Dear Parents, Carers and Friends

Welcome back to Briar Hill Primary School, for 2015. I trust that your break was safe and restful, and that you’re ready for the exciting ride ahead! I wish you the very best for the coming year, and trust that we can work together in strong partnership, to enhance your child’s learning journey.

By the time you read this, all children will have experienced their first school day for 2015, and everyone has settled really well. I know that they are already off to a flying start with their education!

We have several new children and families joining us for the first time this year, so on behalf of the staff and school council, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you. I am confident that all new families will be well supported as they settle into our school community.

I would especially like to welcome our new Preps and their families to Briar Hill Primary School, and thank you for the trust you have given us, to guide and educate your children.

As you are well aware, primary school is an important chapter in your child’s education. You can learn more about enrolment, attendance, costs, homework, what your child will learn and how to get involved, by visiting the DET (Department of Education and Training) website, at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/primary/Pages/default.aspx.

The DET provides tips and information on topics relating to starting school, such as the importance of play and learning to read and write. Links to further resources and online content are also included to help you support your child’s learning journey. These can be found at http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/primary/Pages/p4p.aspx.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

This phrase has been widely quoted when considering the partnerships required during a child’s school years, and our ‘village’ has never been more necessary than it is today. We live in a fast-paced, information-packed, demanding world, and today’s children are faced with myriad choices, challenges and opportunities. Navigating parenthood can be a daunting undertaking, so partnerships and support networks are super important.

As you have probably already figured out, our little school has a big heart and a warm embrace, and we are very keen to work closely with our families to create the best chances for our
students. Indeed, by working together, we can achieve incredible things.

However, simply being here is not what it’s about. You need to be an active member of any dynamic community, to truly experience its rewards. So, put your hand up to help. Show empathy and understanding for others. Make an extra effort to change things for the better. The communal responsibility we all take is significant.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD

The above message is particularly important when it comes to the health of our children. For this reason, I ask you to take special note of the information at the end of this newsletter about anaphylaxis, a life threatening condition that directly affects a small number of children at Briar Hill Primary School.

Obviously, the parents of these children need to be constantly vigilant, in order to ensure that they minimise the risk of exposure to allergens that can cause an anaphylactic reaction. But this also implies that we are ALL aware and alert, to play a proactive role in preventing the presence of triggers.

In the light of advice from parents of the children concerned, our responsibilities and the health needs of our children, the following ground and tree nuts (and products made from them) are NOT PERMITTED AT SCHOOL AT ANY TIME:

- peanuts and peanut products (e.g. peanut butter, snack bars containing nuts)
- walnuts
- cashews
- pecans
- pistachios

As this list does not include almonds, hazelnuts and macadamias, both these nuts and spreads containing them (e.g. Nutella) are permitted.

I thank you for your support and cooperation in observing this important request.

For further information about Anaphylaxis Management in schools, please refer to: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/health/anaphylaxis.htm

You may also wish to refer to the following media link, for an interesting perspective on the debate around nuts in schools. http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-05/allergic-reaction-sparks-debate-over-school-nut-ban/5239504

If there are updates to this information, we will keep you informed.

We thank you for your anticipated consideration and support of the health needs of all of our children.

THE 2015 SCHOOL TEAM

I wish to warmly welcome all new and returning staff members:

Rachel Sparke – Rachel will teach Prep, alongside Mara. Rachel is a graduate teacher, who completed a placement with us in 2014.

Claire Hawkins – Claire will teach Class 1. She is a capable, experienced teacher, who has recently completed study at the Melbourne Rudolf Steiner Seminar.

Kath Morris – Kath, a graduate teacher, was selected for her role at the very end of last year, and I know we have made a fine choice.

I respect the obvious commitment and competence of our staff, and look forward to working with all of them throughout 2015.

Class/specialist teachers

Prep M: Mara Lupieri
Prep S: Rachel Sparke
Year 1: Ingrid Kleinhizen (M, Tu, W, Th)
Year 1: Kath Morris (Th, F)
Year 1: Claire Hawking
Year 2: Natalie Will
Year 2: Dianne Brown (M, Tu, W, Th)
Year 2: Kurt Shean (Th, F)
Year 3: Alison Butterworth (M, Tu, W)
Year 3: Rachel McGregor (W, Th, F)
Year 4: Kate Rees
Year 5: Roger Richards
Year 6: Cathy Yeoman
Enviro Sci: Rhonda King
Physical Education: Georgia Bhandari
German: Catherine Menyhart
Principal: Meron Drummond

Education support staff

Business Manager: Mary Butterworth
Integration aide: Karen Hatfield
Integration aide: Deanne Geddes
Teacher Aide: Judith Endries Hoffmann
OSHC supervisor: Jodie Hector
OSHC assistant: Rachel Watson

Additional (optional) program teachers

Instrumental music:
- Strings: Mary Wright
- Cello: Grace Wescott Dawson
- Woodwind: Jacqueline Pace
- Piano: Greg Asquith
- Trumpet: Tai Jordan

Eurythmy:
- Jessica Moyes

Circus skills:
- Claire James (Dreamspace)

Ancillary staff

Cleaner: Eric Bidgood
STUDENT FREE DAYS
To inform your planning for 2015, the following three days will be student free. These days assist teachers by providing both professional learning and report writing opportunities.

- Friday, 6 March  
  *(This is the day before the Labour Day long weekend)*
- Tuesday, 9 June  
  *(This is the day after the Queen’s birthday long weekend)*
- Monday, 2 November  
  *(This is the day before Melbourne Cup Day)*

THE SCHOOL TIMETABLE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45am</td>
<td>School yard supervision commences</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.55am</td>
<td>First bell to line up with the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.00am – 11.00am</td>
<td>Learning block 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00am - 11.30am</td>
<td>Morning play</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.30 – 1.30pm</td>
<td>Learning block 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30pm – 1.40pm</td>
<td>Children eat lunch in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.40pm – 2.30pm</td>
<td>Lunch play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.30pm – 3.30pm</td>
<td>Learning block 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30pm</td>
<td>Bell – dismissal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45pm</td>
<td>Bell – School yard supervision ends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL COSTS
Accompanying this newsletter, you should have received a letter outlining school charges and contributions for 2015, that are now due and payable.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
Information about available financial assistance, including
- Schoolkids Bonus
- Child Care Benefit
- State Schools Relief

Unfortunately, from 1 January 2015, the government will provide additional financial support directly to Victoria’s neediest schools instead of providing the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to parents. Parents will not be able to apply for the Education Maintenance Allowance in 2015.

SWIMMING PROGRAM
As part of the delivery of our Physical Education program at Briar Hill Primary School, we will be running a whole school swimming program. We expect that all children will participate, unless they have a sound medical reason.

The program will be held at Yarra Swim School, and will be run at different times and in different ways, to target the needs of children in each level of the school, as follows:

- **Years 3 & 4 - Term 2**
  - 8 x 45 minute lessons
- **Years 5 & 6 - Term 3**
  - 6 x 60 minute lessons
- **Preps, Years 1 & 2 - Term 4**
  - 8 x 45 minute lessons

The cost of all swimming lessons and bus transport is $110.00. This charge is payable as part of your school fees.

Specific information will be sent home prior to each term’s program.

CALM SCHOOLS = CALM KIDS
Both research and the wisdom of experience tell us that when children develop and maintain a positive attachment to school, and gain an engagement in, and enthusiasm for learning, they do so much better in their lives. In this regard, both calm schools and calm classrooms contribute significantly.

It is important that parents and children understand the rationale behind our methods, so that support for these will be strong. For this reason, the teachers and I are very keen to stress the following ‘preconditions for learning’:

- **A quiet start to the day**
  Creating a quiet space before school, in the corridors and classrooms, assists teachers to thoroughly prepare and welcome their class in an orderly, organised way.

- **Teachers doing their job**
  You will appreciate that the first duty of teachers is to the children they teach, so we ask parents to be respectful of this by arranging conversations and meetings outside instructional times.

- **Drop off and pick up expectations**: Every teacher will have spoken to her/his class about morning and afternoon routines, and every child will know that these:
  - should line up when the first bell sounds
  - should remain outside with her/his bag, until the teacher arrives in the morning.
  - will be dismissed to the same area at home time.

To avoid congestion, distraction and most importantly, to ensure the safety of everyone in the school community, you are requested to wait outside the building with your child, at the class assembly area, in the mornings, and to collect your child outside the building at dismissal times.

These expectations will be in place from ‘Day 1’, and we thank you for your anticipated support. The school will be a better place for these actions, and our children’s opportunities far greater.

PUNCTUALITY & REGULAR ATTENDANCE
Schooling is compulsory for children and young people aged from 6 – 17 years unless an exemption from attendance has been granted. Parents have a legal obligation to ensure that children are at school every day on time, unless illness prevents attendance.
In the case of illness or unavoidable absence, the school must be notified on the day of absence, and an absence note sent on the return of the child to school. The school has a mandated legal duty to monitor student absence.

Please remember that habitual lateness is cumulative, and can cause weeks of absence from school over time. Furthermore, late arrivals are very disruptive to other students and teachers.

Attending school regularly is a factor that greatly influences success in life, so why wouldn’t you do what’s right for your child, by ensuring they attend each day, on time?

BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Briar Hill Primary School Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) Program will continue to offer before school and after school care in 2015.

The program will be run in the OSHC room (the classroom closest to the office), during each school term, from Monday to Friday, as follows

- Before School Care: 7.00am – 8.45am
- After School Care: 3.30pm - 6.00pm

No school holiday care will be available.

There are currently 20 places available for both the morning and afternoon sessions each day.

Please note that your child MUST be enrolled before s/he can attend Outside School Hours Care program. Enrolment forms are available from the school office.

CLASS MEETINGS

Class meetings for all year levels will be held in Week 3, between Monday, 16 February - Friday, 20 February.

These meetings allow teachers to speak about their programs and their aspirations for their class, and will enable you to ask questions and clarify your understandings.

Please note that the meetings will not provide the opportunity to speak to teachers about individual children. Rather, separate meeting times should be scheduled if you wish to speak to teachers in more depth about your child’s learning needs.

Further information about these will be sent home shortly.

SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS 2015

Next week, I will call for nominations for the Briar Hill Primary School Council, for which there are three vacancies in 2015/16. Please refer to page 6 of this newsletter, for further information.

LABEL ALL BELONGINGS

Uniform items, lunch boxes, shoes and bags are expensive and easily lost – and one BHPS jumper looks much the same as the other 223!

Therefore, please ensure all removable items of clothing are clearly identified with your child’s name, so that they can be returned to their owner if necessary.

However, more importantly, please encourage your child to be accountable for looking after their own belongings. Hundreds of dollars’ worth of items turn up in lost property each week, and are never reclaimed. Obviously, some families have money to burn!

Please ask your child to check lost property for any items they may have mislaid.

PARKING AROUND THE SCHOOL

All drivers need to be aware of parking restrictions around the school. Banyule Council Officers regularly patrol the streets adjacent to schools and infringement notices are regularly issued.

When dropping off and picking up your children in either Gladstone or Beaconsfield Roads, please ensure that you remain aware of the need for safety of ALL children and the rights of ALL neighbours. For this reason, please DO NOT park on neighbours’ nature strips, and across or opposite driveways.

Please note that the car park at the rear of the school is for staff parking only. Parents should not arrange to pick up or drop off their children in this area.

SCHOOL ASSEMBLY

From Wednesday, 11 February, our whole school assemblies will be held on Wednesday afternoons at 3.00pm, in the multipurpose room. All parents are invited to attend.

The purpose of these assemblies is to showcase the range of our students’ abilities and achievements, as well as to provide a public forum for communication sharing. Students play a significant role in these assemblies.

BE SUNSMART: NO HAT = NO PLAY

The school’s SunSmart policy clearly sets out that all students must wear a wide brimmed school hat or bucket hat during Term 1. Parents are requested to support our policy by ensuring that children wear hats as required.

Students and parents must understand that NO HAT = NO PLAY.

Suitable hats can be purchased from the school.

Please note that baseball caps and narrow brimmed hats are unsuitable for school and should not be worn.

The warm weather is also a really good opportunity for you to discuss important healthy behaviours, such as sun screen use and drinking plenty of water, and to practise and model these.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Senior school students will once again have the opportunity to be involved in leadership programs at Briar Hill Primary School:

- **Junior School Council:** This representative body promotes ‘student voice’ at Briar Hill Primary School. Members will participate in a junior leadership conference at the Melbourne Conference Centre in March. In 2015, the JSC will be led by Cathy.
• **The Green Team**: The Green Team is the leadership component of our Environmental Science program. Members will be given opportunities to participate in conferences and to lead school initiatives. In 2015, the program will be led by Rhonda.

Student elections will soon be held to determine membership of each of these groups.

Other student leadership opportunities will be further developed in 2015:

- Sports leadership
- Library leadership
- ICT leadership

We look forward to the exciting opportunities these programs present.

**FREE FRUIT FRIDAY**

A huge thanks goes to Stella Mulder, who organised the supply and preparation of fruit last year.

Stella is unable to continue this service to us this year, so we would welcome any volunteers who would be available to coordinate this program, and help us to further encourage healthy eating habits. The program would be best supported by a small team.

Please contact the office if you are able to help.

**SCHOOL BANKING**

Student banking with the Eltham branch of the Bendigo Bank will commence within the next few weeks. More information about this, and about how to start an account for your child, will be sent home soon. Watch this space!

**THE SCHOOL NEWSLETTER**

So often we hear comments from parents who claim that they are unaware of what’s going on at school. Furthermore, some children and families miss out on opportunities because they appear to have no idea about school events.

However, it’s very easy to keep in touch – simply read your school newsletter! It’s the most reliable way for us to communicate with the whole school community, and we always do our best to include relevant news and articles on a weekly basis. Therefore, it is recommended that you take the time to read it regularly.

The newsletter is published weekly and is usually sent home each Thursday with the eldest child in each family. Alternatively, families may elect to access their school newsletter online, through the school website at [www.briar-hill-ps.vic.edu.au](http://www.briar-hill-ps.vic.edu.au).

Teachers, children and families can contribute to the newsletter, so please speak to us if you wish to do so. Advertising, at set rates for businesses, is also available, and this assists us to cover paper and printing costs.

In short, there is always lots to read, lots to know and lots to think about, so once again, welcome to the first edition for 2015!

**FINALLY…**

Many of you will know that our school follows the maxim, ‘**Head, Heart and Hands**’.

We have also written a simple mission statement and have created a vision, to clarify what this really means on a day to day basis at Briar Hill Primary School. It encapsulates what our school’s spirit is all about.

**Our Vision**

Learning with head, heart and hands

**Our mission statement**

The Briar Hill Primary School Community believes that education entwines the gifts brought by the head, heart and hands of every person. We aspire to create an environment that supports children and the school community in their lifelong journey of self-development, discovery and growth.

**Our values**

The values of our school community are reflected in our behaviour and our decisions, and shape our interactions.

- Be KIND to yourself
- Be KIND to others
- Be KIND to the environment
- Be the learning KIND
- Be the achieving KIND
- Be the community KIND

We intend to share this framework more fully with the school community in 2015, and will value any feedback.

With warm regards,

**Meron**

Meron Drummond, Principal
Next week, I will be calling for nominations for election to our School Council for 2015. With the terms of some parent representatives coming to an end, there will be three vacancies for parent representatives on this important decision making body.

**What is a school council and what does it do?**
All government schools in Victoria have a school council. They are legally formed bodies that are given powers to set the key directions of a school within centrally provided guidelines. In doing this, a school council is able to directly influence the quality of education that the school provides for its students.

**Who is on the school council?**
There are three possible categories of membership:

1. A mandated, elected Parent category.
   More than one third of the total members must be from this category. Department of Education and Training (DET) employees can be Parent members at their child’s school as long as they are not employed at the school.

2. A mandated, elected DET employee category.
   Members of this category may make up no more than one third of the total membership of school council.
   The Principal of the school is automatically one of these members.

3. An optional Community member category.
   Its members are appointed by a decision of the council because of their special skills, interests or experiences.
   DET employees are not eligible to be Community members.

The term of office for all members is two years. Half the members must retire each year, creating vacancies for each annual School Council election.

**Why is Parent membership so important?**
Parents on school councils provide important viewpoints and have valuable skills that can help shape the direction of the school.

Those parents who become active on a school council find their involvement satisfying in itself and may also find that their children feel a greater sense of belonging.

**How can you become involved?**
The most obvious way is to vote in the elections, which are held in Term 1 each year. However, ballots are only held if more people nominate as candidates than there are positions vacant.

In view of this, you might seriously consider
- standing for election as a member of the school council
- encouraging another person to stand for election.

**Do I need special experience to be on school council?**
No. What you do need is an interest in your child’s school and the desire to work in partnership with others to help shape the school’s future.

**What do you need to do to stand for election?**
The Principal will issue a notice and call for nominations following the commencement of Term 1 each year. All school council elections must be completed by the end of March.

If you decide to stand for election, you can arrange for someone to nominate you as a candidate or you can nominate yourself in the Parent category.

DET employees whose child is enrolled in a school in which they are not employed are eligible to nominate as parents for the school council where their child is enrolled

Once the nomination form is completed, return it to the Principal within the time stated on the notice of election. You will receive a Nomination Form Receipt in the mail following the receipt of your completed nomination.

If there are more nominations received than there are vacancies on council, a ballot will be conducted during the two weeks after the call for nominations has closed.

**Remember…**
- Ask at the school for help if you would like to stand for election and are not sure what to do
- Consider standing for election to council this year
- Be sure to vote in the elections.

Please contact the Principal for further information.