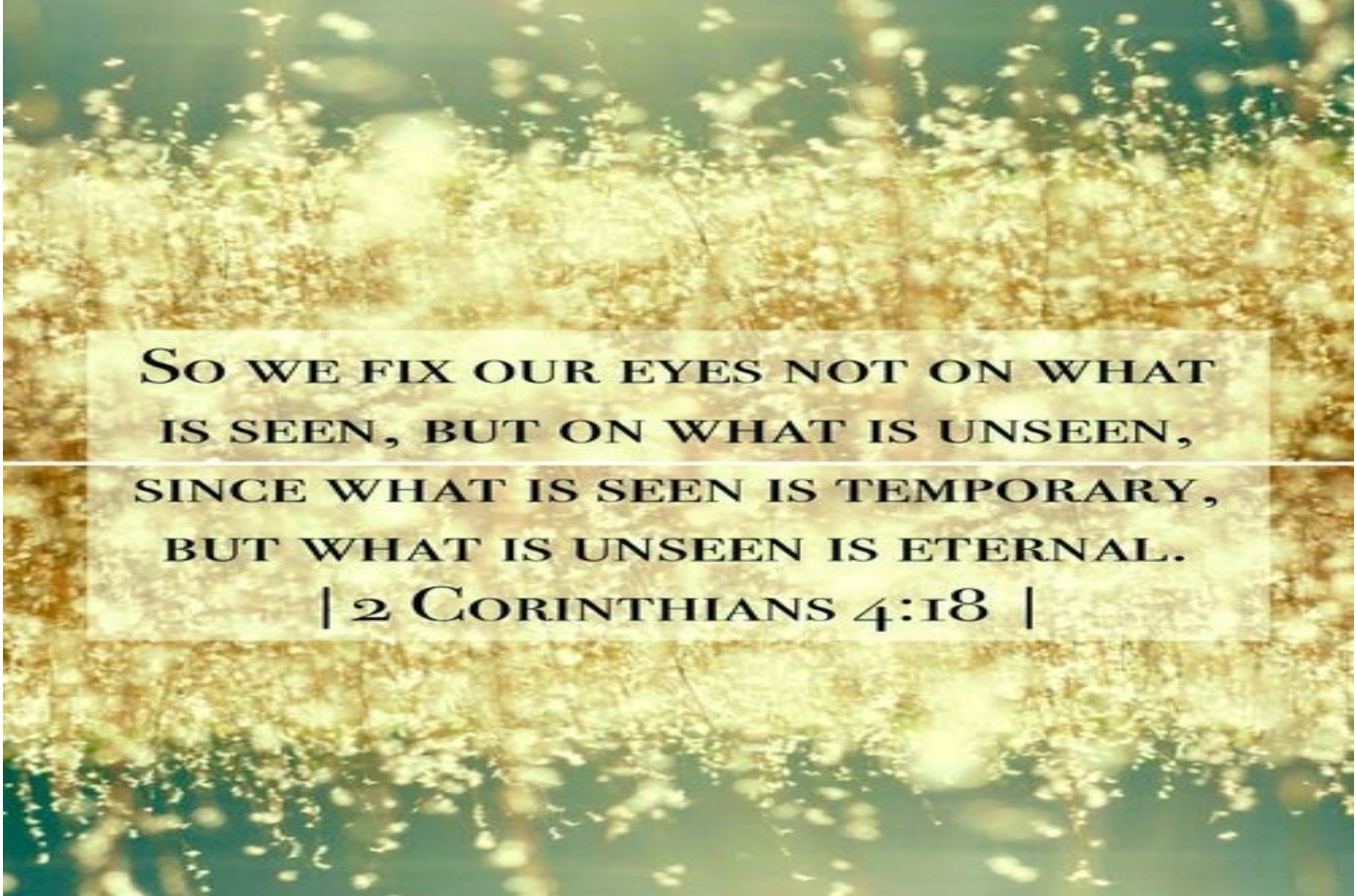




ST. EMILIE'S CATHOLIC  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
*Growing in Grace*

## LETTER TO FAMILIES - 23RD APRIL 2020



SO WE FIX OUR EYES NOT ON WHAT  
IS SEEN, BUT ON WHAT IS UNSEEN,  
SINCE WHAT IS SEEN IS TEMPORARY,  
BUT WHAT IS UNSEEN IS ETERNAL.  
| 2 CORINTHIANS 4:18 |

**Good morning families,**

I hope your week is going well and that you are managing to find pockets of joy and gratitude each day, even amidst these most challenging of times.

Sadly, I am currently waiting to follow a live link to a dear friend's funeral - a woman who I taught with a number of years ago and who was very special to myself and to so many. Clearly this type of farewell is such a strange and confronting experience on so many levels and sadly, I am sure that a number of you will have also been in this same situation since COVID-19 began. If this is so, my heartfelt sympathy goes out to you and your families also. One of our Kindy teachers, Mrs Julie-Anne Fleming, lost her brother just days ago after a long illness, and she too will be celebrating his life next week, with just a small group of her family. Please keep Mrs Fleming and her loved ones, who have had to deal with so much loss in the past year or so, in your thoughts and prayers.

There is nothing quite like a funeral to remind us all of the importance of maintaining perspective in our lives. It is hard to believe that it has just been four or five weeks - it feels so much longer! We all have a different story to tell and there is much pain for many, including the loss of a loved one, concern for family members overseas or in a nursing home, job loss, financial strain, worry over children's education and so much more. Remaining calm and hopeful can certainly test us all.

We fully appreciate that the past month or so has been tough on families and it is understandable that you will now be wrestling with what to do next in terms of the return to school. My own family and a number of members of staff are also grappling with many of the same issues. All we can continue to do is try to keep an open mind, a hopeful heart and gently support and encourage each other, trusting that all will work out in the end, with hard work and a pastoral approach.

Yesterday I received a few emails from parents seeking clarification after the letter that went home to families on Tuesday. These emails were written respectfully and with empathy for the difficult position school leaders and staff currently find themselves in and so I thank these parents sincerely, for reaching out in this manner. While I have attempted to respond to each email, this has been difficult amidst other life matters over this working holiday, so I hope this communication letter further clarifies a few key points for you and also goes some way to reassuring you, at what we fully appreciate, is an unsettling and difficult time for everyone.

In a nutshell, like Government schools, Catholic schools are respecting each families' decision as to whether they send their children back to school or not for the start of term next Wednesday and at this stage, during the next four weeks of term. Please know that we are supportive of whatever decision families choose to make and we will continue to work hard to ensure that all children, whether learning from home or at school, are well supported to maintain the continuity of the learning program that has been created for them.

As stated in my previous letter, children who return to school will be supervised in their learning program, rather than receiving face to face teaching for the coming weeks. This means that whether at home or school, children will be following the same learning program, and therefore, no Catholic student will be disadvantaged.

If a child returns to school, where possible, they will receive learning supervision from their own teacher, but potentially from a combination of dedicated staff members throughout the school day including - specialist teachers, leadership team members and/or teacher/s from other year levels including Education Assistants. These staff will help and support each child to work through their learning program, either individually or in small groups, with social distancing in place. When not supervising students, teachers will be providing feedback, responding to emails and pastorally contacting families and children to discuss their home learning progress, offering any help or advice they can.

Some staff have been granted permission to work from home during this time due to their own individual circumstances. By Thursday afternoon we will have a clearer picture as to how many children will be coming to school and then we can plan our staffing and our learning spaces accordingly.

All supervision will happen at a developmentally appropriate level for the age of the students and staffing will be assigned accordingly. This means that for our very young students, staff will be using the activities set out by the teachers around the room and play opportunities will be built in with staff helping them with their activities, just as you would be at home.

Yesterday CEWA sent us a response to the question:

**Why have WA Catholic schools adopted a single mode of instruction for the first four weeks of Term Two?**

Please read this statement safe in the knowledge that the CEWA team have been working tirelessly for the good of all children and families in our Catholic schools. They have worked cooperatively alongside Government Ministers, the Education Department, Health Department and the Catholic Primary and

Secondary Principal Associations and they are acutely aware of and empathetic to the issues families are facing.

#### **KEY CEWA MESSAGES:**

- The WA State Government, on the advice of the State Disaster Committee, continues to give parents of children in K to 10 the choice as to whether they send their children to school, or not.
- Catholic Education endorses the importance of parental choice, especially when it involves the health and safety of their children.
- This arrangement will invariably mean that in every classroom there will be some children in attendance, and some at home.
- On Wednesday 29 April, in line with the WA State Government's position, Catholic schools will open for children whose parents have chosen to send them.
- Catholic Education is committed to equity of the teaching and learning for all children. Given the State Government's position of choice for parents, Catholic Education needs to ensure that every child has an opportunity to be taught and to learn.
- In the spirit of equity, and reflecting parental choice, Catholic schools must provide appropriate and quality teaching and learning opportunities for all children, both at school and at home.
- Teachers are most effective in leading teaching and learning when they are able to focus on each child's learning needs. They do this by creating opportunities for children to be challenged and supported in their learning journey.
- It is very difficult for teachers to simultaneously deliver effective and meaningful face to face teaching in a classroom while at the same time supporting remotely other children's learning needs. In some ways this is analogous to driving a car and using a mobile phone at the same time!
- The WA State Government provided all teachers with professional development time in Week 10 of Term 1 to effectively plan for the first four weeks of Term 2, employing on line or work pack delivery as the single mode of instruction.
- Given the challenges of dual modes of instruction, and to ensure that all children, whether at school or home, will be equally supported in their learning, Catholic Education has made the decision that for the first four weeks of Term, online teaching and learning, or student work packs, will be the single mode of teaching and instruction offered to all students.
- Catholic schools are well prepared to operate in this space, supported by digital platforms. The preparation which has been undertaken by staff will ensure that for the first four weeks of Term 2, whether a student is at school or home, effective teaching and learning will be offered.
- The priority for teachers delivering on-line teaching and learning or supporting the completion of work packs, whether undertaken by students at home or school, is the pastoral care and wellbeing of each child. This will be achieved by regular contact between teachers and students, irrespective of their physical setting.

- Children should be taught at school or home through on-line learning or work packs.
- If students are attending school it is important that staff are facilitating the on-line teaching and learning process, or completion of work packs, by ensuring that students are engaged with their education.
- Students who attend school are required to engage with their on-line teaching and learning or completion of the work pack.
- School is not open for students to be simply supervised and not engaged with on-line teaching and learning or completion of work packs.
- Teachers will be giving formative feedback on student progress, when and where appropriate, to students and parents.
- If or when significant numbers of students have returned to school, Principals will continue to be agile in responding to the teaching and learning needs of students at both school and home.
- Catholic Education is hopeful that schools will return to normal operation as soon as possible.

I will attempt to address other individual email questions and communicate a few other practical reminders in the next few days, especially in regard to drop off and pick up times. As previously stated, depending on numbers attending, we may need to run staggered times, so please check your emails on Tuesday morning.

I have now watched the funeral and the reading that was shared came from Corinthians. As we move forward - online, offline or face to face, may we continue to think, speak and act from a place of genuine Christian love for the other in both the small and the big things.

Take care and very best wishes,  
Tania Thuijs  
Principal



is patient  
is kind  
it does not envy  
it does not boast  
it is not proud  
it is not rude  
it is not self-seeking  
it is not easily angered  
it keeps no record of wrongs  
it does not delight in evil  
it rejoices with the truth  
it always **Protects**  
it always **Trusts**  
it always **Hopes**  
it always **Perseveres**  
*Never Fails*  
1 Corinthians 13:4, 7-8