



ST. EMILIE'S CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Growing in Grace

24th March 2020

Dear Families,

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone for being a part of this very special St Emilie's community. In this time of great uncertainty I am seeing so many examples of our faith in action and it makes me feel so proud, so humbled and so privileged. May we all continue to stay safe and well.

In line with the latest directives from Commonwealth and WA governments, St Emilie's will continue to remain open until the end of term. Please note that as reflected on the term planner, Term One ends on **Wednesday 8th April** for all students.

In the meantime, as per the Prime Minister and the WA Minister for Education's advice, **parents can choose to keep their children at home.**

Thank you to those parents who are collecting children early in the afternoon, this is greatly appreciated and really supports us at pick up time, to achieve **greater social distance** between children.

A number of parents are seeking our advice as to **whether to keep their children at home or not.** All I can say in response, is that this situation is very much **unchartered territory.** We are of course doing the very best we can to care for your children's physical and emotional health here at school. It is clear from what we are seeing and hearing from other countries however, that many families are now choosing, or or are being forced to keep children at home, with schools being used to care for the children of those who are still working. We currently have close to half of the school staying at home and more families are making an informed personal choice to keep their children at home.



Despite our very best efforts, there are still many 'what ifs' here at school. As leader of this community, I respect every parent's individual decision. I continue to be concerned for every child, staff member and family in our care, as well as the families of my staff and my own family at home. We continue to take one day at a time and we are doing the very best we can, under very difficult circumstances.

In addition to the physical threat of COVID-19, the **mental health and well-being of our children** is of paramount importance during times of stress, change and upheaval. Parents are urged to please stay well-informed, to avoid having too many adult conversations about the virus in front of your children, to stay calm and **provide factual, age appropriate information on a needs-to-know** basis. It is important to be mindful of turning off the TV and making sure children are not listening to daily updates, as these can be scary and confusing to young ears. Please find attached some **parent articles** that may assist you when talking to your children about this situation. Ultimately, children need calm reassurance to help them process their thinking and feelings.

My daughter in law, who is now working from home with her twins, sent me the following article from an unknown source, and my daughter, who is also working from home with her two young children (and a baby on the way), sent me the wonderful posters on this letter. Both girls bring a smile to my face telling me how the day has gone, at home all day with energetic little ones! They facetime with my elderly father who is on his own at home and we do the same with our grandchildren. This weekend we are working on creating a virtual family gathering to touch base :) Technology when used for good, is such an amazing resource.

It continues to be a very unsettling and very sad time for the whole world. May we keep our eyes on the important things, pray for each other, and treat each other with much grace, generosity and kindness.

What is the Corona/Covid-19 Virus Really Teaching us?

I'm a strong believer that there is a spiritual purpose behind everything that happens, whether that is what we perceive as being good or being bad.

As I meditate upon this, I want to share what I feel the Corona/ Covid-19 virus is really doing to us:

- 1) It is reminding us that **we are all equal**, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. This disease treats us all equally, perhaps we should too.
- 2) It is reminding us that **we are all connected** and something that affects one person has an effect on another.

It is reminding us that the **false borders** that we have put up have little value as this virus does not need a passport.

It is reminding us that while we are oppressed for a short time, there are those in this world whose **whole life is spent in oppression**.

3) It is reminding us of **how precious our health is** and how we have moved to neglect it through eating nutrient poor manufactured food and drinking water that is contaminated with chemicals upon chemicals. If we don't look after our health, we will, of course, get sick.

4) It is reminding us of the **shortness of life** and of what is most important for us to do, which is to help each other, especially those who are old or sick. Our purpose is not to buy toilet roll.

5) It is reminding us of how materialistic our society has become and how, when in times of difficulty, we remember that **it's the essentials that we need** (food, water, medicine) as opposed to the luxuries that we sometimes unnecessarily give value to.

6) It is reminding us of how important our family and home life is and how much we have neglected this. **It is forcing us back into our houses so we can rebuild them into our home and to strengthen our family unit.**

7) It is reminding us that **our true work is not our job**, that is what we do, not what we were created to do. Our true work is **to look after each other, to protect each other and to be of benefit to one another.**

8. It is reminding us to **keep our egos in check**. It is reminding us that no matter how great we think we are or how great others think we are, a virus can bring our world to a standstill.

9) It is reminding us that the **power of freewill** is in our hands. We can choose to cooperate and help each other, to share, to give, to help and to support each other or we can choose to be selfish, to hoard, to look after only our self. Indeed, **it is difficulties that bring out our true colours.**

10) It is reminding us that **we can be patient**, or we can panic. We can either understand that this type of situation has happened many times before in history and will pass, or we can panic and see it as the end of the world and, consequently, cause ourselves more harm than good.

11) It is reminding us that this can either be an end **or a new beginning**. This can be a time of reflection and understanding, where we learn from our mistakes, or it can be the start of a cycle which will continue until we finally learn the lesson we are meant to.

12) It is reminding us that **this Earth is sick**. It is reminding us that we need to look at the rate of deforestation just as urgently as we look at the speed at which toilet rolls are disappearing off of shelves. We are sick because our home is sick.

13) It is reminding us that **after every difficulty, there is always ease**. Life is cyclical, and this is just a phase in this great cycle. We do not need to panic; this too shall pass.

14) Whereas many see the Corona/ Covid-19 virus as a great disaster, I prefer to see it as a ***great corrector** It is sent to remind us of the important lessons that we seem to have forgotten and it is up to us if we will learn them or not.

BRILLIANT BIG PICTURE MESSAGES ...

MAY WE CONTINUE TO HOLD THESE MESSAGES, ALL THOSE WHO ARE WORKING IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES, ALL THOSE WHO ARE TOUCHED BY TRAGEDY, ALL THOSE WHO ARE WORRIED, ALL THOSE WHO HAVE DIED, ALL THOSE WHO ARE SICK
IN OUR HEARTS AND PRAYERS AT THIS TIME ...



OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

EMAILS TO TEACHERS

Please keep emails to teachers to a minimum during this time. Teachers are teaching full-time, working on learning plans for children at home and also trying to care for their own health and families at home. Your understanding is very much appreciated.

BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Many of you will be trying **to work from home with your children**. This is not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination (a lot of funny memes could be inserted here!) One useful tip I heard from a parent recently was that they wear a fluoro vest to indicate to the child that the next half hour or so is for Mummy to work. Activities were set up and away they went. (Of course, this plan doesn't allow for babies, tantrums, sibling fights and so on, but all you can do is the best you can.)

The weeks ahead are going to be tough for many parents with children at home. I think a good way of thinking about the whole situation is that we are indeed lucky that our children are safe and sound, given that many families are dealing with a whole lot more. Let's try to get back to the basics and enjoy the time with your children as much as possible. Play, read, build, tell stories, look at photos, clean, cook, garden, tell jokes, write letters, make cards, paint, fix things, rearrange furniture, sing, play an instrument, write a poem, do a crossword, knit, sew, paint toenails, write a song, search for a competition to enter online, teach your child how to fix a flat bike tyre, write a book, plan a post COVID 19 party, research a curiosity question, watch a movie together that warms your hearts, ... this is the stuff of a beautiful childhood!

ONLINE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

I would again refer all families to the **Corona Health and Support in Perth** handout which details some great local resources for families:

<http://web.stemiliescps.wa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Corona-Help-and-Support-Perth.pdf>

HOME LEARNING PLANS

Staff have produced a **Learning Plan** for all children who are at home, and this will be emailed on Monday morning, 30th March. We have avoided sending 'busy work'. The work you will receive reflects what is going on in the face to face classroom. If the situation continues after the school holidays, we will reassess some aspects of our delivery, however essentially we will continue with our learning plans and use SEESAW as our primary online platform, along with other useful applications known to the children.

FROM KINDERGARTEN TO YEAR 2

Encourage continued reading, daily journal writing (this may be drawing a picture and parent reading to the child for the little ones) Reading Eggs (at this stage just Yrs 1 and 2), Mathletics (PP-6). Play opportunities and support of fine and gross motor skills, with less screen time is encouraged.

FROM YEAR 3 TO YEAR 6

Encourage broad reading, daily writing; Reading Eggs, Mathletics, activities to promote fitness and well being.

The Education Department has released to all WA parents the following Remote Learning website that provides educational resources that are linked to the WA curriculum. It is located at the following site:

<https://www.education.wa.edu.au/learning-at-home?uid=01slV3f>

SCHOOL CLOSURE

In the event of school closure, we will enact our **School Response Plan** that has been formulated recently. This includes communicating with families; sharing offsite learning plans; harnessing an online platform and

other online resources to deliver the curriculum; sharing clear expectations and guidelines; and providing support for all members of our community.

PASTORAL CARE FOR FAMILIES

If you are a family who needs support in any way, we are here to do the very best we can for you. We are keenly aware that some families are in a position where **one or both parents have now lost their job**. Please contact the office if you would like to talk to discuss alternatives including deferring fees and adjusting your fee plan. We do not want to see any family in this type of situation be placed under financial hardship. Please also be reassured that we want you to keep your children in our school and that we will work with you until you are up on your feet again.

COMMUNICATION

Communication to parents and carers will continue to be via email and SETQA (please ensure the app is up to date and that you check it frequently for messages).

PARENTS ON THE SCHOOL SITE

Everyone in the community has a part to play in helping control the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to follow the latest advice of the Department of Health. I will keep you informed about any changes for our school as updates become available.

EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

All external providers will cease attending on the school site as of the end of this week. This includes Speech Therapists, OT therapists, Music instructors, Extra Curricular Sport providers.

OSH CLUB will continue to remain open unless otherwise directed.

KINDY INTERVIEWS for 2021

Typically we would be holding our KINDY INTERVIEWS for 2021 at the start of Term Two. Due to the current situation however we are forced to cancel these until further notice.

FINALLY ...

Many thanks to those parents who have sent an email of encouragement and thanks to our hard working staff for all their efforts - it is very much appreciated and really reinforces what a special community we all belong to.

One parent email ended with a quote that went along the lines of ...
"It will be good when at the end of all this we can say of each other,
that when things were at their worst we were at our very best!"

All the very best everyone!

Kindest regards

Tania Thuijs
Principal

