30th January 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope that you all had a wonderful Christmas and I send all our families best wishes for 2015. The end of a school year is always very busy and it was difficult to find time to express my gratitude to all who sent cards and gifts. These were greatly appreciated by myself and the staff. We are truly blessed to have so many families who go out of their way to make us feel so valued. All organisations require systems and procedures to ensure their smooth operation and Our Lady of Mount Carmel is no different. Whilst I understand that this letter is lengthy, I ask parents to take the time to read it, it is critical in ensuring good communication and will assist us to focus our energy on our core business: Faith Formation and Learning.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone to Our Lady of Mount Carmel in 2015, in particular our new families. With your support we will provide your children with an outstanding education.

**Punctuality**

Being on time for appointments is not only a life skill for employment but also a courtesy to all of those waiting for you or with you. Regularly being late does not teach your child this important life skill, and it also disturbs the class, morning routines and prayer that takes place at the commencement of each and every day. It is not possible to drive into Bennett Street or Smith Street at 8:58am and expect your child to be on time. **ALL** children **must** be at school by 8:50am as the school gates are closed at 9:00am. Morning routines, preparation the night before and no television of a morning are some ways that will assist punctuality.

**Morning Drop Off**

Under no circumstances are children to be dropped off anywhere other than in the kiss and drop area (no parking 8:30-9:30am) on the street. There are **NO** exceptions to this request. I would stress that the consideration of all, including our neighbours, needs to be considered. (i.e. No parking in driveways or double parking on the street) These expectations are for the safety of our young children! When dropping off in our kiss and drop area (no parking 8:30-9:30am) please move promptly as it assists with the flow of traffic and consideration of others. **Children are not to be dropped off at the crossing as this is a no stopping area and dangerous.** All children are to walk on the footpaths around the school. Please ring the school for various out of school care options in the local area. Students who arrive after 9am (when the school gates are closed) **must** be signed in by their parent (guardian) stating the reason for their absence. We ask that parents respect this and not pressure the student leaders who are closing the gate.
**Afternoon Pick Up**
All children are to be collected from the front playground by 3:30pm. To assist staff in ensuring the safety of all children, we request that parents remain behind the yellow line so staff can ensure that all children are safely handed over to their parents and carers. A staff member will walk all children walking home to the crossings around the school. In cases of wet weather, the gates will be opened and students can be collected from their classrooms until 3:20pm. After this time all students are collected from the Year 4 classroom located on the verandah above the canteen.

**Attendance**
School attendance is extremely important as it provides ongoing instruction and continuity of learning.
If your child is absent from school due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances you must send a note (or email) to the class teacher/school as soon as your child returns to school containing the following information—
1. child’s name
2. date(s) absent
3. reason explaining absence
The Attendance Roll is a legal document and written documentation to support a child’s absence from school is required. If your child is on extended sick leave, that is over three days, please inform the School Office. Please ensure that upon your child’s return to school that a note is sent containing the above information. Too often staff waste time following up these notes. After 7 days upon your child’s return to school should no written documentation be received by the school your child will be marked on the attendance register as unexplained absence. If your child has continued unexplained absences and/or a significant number of days absent or partially absent (late to school or leave early from school), there will need to be a meeting with the school principal to discuss this issue.

**Application for Leave**
The Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, has issued all schools with procedures for the approval of leave applications consistent with amendments made in June 2009 to the Education Act 1990. First and foremost, under the Education Act of 1990, I must remind all parents that you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child(ren) attend school. In the Act, the delegated officers (Principal, Executive Director of Schools or the Minister for Education) are the only officers who may grant exemptions from school attendance.

As such, Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta, has developed the following procedures for the application of leave.
Step 1: At least two weeks prior to the planned date of leave parents are to complete an “Application for Exemption from School Attendance” and “Certificate of Exemption from Attending School” (available on the school website (school notes/leave applications).
Step 2: Send to school the completed “Application for Exemption from School Attendance” and “Certificate of Exemption from Attending School” for approval.
Step 3: If leave granted, I will sign the “Certificate of Exemption from Attending School” and send home.

Please note that the Certificate cannot be granted retrospectively, and if the application is not received with at least two weeks notice the “Certificate of Exemption from Attending School” may not be granted.
The Minister for Education has announced the following changes in accordance with the ACARA National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting.

Holidays/Leave:
A ‘Certificate of Exemption from School’ can no longer be granted for this purpose. As such:
· If the Principal accepts the reason for the absence, the absence will be marked as ‘L’ (Leave)
· If the Principal does not believe the absence is in the student’s best interest and does not accept the reason, the absence is unjustified and will be recorded as ‘A’ (Absent).
· If the period of absence is in excess of 50 days, your child may be eligible to enroll in “Distance Education” and rescind their enrolment at OLMC Wentworthville during this period.

Contact Details
I cannot stress the importance of ensuring that the school is kept up to date of any changes to phone numbers. During the past few days staff have attempted to contact various families with no success due to changes in phone numbers, especially mobile numbers. Not only is this a waste of time, it can in some circumstances be extremely stressful to your child. A simple phone call or email immediately can save time and stress.

Supervision and Routines
Before school supervision commences at 8:30am. No child is to be at school before this time, except on a Wednesday or Friday if participating in Wednesday Workout or Friday Fitness. When children arrive at school they are to walk immediately inside either gate entrance and proceed immediately to the front playground. Children must not be left unattended in the Narthex of the church for their own safety and the safety of others. Students who arrive before 8:30am must sit on the silver seats outside the school office until the supervising teacher arrives. After school supervision concludes at 3:30pm. Please ensure your child(ren) are collected by this time, as staff have meetings and other commitments to attend. TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF ALL NO CHILD IS TO WALK OR WAIT ON THE FOOTPATH WITHOUT AN ADULT. Parents need to inform their child’s class teacher if they will be walking home from school so arrangements can be made to assist them crossing Bennett or Station street.

Consideration of our neighbours
When parking around the school please do not under any circumstances park across or in any driveways.

Assembly
Parents are always welcome to attend Monday morning assemblies. We would ask that parents stand away from the classes (near to Bennett Street gate entrance), model respectful manners by not speaking, participate reverently in prayer and sing the national anthem.

Medication
If your child is ill and requires medication in school hours they must remain at home until the prescribed course is completed. If your child needs to take ongoing medication during school hours, it must be administered by the office staff. All prescribed medication must be sent to the office in the original container, clearly marked with the student’s name, the name of the drug, dosage, frequency of administration and prescribing doctor’s name. For long term medications, there are forms that must be completed before administration of the medicine can take place. These are available from the office and will be sent home on request. A formal action plan will then be established. The Catholic Education Office advises that Our Lady of Mt. Carmel staff will not administer non-prescribed medicines such as cough mixture or pain relievers bought over the counter.
Permission Notes for Excursions, Incursions and Camps
The school goes to great lengths to ensure that our communication of major events is well publicised. We have done this to ensure that staff and parents have adequate time to plan for these events. As such, I ask parents to assist us by returning all permission notes by the dates published. Organising large groups of students is a complex and difficult endeavour and late returns place our staff under unnecessary pressure and this in turn impacts the planning and safety of students. These letters are sent to all parents and students and as such, I have instructed our staff not to accept any permission notes beyond the due date of return. Furthermore, phone calls and emails granting permission will also not be accepted beyond the due date. If permission forms are not completed and returned your child will not be able to participate in the excursion, incursion or camp (and there will be no excursion money refunded) and will remain at school. It is a legal requirement for the school to have and retain permission slips.

School Uniform
We ask that children wear full school uniform at all times and we ask for parents’ support in ensuring appropriate haircuts (no coloured hair) and wearing of limited jewellery (one pair of studs or sleeper earrings only per earlobe is permitted, no bangles, rings, bracelets, bangles or necklaces may be worn etc). Coloured nail polish is also not acceptable. Regulation hairstyles for school have been included in the uniform information below. (Please note the final decision is at the discretion of the principal)

The Sports Uniform is worn on set sports day and sandshoes are to be worn only with the sports uniform. Children are to wear full school or full sports uniform, not a combination of both. As stated in our school uniform policy and reminded at the end of 2014, sports shoes are to be predominantly white.

The change of supplier and slight changes to the uniform will I anticipate be finalised during the first half of this term. As mentioned, the changeover phase will be during the next two years with full integration at the commencement of 2017.

Communication Channels
The following procedures are in place to provide structures for the effective communication of issues and concerns.
Parents are advised to make an appointment with the class teacher through the school office. If further assistance is required parents are advised to make an appointment with the Stage Coordinator in the first instance, then the Assistant Principal then Principal.

Early Stage One (Kindergarten) Coordinator: Miss Sara Butler
Stage 1 (1-2) Coordinator: Miss Sara Butler
Stage 2 (3-4) Coordinator: Mrs Bernadette Nolan
Stage 3 (5-6) Coordinator: Mrs Jodie Meares

Thank you for your support of the above requests to ensure that each and every child is safe at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Once again, we are looking forward to working with you in the Catholic education of your children.
May God bless all our endeavours this year.
Yours sincerely
Steven Jones
Principal