have addressed the issue. Some answer with a void; happiness is a lack of anxiety. Jesus, however, answered with a direction. We might not be able to completely escape worry, but we can find peace and happiness with a focus on God. This week’s Gospel reading reminds us of keeping in mind the big picture. Happiness is found in sharing the joys and anxieties of life with someone in whom we love, trust and share hope. Happiness, then, is a life directed to another. The ultimate happiness is a life focused on God. So, it is the direction of life that allows us to sweep away anxiety and seek our goal: the Kingdom.

Benedict’s dictum to seek balance: make a space for work, leisure and, most importantly, God, might go a long way in all our lives to reduce anxiety.

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Staff Development Day
Pupil Free
this Friday
7 March 2014
At a recent MISA Sport meeting, it was decided by all participating MISA schools that students must return back to school at the conclusion of their MISA competition. The MISA Sport Policy now includes that parents/carers should not take their child directly home after their game, as the student is required to return to school in order to finalise their normal school day. This policy will be implemented, beginning Tuesday 4th March, to reduce risk of any unforeseen student health and safety issues.

Congratulations to our Parents & Friends Executive who were re-elected unopposed on Tuesday evening.

Danny Rodriguez President
Denise Hempenstall Secretary
Libby Tully Treasurer

I look forward to working with them and all parents in 2014 as we continue to grow.

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It is enrolment period once again. Parents with children at the Catholic feeder schools (St. Paul’s, St Anthony’s, St. Justin’s and St Clare’s) should have received, or will receive shortly, a pre-filled enrolment form to check family details and then submit to the College. When lodging these completed forms, please make sure that you have attached copies of the other documents that are listed in our enrolment package. Our Information Night for Year 7 will be held at the Camden Civic Centre on Wednesday March 12 beginning at 7pm. Families wishing to enroll from the local State Primary Schools will need to obtain the Enrolment Package which will be available at the Information Evening or from the College office from Thursday 13 March. We are once again looking forward to strong growth in Year 7 in 2015.

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The College Swimming Carnival was held last Wednesday and we avoided the downpours that occurred late in the day. A fantastic day was underlined by the large number of parents who were in attendance, many taking the day off work to support their children who were swimming. Congratulations to Mr Manns who organised this fantastic day.

Congratulations to those students, listed elsewhere in this newsletter, who broke a number of College records on the day.

Michael Hanratty
Principal

Has your child arrived late to school or been absent for any length of time?

If your child has been late to school or absent for 1 or more whole days, you may have received an email from the school. This is a computer generated message that is sent to obtain a reason for your child’s late arrival or absence.

By replying to the email with the reason for the absence you will satisfy the legal requirements under the Education Act 1990—Part 5 Attendance of Children at School. Under this act parents/carers must supply a reason for their child’s absence within 5 school days of the said absence. If no reason is recorded then the part or whole absence on the Official Roll will be marked as UNJUSTIFIED.

If you do not have access to emails then a written note or a phone call to the College Office will satisfy the legal requirements.

Your assistance in this matter is appreciated.

MISA Sport

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Congratulations

Congratulations to Charlii Dyer of Year 7 who recently competed in the International Sports Karate Association Western National Tournament, held in Bathurst. Charlii competed in Traditional Weapons where she received 1st Place. She also competed in Point Sparring, and even after a nasty injury, received 3rd Place. She performed very well in Traditional Forms, and Showmanship. Well done, Charlii.
Ash Wednesday

This Wednesday, 5 March, is Ash Wednesday, which marks the first day of Lent. Lent is the season of preparation for the resurrection of Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday.

A reminder to all that Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of abstinence for:

- All who have completed their 18th year and have not yet begun their 60th year are bound to fast.
- All who have completed their 14th year are bound to abstain from meat on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

During this season, we are obliged to do penance. The special times of penance are all Fridays throughout the year, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday and the season of Lent. The practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any one of the following:

a) **Prayer** - for example, Mass attendance; family prayer; a visit to a church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the Stations of the Cross; praying the Rosary.

b) **Self-denial** - for example, not eating meat; not eating sweets or dessert; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor of one’s own country (eg, Project Compassion).

c) **Helping others** - for example, special attention to someone who is poor, physically or mentally ill, elderly, lonely, bereaved, depressed, addicted or overburdened.

This fasting and abstinence is not simply a form of penance. It is an opportunity for us to take stock of our spiritual lives.

VISITORS & PARENT ACCESS TO THE COLLEGE

All visitors to the College, including parents, are to report to the Office on arrival. If you wish to contact your child, the Office staff will arrange for your child to come to the Office.

If you are picking your child up to leave early for an appointment please send a note with them in the morning indicating the approximate time that they are to leave class. They are to report to the Office with their note and Diary in the morning and a Leave Early stamp will be put in the Diary to show the teacher when they are to leave class.

With the large number of builders, architects, CEO personnel, contractors etc. visiting the College it is important for the safety of your child that we are aware of all people on site.

Thank you for cooperation.

BISHOP PETER WANTS TO HEAR YOUR VOICE!

Young people (from ages 12 and up) and those involved with young people (eg parents, teachers, clergy, youth ministers, catechists) are invited to complete a survey on what works and what is needed for Catholic youth: [http://tinyurl.com/dowyouth](http://tinyurl.com/dowyouth)

On Tuesday 1 April those involved in youth ministry will gather with 100 young people to determine our priorities moving forward with Jesus. Ask your Principal about representing your school.

Contact our Diocesan Youth Office on 02 4222 2460 or youth@dow.org.au

Find out more about the National Vision for Youth at: [http://tinyurl.com/anointed-sent](http://tinyurl.com/anointed-sent)

Lenten Message from BISHOP INGHAM

To view Bishop Ingham’s Lenten Message please follow the link at [https://vimeo.com/87441931](https://vimeo.com/87441931)

If you wish to receive a printed copy, please contact the College Office.

Please remember in your prayers those members of the school community who are presently coping with the loss of loved ones and those dealing with illness or injury. May they be comforted by the prayerful support of the St Benedict’s community.
Swimming Carnival 2014

It is my pleasure to announce that the annual St Benedict’s Swimming Carnival was a huge success. Thankfully Mother Nature was kind, providing us with a beautiful day. The students swam proudly and cheered passionately, with great sportsmanship on show by all students. It was fantastic to see a high number of students participate in more than one race, often stepping outside of their comfort zone. This year we welcomed 140 new students across the three houses and it was evident that house spirit was boosted by their arrival.

There were many talented swimmers participating, showing they have the potential to achieve high levels of success. It is safe to say that St Benedict’s has a promising future in the pool. The day concluded with the Champion of Champions race. This race involved the seven fastest 50m Freestyle swimmers in the school. It was an exciting and extremely close race, with Bryanna Rixon taking out first place in a time of 31.06 seconds. Congratulations to all that made it into the Champion of Champions race.

I am proud of St Benedict’s for all of their efforts in all areas including behaviour, participation and house spirit. The final results of the carnival, including points tally and age champions, will be announced at the next school assembly.

I sincerely thank all of the parents that helped out on the day. The carnival would not have run as smoothly and efficiently without your assistance. I would also like to thank the staff for their efforts and support for the carnival.

Tim Manns
Sport Coordinator

Congratulations to
Record Holders 2014

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