



Pittwater House

From the Principal

22 January 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians

A very warm welcome to 2021 for all our Pittwater House families.

As we welcomed in the New Year, most of our families were coping with the challenges that the lockdown of the Northern Beaches necessarily imposed. It has been a very difficult time and whilst we know how fortunate we are to be living in Australia, and on the Northern Beaches, many of us have had plans for holidays and family reunions compromised and hoped for activities, cancelled. Thus, the beginning of a new school year with its sense of normalcy, routine and hope, will be appreciated I am sure, by many of you.

Despite this time of global and local uncertainty, I do hope these weeks of holiday have allowed you the precious qualities that family time allows. 2020 was a year for embracing change and students and staff alike demonstrated great bravery in mastering new skills and showing considerable resilience. At such a time, the importance of values shines through. Our Core Values shown through the mnemonic HEROIC highlight areas such as family, care and concern; these are fundamental characteristics of Pittwater House that make us a happy and unique and special place of learning.

My wish for the long Christmas recess is always that students and families will pause, breathe and smile, to momentarily step aside from our busy lives, to stop doing and simply be... well, I think the opportunity for this was clearly present. And now, we must embrace all that 2021 will offer.

Throughout the months of COVID-19, Pittwater House has worked to instil the Government regulations and noted the requirements imposed by the Chief Health Officer. As we begin a new year we continue to live by these expectations. I ask that you respect all that is asked of you in the coming weeks and months; plans will necessarily change if guidelines for school activities change. And I am sure there will be change from that you have come to expect in years past. I am sure you will acknowledge that the ongoing health and wellbeing of all our students and Staff is our upmost priority.

The accompanying letters from the Deputy Principal, Heads of School and Business Manager will cover some of the COVID practices we employ and will continue to employ at our School.

Of course, our School has not been idle through the recess period. The Campus has seen significant activity once contractors were allowed on Campus and identified holiday projects were undertaken. Painting, carpeting, freshening of learning spaces as well as some internal modifications along with work on the grounds are all very visible elements of our holiday works. And the wonderful rain has produced a magnificent greening of the oval. These have been precious weeks as we ensure all is ready for the return of our students.

Once again, the Principal's Pack comes in electronic form. This allows you to download and print off those components of relevance to you and your family.

As always there is a substantial amount of information for all families in preparation for the year and we trust it responds to the questions you may have at this stage. There is, for example, useful guidance from the Heads of School for Day One, split as it is between new students on Wednesday 27 January (including **ALL** Kindergarten and Year 7 students) and **ALL** students on Thursday 28 January. Additionally, the Business Manager, Ms Lynn Phelan has included some practical information regarding uniforms, car parking and safety, and bus travel.

Academics

Our focus for 2021 remains on the provision of an all-round education, ensuring our students reach their full potential socially and academically and in the sporting and creative domains. We were delighted with our HSC results from the Class of 2020 as my communication to you prior to Christmas outlined. It should be noted that our high achieving students all gave generously to our School through their range of co-curricular activities and leadership roles, proving once more that our all-round approach is one of which we should be rightly proud. Our Dux of the Grammar School, Callum Metzke with an ATAR of 99.8 and our Dux of the College, Mia Giladi with an ATAR of 99.05 will be presented with their Dux medallions at our Opening of the School Year Assembly, on the first day of School. These fine Alumni will share a little of their story to inspire our students as they start the new academic year.

Whilst we relish our role in providing an all-rounded education at Pittwater House, working smartly is critical. So, facing the New Year my wish is that every student strives for excellence and achieves their personal best, whatever that may be.

As each student transitions to a new year group, the time for reflection and celebration is central. Everyone should be excited by the boundless possibilities. All students will be busy. Planning is the key to success; setting goals, making lists, and noting intentions, are expected as a sense of hope and optimism pervades all year levels. I trust that each student will know where they need to make change and will take on the responsibility for *their* education by putting in the extra study needed. Our HSC students need to ensure attendance at the master classes and extra classes offered by their teachers and realise that their 'race' against all final year students in NSW must be measured and consistent in its intensity.

To our senior students, I ask that all of you take personal responsibility for your future... you cannot expect to coast along and assume success will fall into place. Every student needs to be reminded that there are so many young people out there achieving exceptional things-achievements and actions that have purpose and contribute to the world in a highly meaningful way. Our students will be encouraged to pursue their dreams and engage in actions that will benefit society; we want contributors with a respectful conscience. At the same time, it is a competitive world and each student, their teachers and their families need to appreciate the 'hunger' that is needed for success. I want our students to think. I want our students to learn to think and to never enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought. For as John F Kennedy said in his 1962 address to the graduating class of Yale, "we subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought." That is the challenge for all members of our community as we begin a new academic year.

Staffing

We have in place a Staff who seek the best outcome for your children, and we encourage you to work closely with them. Various forms of communication are available, and your Head of School will speak of these in the context of the new year. I ask that you work through your child's class or form teacher as a starting point. Subject teachers, Faculty Co-ordinators, Year Level Coordinators, Assistants to the Head of Junior School and Heads of School are there too, should the need arise.

Pastoral Care/Wellbeing

Our programs for Pastoral Care and Wellbeing across the School are in place with specific programs having been developed and adapted as need arises, by the Heads of Grammar and College. To ensure the best possible input to either half or full day programs, we use external providers in addition to our Pittwater House Staff. Mrs Achurch too, has worked with Junior School Staff to create age appropriate pastoral and wellbeing structures through, for example, the identification and appreciation of character strengths. You will continue to see the benefits of Pittwater House providing a 'tool kit' for life for our children and young people to become the best versions of themselves. Without a commitment to resilience, care and welfare for our community, our academic curriculum would be compromised.

Developing a positive mindset, being open to learning, facing challenges and showing resilience are all necessary skills with our students needing to believe their abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This world of Pittwater House needs to be a happy place where the students laugh, where they explore and connect with people, thoughts and interests, and where they learn something of themselves and where they make good friends.

Welcome Drinks

This annual event, with a date saver of Friday 29 January, has been **postponed**.

As you would appreciate our requirement to be COVID safe precludes such an event at this time. Although disappointed with this decision, we are determined to find an alternate way to engage with you when it is deemed safe to do so.

And now, together with the Staff, I look forward to working with all families to ensure Pittwater House provides continuous growth and change for all who daily pass through our gates.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nancy Hillier
Principal