

Welcome Back to Another School Year

Welcome back to another school year. We hope you have enjoyed our wondrous summer and had the opportunity to spend quality time with your daughters and sons.

Thank you for taking the time to click on our link. To new St Mary's College parents we say, 'welcome'. We hope that you will become a regular reader and find useful, supportive and informative material in our fortnightly column. Our aim is to provide up-to-date and peer reviewed information and advice on topical and perennial parenting matters.

Getting your children back to school can be exhausting, expensive and, for many, a relief. The lazy mornings for some and the late nights for others must come to an end as we wrench ourselves back into a more disciplined routine involving clock watching, early nights, buses, school bags, lunch boxes, new shoes, readers and sporting commitments. It can be very stressful.

Remember that returning to school can be tiring, emotionally draining and stressful for your children, as well. Life can be made more manageable for you and for them by establishing a sound and workable routine from the very beginning with regular meal, homework and bed times. Children respond positively to routine and behave and learn better when they are well rested. Let them know what your expectations are and be sure to build quality family time into the mix, as well, for this is often the first casualty of return to school. This might mean, for example, making the evening meal a little more formal, everyone up to the table, devices away and friendly banter (nothing too heavy about school or homework).

Acquire a copy of your child's timetable and sporting fixtures and have them in a prominent place. The fridge door fits the bill in a lot of households, or inside the pantry door. It is useful to become familiar with these timetables yourself, but encourage your children to take responsibility for knowing what's coming up on any given day.

Keep the schedule workable. We fully support extra-curricular activities and sport, but down-time and days where there is nothing on after school are very important, especially for younger children who do important growing and developing through free play time. This message is for you too, Mum and Dad. Put the work away and spend a few hours a week playing with your children – literally. Go for a walk to the park, or just a walk. Kick the ball in the backyard. Get on the trampoline. Be with them and be present. Scrolling through your phone while your children run around on the play equipment does not count. Be as organised as you can be. For instance, have a designated area for school shoes and sporting equipment. Do the lunches at the same time each day. Have a special spot for the school reader. You might find it helpful to talk to your children about the things that caused them stress last year and see what ideas they have to eliminate the problem for this year.

Provide your children with good nutritious food. It is very easy to allow nutrition to slip during the Christmas holidays. Get them back into good habits early on. Children should not be drinking sugary or caffeinated drinks like lemonade and Coke. Even most fruit juices are very high in sugar. Simple meals with daily servings of vegetables and protein are best for building strong bones and bodies. A good breakfast is also important. Children who are hungry, dehydrated or high on sugar struggle to concentrate and are at a strong disadvantage in the classroom.

Finally, pay attention to any change in your child's behaviour and mood. Early detection and intervention can ease worries and anxiety before they become a big problem. Encourage your child to talk to you about their day while you are on the trampoline or on that walk. When you take the time to listen to and validate your child's feelings and concerns, they will learn to trust you with their worries and continue to trust you with the big stuff.

We hope you all have a rewarding year of growth, growing up and learning. If you have any concerns about your child please do not hesitate to contact us at school, or through our school email. We are happy to help.

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