

25<sup>th</sup> March 2020



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Dear Parents/Carers,

First of all, I thank you for so graciously opening and reading all the correspondence that must seem as though it's flooding your inbox in recent days. This letter is perhaps more significant than others so I encourage you to read it particularly carefully and to contact the College should you need to clarify anything further.

In recent days attendance has fallen to below 40%. Although I have a responsibility to ensure quality teaching and learning is achieved, I also have an obligation and a deep desire to empower my staff team who need to be able to work in an environment that is both realistic and manageable.

It is with this in mind that a decision has been made for Wednesday April 1<sup>st</sup> to be the final day of Term 1 when Encounter operates its usual teaching and learning program. The purpose of Thursday and Friday of next week (April 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>) will have the primary purpose of providing necessary time for teaching staff to collaborate with colleagues to best prepare for a remote learning environment. With student attendance decreasing rapidly this is clearly emerging as the most practical and desirable solution for a growing majority of Encounter families.

During Monday to Thursday of Week 11 (April 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>), we will conduct a trial period of remote learning, which staff have already been preparing for diligently and mainly in their own time. Tori Weiss and Penny McKenzie, as Heads of School, will communicate instructions for students and/ or families by the end of the week.

Teaching staff will also spend time for the remainder of this week communicating the specific detail of how teaching and learning will continue to be undertaken in the coming days. During the trial period of remote learning, your feedback is welcomed. We are determined to deliver the curriculum in a rich, rigorous manner so being able to refine our practices in response to how you are supporting your children will enable us to best respond to an environment that will remain unpredictable for the foreseeable future.

With all of this in mind, Parent/ Teacher Interviews will be postponed until Term 3, with the desired date at this stage being the student-free Show Day on Friday September 4<sup>th</sup>.

Our Wellbeing team will continue to remain in contact with students who are already being supported. Heads of School, other key staff and I are also planning to remain in close contact with families throughout the final days of Term 1.

Regarding student attendance from next Thursday (April 2<sup>nd</sup>) to Wednesday of Week 11 (April 8<sup>th</sup>), we ask that only parents who are in essential-service employment send their children to school on those days. If students in Foundation to Year 11 do attend on these days, they will be supervised in either The Nest (Foundation to Year 6) or in Middle & Senior School (Year 7-12) learning spaces. We specifically ask Year 12 students to attend next Thursday and Friday (April 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>), with attendance in Week 11 being by negotiation with individual teachers.

*Looks like school, feels like home...*

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If you intend to continue attendance on-site at Encounter beyond next Wednesday, please email [admin@encounter.sa.edu.au](mailto:admin@encounter.sa.edu.au) so we know specific numbers of students to expect each day, allowing us to staff learning spaces accordingly. Our Early Learning Centre will remain open until the end of term and, at this stage, we will also operate vacation care through the Centre.

YMCA will continue to operate before and after-school care until Wednesday April 8<sup>th</sup>, with vacation care still operating on what remains as our student-free day on Thursday April 9<sup>th</sup>. Vacation care in the scheduled two-week holiday period will also proceed unless we are advised otherwise by the Government.

I fully appreciate the inconvenience this decision may cause some families, but I also hope you understand decisions must be made in the best interests of the majority of the Encounter family. At this point in time, it is best for most students and also for staff that we make a bold, decisive move rather than treading water for an indefinite period. It is also worth noting this decision is aligned with those that have already been made or discussions currently being held by most, if not all, State jurisdictions. There is far more value for all members of the Encounter community that we take a decisive lead rather than being blindsided and ill-prepared in the event of further restrictions in the weeks ahead.

In the days ahead we will continue to discuss how we might approach teaching and learning at Encounter in Term 2. We will make decisions and then communicate these to you once we get to the midway point of the upcoming school holiday period.

Finally, we will continue communicating relevant and updated information about College operations and any new initiatives to remain engaged with you and your children in the days and weeks ahead.

I thank you for your patience, support and understanding, especially as we seek to provide an engaging and rich teaching and learning environment away from your Encounter home.

Sincerely,



Kelvin Grivell  
Principal

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