

## BIG HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Principal – Matt Pearce



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Dear Parents/Carers,

05/08/2020

Earlier this week, the Victorian Government announced that, on the advice of the Victorian Chief Health Officer, regional and rural Victoria will move to Stage 3 restrictions and metropolitan Melbourne will move to Stage 4 restrictions to slow the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19).

These requirements apply to all schools across the government, Catholic and independent sectors and across all metropolitan Melbourne and rural and regional Victoria.

The changes to Big Hill Primary School operations when transitioning to remote and flexible learning will come into effect from Thursday 6th August. This is following our two student free days on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> and today, Wednesday 5th August, and are likely to apply until the end of Term 3.

As outlined in the Chief Health Officer's advice on Friday, schools remain safe places for staff and students – but these steps are critical measures to reduce the movement of students and families across the state. Obviously, the safest place for all at the moment is at home with family, however, for some in our community, attendance at school is sadly the only option for them. Due to this, we have opened our Onsite Supervision and Out of School Hours programs to support families in desperate need. Both require formal bookings – contact the school to find out more if you are stuck. I know it's hard to send children to school during a pandemic, but for those that have no choice, we are here.

I want to thank School Council for supporting the late announcement of a Curriculum Day today after it was suggested by our Regional Director. The day has assisted our transition enormously and has provided invaluable time for staff to prepare.

Feedback of parents and children given during the last period of remote learning has enabled us to take into consideration changes we could make this time. As you work through the next few weeks, you will notice the inclusion of WebEx in all Units, teacher check ins, new communication approaches etc.

### **A REMOTE DAY – WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?**

Our learning essentially is delivered in bite sized pieces, with suggested times given for activities. This will help you to keep children focused and ensure not too much or too little time is spent on a task. Generally, we will run sessions in the following way...

**9:00 – 11.00** Literacy work, including a Unit meeting most days. These meetings will occur at different times to avoid clashes when one device is shared amongst siblings.

**11.00 – 12.00** Break – morning tea, time outside, fresh air, exercise, PE related tasks etc.

**12.00 – 1.30** Numeracy (may include some literacy activities that carry over from the first session too)

**1.30 – 2.15** Lunch break, exercise and time outside

**2.15- 3.15** Specialist learning – Art, Music, Chinese, etc.

This is a guide only. We will run onsite supervision like this, however, some families need to be creative with multiple children, preferred days of learning (eg. Some work the children Saturday and Sunday and have two parent work days as rest days for children) etc. As long as you get the work done, especially the literacy and numeracy, it doesn't matter what time you work or what day. Obviously the only time commitment is trying to align with class meetings or individual calls/sessions.

I believe the State Government's daily minimum curriculum guidelines for schools will be the same as our first home learning experience. This will mean:

For students in Prep to Year 2, schools should provide learning programs that include the following:

- Literacy activities that take a total of about 45–60 minutes
- Numeracy activities of around 30–45 minutes
- Additional learning areas, play-based learning and physical activity of about 30–45 minutes.

For students in Years 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10, schools should provide learning programs allocated as follows:

- Literacy: 45–60 minutes
- Numeracy: 30–45 minutes
- Physical activities: 30 minutes
- Additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes.

In some instances, lesson lengths may vary and ultimately, the importance of adequate time on Literacy and Numeracy is noted in our planning and delivery.

Students will be accessing exactly the same activities either at home or at school. All learning, whether at school or from home will be the same, with the **FIRST STEPS**, **JUNIOR UNIT** and **MIDDLE UNIT** running Unit Blogs and the **SENIOR UNIT** using Showbie. This is the same platform approach as last time to make it easier for parents.

The children attending school will not be supervised by their class teacher, but rather staff (nb. some are not teachers) rostered on as part of the skeleton staff requirements. Our school is required to have a very limited amount of staff at school as we also try to reduce the spread of this virus. Staff who are medically vulnerable or live with a medically vulnerable person must not work on-site.

Our students will once again be challenged during this time. Learning will look different and this will take time to adjust to. Routines will be important for them, especially if parents are trying to work from home. They will not be able to socialise as they normally would. Please note that it is important that children are given regular breaks from screens. Please ensure children are: reading widely, playing outside throughout the day and connecting with the family by playing family games. Contact with your child's friendship group is also encouraged – parents/carers are best placed to take care of these needs.

### **Online Attendance and Engagement**

In the previous remote learning period, we were concerned that some student engagement levels did not sustain throughout and at times, we were concerned if learning was happening at home. Please ensure you stay in daily contact with your child's class teacher via WebEx meetings, DoJo, Showbie or email. We mark the roll each day, so please ensure your child is active, or you have made contact via one of the above ways to indicate your child is working.

### **Student Wellbeing Support**

Class Teachers will continue to be you and your child's main support during remote learning and we encourage parents/carers to contact teachers directly if you have concerns about your child's learning or would like some feedback about their learning progression during this time. Classroom Teachers will contact parents/carers via email or phone from time to time to check in. We understand that supporting parents/carers is just as important during this time and so we want to be available to answer your questions or provide additional support if necessary.

The school Wellbeing Team (ie. Megan Haddon and Sharyn Burnett) will also be available to speak to parents/carers or provide additional support to students to help manage learning from home and to stay connected to school and others.

The majority of staff will be working and teaching from home and using their own mobile phone on 'no caller id'. Please either answer or listen to messages and return contact if you miss a call. We're here to help you and your child/ren.

The general office will remain open between 8:30am - 4:00pm Monday to Friday to answer calls and provide assistance. At times the phone may not be answered, so please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as possible.

Our expectations for reducing the amount of adults on the school grounds is still in place so if you need to come into the school contact the general office prior to arrange and continue to follow our good hygiene practices, social distancing and wearing of masks at all times. Parents do not need to sign children in for onsite learning either, nor walk children onto the grounds. Please encourage your children to independently walk onsite and head to the new multipurpose room.

Finally, I'd like to thank our incredible staff who have worked tirelessly over the past two days to ensure our readiness to support a smooth transition for students. Importantly, we are all in this together and we are here to help you and support your child to be as successful as they can be learning from home. We've done this once...and we can do it again. Let's remember it's hard for us all – so as a team, we'll succeed. Hard isn't bad. Hard is what we all have to do to do our bit to get back to a normal way of life.

Stay safe one and all 😊

Kind regards,

Matt Pearce  
PRINCIPAL