



From the Head of Senior School

8th April 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

As we begin our Easter Holiday, I would like to acknowledge and say thank you for the generosity and adaptability with which our school community has navigated the ongoing rumblings of COVID-19, significant weather events, the disruption of transport services across the Blue Mountains and the subsequent re-organisation of events here at School. In this context it has been a genuine pleasure to begin welcoming parents back onto Campus once again, and to see you celebrating the learning and accomplishments of your children.

Just a little over two years ago most of us had never heard of COVID-19, and we could not have anticipated the level of disruption it would cause both in our own lives and around the world. I believe the challenges of the past two years have taught us a great deal about community; both its value and the things we can do intentionally to foster it. It is my sincere hope and intention that as we learn to live with COVID-19, we will continue to recognise the value of our School community and work together to grow ever stronger connections for the benefit of our children and young people.

We look forward to continuing this learning journey with you over coming years.

Staff Movements

From the beginning of Term 2 we welcome back Mrs. Megan Harris and Mrs. Sally Herron, both of whom have been enjoying an extended season of Long Service Leave. I'm sure you will join me in offering sincere thanks to Mrs. Florence Lee and Mrs. Nadia Matteucci who have been diligently caring for their classes over these past months.

In addition, we wish Mrs. Emily Peters all the very best as she departs on Parental Leave, and welcome Mrs. Amy O'Keeffe who will be joining the English Faculty.

Wellbeing and Learning During the Holiday Period

Over the past two years we have intentionally grown an increasingly strong narrative of academic rigour and learning-focus in the Senior School. While we have always been and will always remain a school dedicated to the wellbeing and holistic development of our young people, as a century-old grammar school our students' academic learning sits at the core of our purpose. Our students work hard throughout the term, and I know that for many this holiday will be a much-needed opportunity for rest. At the same time, however, I encourage our older students to take this opportunity to make real progress on study, assignments and learning in order not only to stay afloat... but to thrive and gain mastery of the skills and concepts they have learned in class this term.

It has been my long experience in schools that when we use our non-term-time wisely, even the busiest of subsequent seasons can be manageable and enjoyable.

Piercing, Dyeing, Shaving and Growing

It is an unfortunate trend that at the beginning of each term a small number of students return to School sporting various facial piercings that contravene the School's uniform rules (found on p. 16 of the Student Diary and via the School Uniform Policy on the Parent Portal). Invariably, students inform us that they are unable to remove piercings until they have healed, frequently a matter of up to six weeks. In the spirit of partnership between School and home, I ask parents not to allow such piercings where there is insufficient time for healing to take place and for piercings to be replaced with plastics.

Similarly, as many of our boys grow older they enjoy forays into the exciting world of facial hair, experimenting with designer stubble, van dykes, flavour-savers and sometimes even the full Hagrid. While this is perfectly acceptable during holidays, students are required to be clean-shaven upon their return to School. I request your parental assistance to ensure this happens. Any student returning to School in need of a shave will be provided with the necessary materials and required to do so prior to their first class.

Finally, many of our students are growing taller by the week and it can often seem that students leave us as small children at the end of one term and return as gangling teenagers the next. When this occurs, trousers and skirts that were perfectly



sized are simply too short. Trousers should sit below the ankle (typically touching the shoes and covering the socks), while skirts should sit on or below the knee. Where hems need to be let down or new garments purchased, I ask that this happen prior to the return of students for Term 2.

Winter Uniform

Please note that students are to return in Winter Uniform in Term 2. This means that Blazers are to be worn by all students. I urge parents to encourage their children to check blazers irregularly worn since last Winter still fit, and to prepare uniforms for colder weather. In the colder months here in Wentworth Falls morning and evening temperatures can be well below zero, and students are welcome to wear their School jumpers, blazers, all-weather jackets, school scarves, gloves and beanies. Please note that non-uniform puffer jackets and other non-uniform items are NOT to be worn and will be confiscated.

Home-School Communications

- **If your child is absent from School** - Please email absences@bmgns.nsw.edu.au or telephone Senior School Reception, preferably in the morning of the absence, between 8:30am and 9:30am letting us know that your child will not be attending School on that day. If the absence is not authorised by a parent or guardian an unexplained absence will be recorded which then needs to be approved by you in the Portal.
- **If your child is absent at the time of an assessment task** - Please note the absence as above, AND complete (Years 7 - 10) or ask your child to complete (Years 11 - 12) an Illness/Misadventure form at the earliest possible opportunity after your child returns to School and submit to Mrs. Alicia Michielsen (Dean of Curriculum). Illness/Misadventure Forms are available via the Portal.
- **If you are not receiving emails from the School** - Please check your currently listed email address via the Portal, and/or check the spam filters in your email service.
- **If your child messages you to say they are unwell at School** - Please ask them to report directly to Senior School Reception. We take our duty of care for your children seriously. So, students will be admitted directly to Sickbay and our team will make an assessment as to whether they require first aid, medical attention, to be collected by a parent or should be sent back to classes. We will contact home as necessary.

Bus Travel

We are fortunate in the Blue Mountains to have a reliable public bus service in CDC NSW Blue Mountains. Parents whose children travel on public buses are asked to remind their children of the following:

- Students require an Opal Card and must Tap On and Tap Off.
- Face Masks are Mandatory for Senior School Students.

Year 10 Work Experience

Year 10 students have this week received their Work Experience Letter, with instructions, steps and due dates for various steps spelled out for them. With many workplaces re-opening to school students, we are re-launching Year 10 Work Experience as an important aspect of the transition into senior studies. It is our hope that exploring options for work and career will encourage students to make great choices in their Stage 6 subjects, and will help to motivate them by building a strong sense of purpose for their lives. Students are reminded that while we are here to support them, it is their responsibility to approach potential workplaces and seek opportunities for themselves. This in itself is an important learning experience for them!

Final Greetings

It is my hope and prayer that your family will enjoy a restful break this Easter, and be refreshed for whatever life brings in coming months. For those experiencing difficulties, please know that you have the love, the care and the unstinting support of the entire Blue Mountains Grammar School community.

Yours Sincerely,

Owen Laffin
Deputy Headmaster – Head of Senior School