



# Muswellbrook High School

## Newsletter 4

21st June 2012



### *Principal's Report*

We have now almost reached the halfway point of the school year following what is always the busiest Term of the school year. As you will be able to glean from the following pages, the students have continued to excel in a range of activities and endeavours.

I am currently in the process of reading all of the students' reports from Years 7-12, with a particular interest in our Year 12 students, who I have been interviewing along with our Careers' teacher, Mr Borg. This has been a positive and informative process and I am sure our current students will uphold the high level of achievement of recent years.

Looking ahead to the end of term, we will be celebrating NAIDOC week with our annual assembly and community barbeque, which will also see the unveiling of our mural project. Students, staff and Aboriginal artist, Les Elvin, have been working on this project for approximately nine months and the results are simply stunning.

We were also buoyed by the news today that the State government had allocated \$80,000 in funding to rebuild a retaining wall on the Dolahenty Street side of the school. Although we had submitted this application a number of months ago, in true political form, the first we knew of this was when we read it on the front page of the paper.

### *The baton is passed on*

There is an old adage that records are made to be broken, but it always takes a very special athlete to do so. 29 years ago, a young Muswellbrook High student named Toni Stewart set a blistering time for the 13 Years Girls' 100m. So fast, in fact, that for three decades no student has been able to better this time. Fast forward to 2012 and we did indeed witness the arrival of that very special individual. At our recent Athletics carnival, Year 7 student, Natasha Hall, broke not only the 100m record, but also smashed the 200m record, which was set in 1974, by 0.71 of a second.

Toni Stewart, who is now better known as Muswellbrook High School Student Learning Support Officer, Toni Boney, is pictured above with Natasha. Natasha is looking forward to representing the Upper Hunter Zone at the upcoming Regional Athletics Carnival where the record book may again require updating.



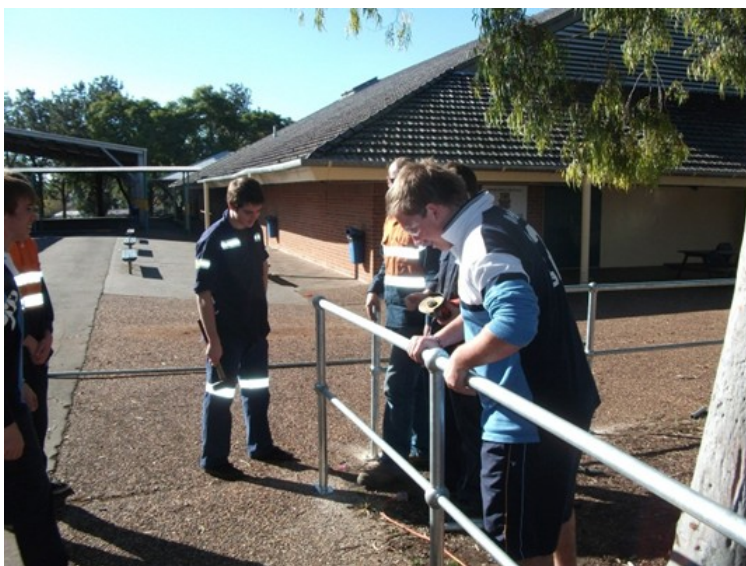
100m	T. Stewart	13.72 sec	1983
200m	W. Gill	29.00 sec	1974

100m	N. Hall	13.12 sec	2012
200m	N. Hall	28.29 sec	2012

## *MPC Upgrade*

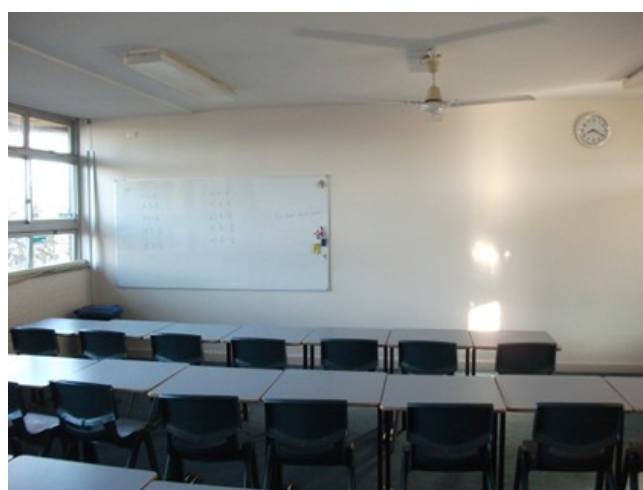
After more false starts than a 100m final the upgrade to the MPC entrance is now back in full swing. Wet weather and some extremely hard cement have been amongst some of the many obstacles that have slowed the progress on this project. In fact, over \$200 worth of drill bits were expended on the first day of drilling alone. In spite of this, we now have had the signage, hand rails and lighting installed, enhancing the safety and appearance of one of our main entrances to the school. Thank you to Mr Christian and Mr O'Hara and his Metal and Engineering class, with a special mention of Blake Brands and Anthony Coster, who have worked like Trojans on this project which has been funded by our P&C.

The Lioness club of Muswellbrook has also generously provided funds for the purchase of two ornamental trees for the entrance to the MPC.



## *New carpet, painting and softfall*

Other major projects recently completed have included the carpeting of our school library, the painting of C Block Maths classrooms and the installation of softfall in the horseshoe area.



## *Breakfast Club Sponsorship*



Unbeknownst to many, dedicated maths teacher, Mrs Paulsen, gives up her time three mornings a week to help provide a good start to the day for many of our students through the Breakfast Club. Operating from our school canteen, students are able to pick up toast and a hot Milo before school, which is much appreciated on our cold Muswellbrook mornings. Recently, Bengalla Mining Company kindly donated \$300 to help support this initiative, which is very much appreciated and helps to ensure that students are well-prepared to face the rigours of the school day.

## *Student Commendations - Diamond Level*

Congratulations to all students who have now attained the Diamond Level in our School Merit System over the last three months. Merit points are awarded by teachers to students for academic performance, sporting participation, school service or representation and leadership. For example, a student who placed first in a Science test or History assignment may receive three merit points, second place two points and third one. Other examples of how students may earn points include becoming a sports age champion, significant academic improvement, participating in a public speaking competition or fundraising for a charity. A summary of the Merit System Levels is listed below:

Emerald Level – 25 merit points

Sapphire Level – 75 merit points

**Diamond Level – 150 merit points**

Platinum Level – 300 merit points

Principal's Medallion – 450 merit points

Particularly noteworthy is the achievement of the students in Years 9 and 10 who have progressed very quickly through the Merit System ranks and are on track for the Principal's Medallion by the time they reach Year 12.



# DIAMOND LEVEL

## Year 12



Dean Olson



Tori Hoad



Amanda Parker



Samuel Tuckey



Briana Waters



Mikala Williamson

## Year 11



Tahler Connolley



Liam King



Emily Lanyon



Courtney Price



Jayden McCarthy



Georgia Harris



## Year 10



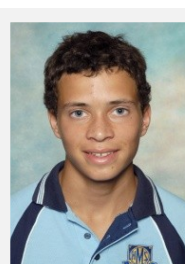
Jacob Connor



Destiny Dwyer



Larissa Murray-Mell

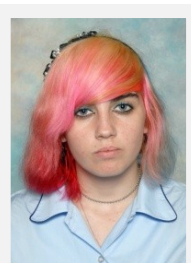


Thomas Sparre

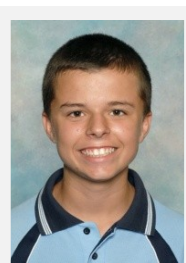
## Year 9



Holly Arvidson



Madeline Anshaw



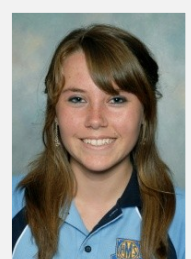
Aaron Carey



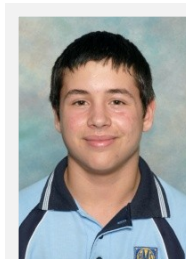
Patrick Richards



Elena Peteraitis



Karly Stevenson



Marnes Swanepoel



Elizabeth Symington



Kate Symington

Mr Gareth Erskine  
Principal

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## Parent Information



Millennium Portal is the gateway for your students & parents, allowing for improved learning, attendance monitoring and sharing of resources and information.

From home, or on the way to school, students can review their daily timetable, and examine lesson plans in preparation for class.

Parents can monitor their children's attendance and welfare issues, as well as review reports and commendations and awards.



Student Timetable  
Student Classes & Teacher  
Online Lessons  
Assessment Marks linked to related  
Resources  
Semester Reports  
Welfare & Achievement Summary  
Attendance Summary



It was brought to our attention that many parents were still viewing the Millennium Parent Portal as 2011. All parents should now be viewing the current year 2012. You will not need to change any settings as they have been made for you.

## Millennium Parent Portal Login

If you have not yet had the chance to log on and look around in the Parent Portal, I strongly encourage you to do so. The webpage is self explanatory & very easy to use. Make a cup of coffee and take a look for yourself I'm confident that you will be able to access lots of information regarding your children, from viewing their Timetable, Attendance, Reports, Assignments & Results, Incidents (behaviour & others), Classes & Teachers.

If we have your home or work email address on file at school you should have received an email supplying you with a user name, password and the link to the Millennium Parent Portal. If you haven't, or have lost it, you can contact Tanya Clifford in the Main Administration Office to have the email resent.

For those parents that have a password already the link below will take you straight to the login page as shown:

[www.millenniumschoools.net.au/portal/](http://www.millenniumschoools.net.au/portal/)

## *School Reports on Millenium*

Years 7-10 Semester 1 reports will be available on the Parent Portal as of Thursday 21st June. All Parents will receive a text message advising them that your child will be bringing their report home that day.

## *Sick Bay*

The rules for using sick bay are very simple, all students that are not feeling well must get a note from their class teacher, or playground duty teacher. With this note, the students can come to the main administration office where first aid & TLC will be given; followed by a phone call home if the students are unwell.

We do **not** encourage students to use sick bay as a resting place. If they are sick we will call home to have them picked up. The phone calls are always made by the administration staff and definitely **not** the students.

We are requesting parents remind their children about the procedures of sick bay. Under no circumstances are they allowed to phone or sms parents themselves to go home.

If you receive a message from you child to come and pick them up, we would like you to advise them of the correct procedure and direct them to come to the office where we will phone you.





## *Athletics Carnival 2012*

The 2012 Muswellbrook High School Athletics Carnival was held at Victoria Park on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May. The weather was perfect on the day and allowed for some very competitive races and field events.

The age champions on the day are listed below.

BOYS	GIRLS
12 Years- Thomas Pickersgill	12 Years- Moneke Crabb
13 Years- Cashlin Murray-Mell	13 Years- Brydie Parker
14 Years- Brad Collett	14 Years- Cody Wright
15 Years- Kyle Robertson	15 Years- Lauren Beatty
16 Years-Beaudon Dixon	16 Years- Megan Doran
17 Years-Leonard Craft	17 Years- Ashley Frankland

There were also several records broken on the day. Natasha Hall broke the 13 years girls 100m in 13.12 seconds and the 13 years girls 200m in 28.29 seconds. Zac Butler broke the 13 years boys 1500m in 5.31.00.

The Dash for Cash was a new event which saw the fastest runners from each group participating in a handicapped race.

The fastest runners from each age group where pitted against each other in a girls and boys division. Natasha Hall and Thomas Sparre where triumphant on the day.

We also had prizes for the best dressed senior and best dressed junior student who proudly wore their house colours. Ellie Thomson from Paterson and Tyrrell Roadley from Goulburn where winners on the day.

The final points score for the day where.

Goulbourn- 839

Page- 823

Paterson- 614

Hunter- 536





## *Athletics Carnival*









## *Football Gala Day*



The Newcastle Jets took time out from their busy pre-season schedule to lend a helping hand at the Endeavour Industries Football Gala Day at Cessnock PCYC Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May.

Matthew Williams from the GOLD class enjoyed kicking around with several big name players. Nearly the entire senior Newcastle Jets squad, as well as head coach Gary van Egmond assisted with the Gala Day for people with intellectual disabilities. In total, 11 teams and more than 80 players took part in the Gala Day and the students from Muswellbrook High School enjoyed every aspect of the fun filled day. It was a great opportunity for students to meet and greet players.

A big thank you to Mr Sneesby and Leanne Hernando for making the day run so successfully.

**Grant Herbert**  
**Head Teacher PDHPE**

## *Year 12 join the masses in preparation for their HSC*

MHS Year 12 joined over 1000 HSC students from across 28 schools in Singleton to gather as much information as possible in anticipation of their final examinations in the very near future.

The day entails a variety of seminars which are presented by HSC markers, University lectures and the Department of Education Consultants. The day has been specifically designed so that rural HSC students can access important information which is available to their city counterparts.

Students tailor their day according to their subjects and gain insight into what it is marker's are looking for to help improve their grades.

**Year Advisor**  
**Miss Narelle Smith**

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## *Outward Bound 2012*

Seven Year 9 students and two Year 10 students attended Outward Bound adventure and leadership training between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of June in the Tweed Valley, New South Wales. The students were pushed well beyond their comfort zones, which enabled them to build new skills, both physically and mentally.

The students experienced many thrills during the six days, which had literally more highs than lows. These involved scaling a 12 metre wooden pole and leaping from a trapeze, climbing a giant ladder up to the tree-tops and abseiling down a 10 metre cliff face. Many other activities were also mentally frustrating, like ten people standing on a small tarpaulin and having to flip it without moving off.

A typical day would start at 5.00am (some mornings started at 4.00am), with breakfast then packs on a walk of four or five kilometres. During this time, students would learn map reading, navigation and bush skills. I was incredibly proud of the way in which the students displayed teamwork and compassion within the group.

One of the best experiences of the course was the visit by Olympic swimming champion Lara Davenport who represented Australia at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Her talk on overcoming adversity and teamwork were most appreciated. That will probably be the first and only time the students will hold an Olympic gold medal (yes, they are really heavy).

All the students showed initiative and spirit, especially when it came to cooking dinner, which was not an easy task in a cold, wet and dark environment. Thankfully, the terrain and views were spectacular. The teachers from every group expressed how well our students performed.







Thomas Sparre and Blake Pickham had an outstanding view over the top of this ancient volcano and over the cliff



There were many enjoyable moments including being “geographically embarrassed” coming off a mountain and climbing through the clouds whilst conquering Mount Warning



I would like to acknowledge the financial assistance provided by Coal and Allied. Thank you!

The students of Muswellbrook High School: Blake Pickham, Thomas Sparre, Anaru Komene, Tyrell Roadley, Lacey Ward, Taliesin Morgan, Mark Glew, Kiera Bastick and Cody Sharman have proven themselves to be outstanding students and valuable members of our community. They have learnt how to overcome hardship, work together and dig deep when needed. Well done!



Rod Glase  
TAS teacher

### *CSIRO Education Visit*

On Monday the 21<sup>st</sup> May, Andrew from CSIRO education division visited MHS. He presented a “Chemical Reactions” show to 60 Year 9 and 10 students and 90 Year 7 and 8 students. The students were “wowed” by the “ever changing coloured solution”, expanding foam, which set hard, and the “Elephant’s toothpaste” to name just a few. Andrew also explained the science behind these reactions to increase our students understanding of Chemistry.

After lunch, 30 students from Year 9, 10 and 12 participated in experiments to highlight the workings and implications of Climate Change. Students witnessed the effect of rising oceans, the efficiencies of various light bulbs, the making of acid rain, the use of a “new” recycled fertilizer called “biochar” and a variety of other experiments.

We are very fortunate to have these visiting shows come to us and must ensure we take full advantage of them in the future. If your student brings home a note for an excursion, or a show, please ensure you adhere to the final date for payment and return of notes. It would be a shame if we were forced to cancel a show as notes and payments were not returned in time.

Fiona Bailey  
HT Science /LOTE

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## Boys Touch Football 2012

The Open Boys Touch team began the year with two forfeits from other schools not being able to make the trek from Newcastle to Muswellbrook. This resulted in Muswellbrook having to travel to Broadmeadow to take on the top 8 in the Hunter without any matches under our belt.

The first match of the day was against Hunter Sports High. After a tough start to the match, we ran away with a lead and managed to beat Hunter Sports 7-4. This result meant that we had to then take on a formidable Wingham High side from Taree. In this match, the score remained close throughout the entire time. Fortunately, a late intercept and break away try to Zac Collett helped Muswellbrook to win the match 4-3 and move to the Hunter Final.

The Hunter Final pitted Muswellbrook against Callaghan College – Wallsend. This team had just beaten the reigning champions and consisted of a number of players in the Hunter CHS team. Muswellbrook got out to an early lead before Wallsend showing their excellent form. With 10 minutes to go, the score was 5-1 to Wallsend. 3 quick try's took the score to 5-4 before a controversial disallowed try to Muswellbrook. The final score meant that Muswellbrook had finished second and had a home game against the winning team from the Sydney South West region.

On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> June, Bass High School travelled up to Muswellbrook as winners of their region to take on our school. With the start delayed due to travel difficulties, the match began with a sudden burst of speed. After the first 5 minutes, there had been no score. Bass High scored the first try and the signs were not looking good for Muswellbrook. However, within a minute of their try, we managed to tie it up thanks to some quick movements to Joel Picton on the wing. Muswellbrook then scored the next 4 touchdowns thanks to 1 from Lenny Craft, 2 to Beau Dixon and 1 try to Callum Strachan. At half time, the score was 5-1 with Muswellbrook showing complete dominance. The second half began well for Muswellbrook with the teams sharing the scoring. Tries to the young pair of Bailey Taylor (year 7) and Jake Parker (year 8) left the score at 7-3 to Muswellbrook. The scores remained this way for a few minutes before the Bass team had spent most of their energy. Zac Collett scored before Lenny Craft took an intercept and a full length of the field touchdown. At 9-3 the game was almost over. Beau Dixon scored 2 in the last few minutes to ensure Muswellbrook won convincingly by a score of 11-3.

The next step for this team is the State Championships that are being held at Gosford on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of August. Here, the top 20 teams will be split into two pools and play a number of round robin games before the finals on the second day.

I would like to congratulate all of the players for their effort and attitude, sportsmanship and skill level throughout all of the matches. The team consists of:

1. Bailey Taylor (year 7)
2. Joel Barner
3. Jake Parker
4. Dylan Howard
5. Zac Collett
6. Beau Dixon
7. Jacob Kennedy
8. Mathew McKay
9. Mathew Merrett
10. Joel Picton
11. Jake Barner
12. Lenny Craft
13. Callum Strachan

Mr Herbert  
Head Teacher PDHPE











# Aboriginal Education



We have started another program that is embracing our Aboriginal girls in Year 8 and 9.

The **SistaSpeak** program is designed to inspire and motivate young Aboriginal women about the importance of education and to raise awareness about the diverse career paths available to them. The program focuses specifically on the issues of self-esteem, careers, culture, leadership and economic independence.

We have four Aboriginal women who are **volunteering their time to help mentor** and run this amazing program.

This program runs for 5 weeks and is being held on Thursday afternoons and commenced on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May.



## Muswellbrook High School Junior AECG

Muswellbrook High School is proud to acknowledge the formation of a Junior AECG (Aboriginal Education Consultative Group), which gives the Aboriginal students of the school the opportunity to develop leadership qualities, empower their cultural heritage through real and active involvement in decision making at school level and to increase Aboriginal Community participation in Aboriginal Education.

We would like to congratulate the following students in becoming the Executive leaders in Aboriginal Education at Muswellbrook High School.

<b>Petra Franks</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Year 12</b>
<b>Rosemary Howard</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
<b>Chloe Barwick</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Year 12</b>
<b>Jamie Parker</b>	<b>Assistant Secretary</b>	<b>Year 11</b>

Students have been holding regular meetings.

## Reconciliation Week

Muswellbrook High School celebrated National Reconciliation Week with staff and students attending the Community flag raising ceremony which was held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May at Simpson Park and we also held a whole school assembly.

***We come together and celebrate National Reconciliation Week as a school and community to identify and celebrate significant milestones in the reconciliation journey for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people. We as a school community embrace and acknowledge reconciliation and how important it is that we all stand united together.***

## Upper Hunter Aboriginal Education Pathway Awards.

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> May staff and students attended the Upper Hunter Aboriginal Education Pathway Awards which were held at Singleton High School. These awards are in celebration of the success and achievement of Aboriginal students that completed their studies in Year 10 and Year 12 in 2011. The evening also celebrates and recognises the achievements of people in the community who are committed to education and improving the outcomes for our students.

Congratulations to the students!





# School Uniform Care



- When you get home from school change out of your uniform.
- If you have a tear in the seam of your trackpants or jacket, fix it as soon as possible.
- Small tears in the fabric can be repaired with a navy iron-on patch and a few stitches. (The patch should be placed in behind the tear so it's not visible. Use a pressing cloth or big handkerchief.)
- Wash dark items separately for the first couple of washes. You can quickly hand wash in cold water, rinse well and then machine spin. Don't leave wet clothes in the machine, line dry as soon as possible. Hang dark clothing inside out to prevent fading. Close zips, especially on jackets, before washing.
- Avoid tumble drying. (The lint in the tumble dryer used to be your clothing.)
- Treat stains with a bar of 'Sard Wonder soap' or similar before washing. Ink, paint and glue can be removed with a product called 'Oomph.' You can borrow some from the uniform shop or buy it at Bunnings.
- Knitted jumpers should always be washed inside-out in lukewarm water with a suitable wool detergent, either by hand or a wool/gentle machine cycle. (Don't use enzyme based detergents.) Never soak. Allow to dry by placing on a fluffy bath towel over the back of a kitchen chair or clothes rack. Tumble drying isn't recommended.
- If your trackpants are a little too long, wearing a traditional or jogger style shoe instead of flat or ballet style shoe will prevent the hem of the trackpants from touching the ground and wearing out. (It's better for your feet too!)

## **Did you know...**

**10% of sales from the school uniform shop are returned to the school.**

Information regarding the school uniform can be found on the school's website...

<http://www.muswellbro-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/school-uniform>

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# *Muswellbrook High School*



3-10 JULY 2011 | **Change:**  
the next step is ours

*We invite parents, family, friends and community  
to attend our*

*NAIDOC Celebrations on:*

***Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June @ 9am***

*We hope you can attend and share the celebration with us in the  
School Hall, followed by a morning tea.*

*Please contact Mel Powell on 6542 5061  
if you are able to join us.*

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## **A FREE\* COURSE for WOMEN**

### **SKILLS FOR WORK AND TRAINING**

is a course for women who haven't had recent experience in education or employment and who want to undertake further training or are seeking entry to the workforce.

**WHERE?** Muswellbrook TAFE  
Maitland Rd, Muswellbrook

**WHEN?** Semester 2, 2012 (July to November)  
3 days a week, 9.30 – 3pm

### **Interested?**

To obtain further information about this popular course

**Phone** Maree at Muswellbrook TAFE

on **6542 1142**

## **INFORMATION AND ENROLMENT SESSION**

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

**Muswellbrook TAFE**

**10.30am Room FG 2**

\*There is no TAFE Course Fee but a \$25 Resource Fee applies.

## Skills for Work & Training

This is a **FREE COURSE FOR WOMEN** thinking of returning to the workforce or pursuing further education. It is designed specifically for women who want to upgrade their skills, establish career goals and develop confidence to achieve them.

Students will develop computing and job seeking skills, as well as brush up on communication, mathematics and green science in a fun, cooperative and supportive environment. This course also includes one week's Work Placement and the opportunity to obtain a First Aid Certificate. A course related charge of \$25 applies.

Classes run for 3 days a week within school hours.

An information/enrolment session will be held at 10.30am on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 in F block at Muswellbrook TAFE. If unable to attend at this time please phone **Maree at Muswellbrook TAFE** on 65 421 142.

Many thanks,  
Maree



### Muswellbrook High School

PO Box 198

MUSWELLBROOK NSW 2333

Phone: 02 65431033

Fax: 02 65433927

E-mail: [muswellbro-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:muswellbro-h.school@det.nsw.edu.au)

Web: [www.muswellbro-h.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.muswellbro-h.schools.nsw.edu.au)

Text Number: **19910010**



*"Striving for excellence in a school that cares"*





# Regular School Attendance

## Information for parents and carers



Did you know? If students miss as little as eight days in a school term, by the end of primary school they will have missed a year of education.

### Why must I send my child to school?

Education in New South Wales is compulsory. This means all children from six years of age and under the minimum school leaving age are legally required to attend school.

From 2010, all New South Wales students must complete Year 10. After Year 10 and until they turn 17 years of age students must be:

1. in school or registered for home schooling, or
2. in approved education or training (e.g. TAFE, traineeship, apprenticeship) or
3. in full-time, paid employment (average 25 hours per week) or in a combination of work, education and/or training.

Principals are legally responsible for keeping accurate records of student attendance.

Principals are also responsible for deciding if the reason given for an absence is justified.

For this reason, Principals may request medical certificates or other documentation for long or frequent absences explained by parents as being due to illness.

If Principals don't consider an explanation to be satisfactory, they will record the absence as unjustified.

It is important to understand that the New South Wales Department of Education and Training may prosecute parents (including carers) if children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unjustified absences from school.

### Must I send my child every day?

**YES.** It is a condition of enrolment that you send your child to school every day.

A small number of absences may be justified if your child:

- has to go to a special religious ceremony
- is required to attend to a serious and/or urgent family situation (eg a funeral)
- is too sick to go to school or has an infectious illness.

Head lice infestations can be a common occurrence, particularly in primary schools. Parents should check their child's hair

regularly for head lice and undertake treatment where eggs or lice are identified.

Translated information about head lice and how to treat them can be found at

<https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/languagesupport/documents/headlice/infosheet.htm>

Advice from NSW Health indicates that there is no need for students to be sent home or excluded from school because of head lice. Head lice, is not a valid reason for prolonged absences from school.

### Why is regular attendance at school important?

Regular school attendance will help your child to succeed in later life.

Attending school every day makes learning easier for your child and helps children to build and maintain friendships with other children.

If your child doesn't learn the basic skills in the early years of school, they may develop learning problems in later years.

### Why is arriving at school on time important?

Arriving at school and class on time:

- ensures that your child doesn't miss out on the important learning activities scheduled early in the day when they are most alert
- helps your child to learn the importance of punctuality and routine
- gives your child time to greet their friends before class and therefore
- reduces the opportunity for classroom disruption.

Lateness is recorded as a partial absence and must be explained to the school the same way as other forms of absence.

### What should I do if our family is going on holiday in school time?

Parents and carers are encouraged not to withdraw their children from school for family holidays. Families should try to arrange holidays during school vacations.

If your family holiday is during school time, inform the school principal in advance and request leave and/or an exemption from school.

Depending on the circumstances and how long the leave will be, you may ask the school to provide tasks that can be completed while your child is absent.

### Must my child attend all activities, including daily fitness and sport?

**YES.** Sport and other physical activities help to keep your children healthy. Children are expected to attend all regular school activities, including sport.

### Do not keep your child away from school for the following:

- birthdays
- shopping
- minding other children
- routine check ups or care such as hair cuts
- minor family events
- sleeping in.

Medical and other health appointments for your child should be made either before or after school or during the school holidays.

### What should I do if my child has to stay away from school?

If your child has to be absent from school, it is important to tell the school and provide a reason for your child's absence. To explain an absence parents and carers may:

- send a note, fax or email to the school
- telephone the school, or
- visit the school.

All absences must be explained to the school. Bilingual absentee notes and further information on attendance can be found on the Department's website under the heading *School Attendance (School Attendance)* at

[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/languagesupport/documents/index\\_s.htm](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/languagesupport/documents/index_s.htm)

The principal of the school has the right to question parents' or carers' requests for their child to be absent from school.

The principal may also question any explanation given for a child's absence from school.

### My child won't go to school. What should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. The principal may seek support from a home school liaison officer or Aboriginal student liaison officer.

### Who are home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers?

Home school liaison officers and Aboriginal student liaison officers have been specially trained to help you with your child's attendance.

They work with school communities to encourage all students to attend school regularly.

For further information about the Home School Liaison Program you should contact the program manager at your local Department of Education and Training regional office. Contact numbers can be found at the website address:

[www.det.nsw.edu.au/contactus/index.htm](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/contactus/index.htm) or by telephoning 131 536.

### Do you have problems with getting your child to school, for some of the following reasons?

- won't get out of bed
- won't go to bed
- can't find their clothes, books, homework, school bag...
- school lunches not ready
- slow to eat breakfast
- homework not done
- watching television late at night or when they should be getting ready for school
- test or presentation at school
- birthdays
- screaming and not letting go of you.

### Here are some suggestions which are based on setting regular routines:

- Have a set time to be out of bed
- Have a set time to go to bed
- Have uniform and school bag ready the night before
- Make lunches the night before
- Have a set time for starting / ending breakfast. A routine is important.
- Set time for daily homework activities
- Turn the television on for a set time and only if appropriate
- Be firm, children must go to school
- Provide lots of positive encouragement
- Be firm, a birthday is not a holiday
- Time arrival at school to coincide with bell time and leave quickly. If arranged with the teacher beforehand, place your child's hand into that of the teacher and then leave.

### Do you need an interpreter?

Interpreting services are provided where possible for parents and carers who do not speak or understand English well and for Deaf parents and carers who use sign language. For more information on interpreter services contact your school or phone the Telephone Interpreter Service and have them contact the school. The telephone number to ring is 131 450. Ask for an interpreter in the required language and the interpreter will call the school and stay on the line to assist you with your conversation. You will not be charged for this service.



# INSIGHTS

by Michael Grose – No. 1 parenting educator



## It's not okay to be away ... nor to be late to school

When kids miss school, not only is their academic progress impeded, forcing them to catch up on missed work (which some never do), they often miss important interactions with their peers which can compound issues of social isolation and low self-esteem.

One of the most important things you can do to ensure your child has a bright future is to make sure he or she goes to school every day—and gets there on time.

It sounds simple, but it's true.

The correlation between school attendance and children's achievement levels is well-established. The more time kids spend at school, the more likely they are to experience school success.

Conversely, according to a report from the Victorian Auditor General, students who are regularly absent from school are at the greatest risk of dropping out of school early, and of experiencing long-term unemployment.

When kids miss school, not only is their academic progress impeded, forcing them to catch up on missed work (which some never do), they often miss important interactions with their peers which can compound issues of social isolation and low self-esteem. Also, many teachers tell me, it's often the kids who can least afford to take time off school who are most likely to be serial absentees.

Of course, most people know this intuitively, yet school absenteeism is a huge problem in Australian schools—and much of it is parent-condoned.

It's hard to get an accurate picture across the country but it would appear that Australian students miss an average of between 12 and 15 days per school year, with parent-condoned absenteeism highest among young primary-aged children.

That adds up to a year's lost schooling over the school-life of a child.

In today's highly competitive world, this rate of absenteeism is alarming, putting our kids at a distinct disadvantage.

### That's not a reason to be away!

It's now commonplace for children to stay away from school for reasons that would have been unheard of just twenty years ago. These include staying away to celebrate their own or a sibling's birthday; being absent because they stayed up too late watching television; going shopping for clothes; an extended long weekend; and kids not wanting to take part in a sports day or special school event.

This type of absenteeism sends a strong message to kids that parents don't really value learning or their children's school experiences.

Australian kids only spend 15% of their total time at school. They spend more time asleep than they do at school. So we need to maximise every day to get full value. That means turning up to school every day, on time.

### As a Parent:

- ☒ Commit to sending kids to school every day.
- ☒ Make sure kids arrive at school and class on time.
- ☒ Inform the school when they are away, sending medical certificates and other evidence of genuine absence.
- ☒ Consider catching-up on missed work.
- ☒ Make kids who are away stay in their bedroom – that is where ill kids should be.

### Being late is not okay either

Missing a few minutes each day may not seem like a big deal but your child may be missing more than you realise if he or she is continually late.

Current research shows that mornings for most children are the most productive time of the day, with 10.00am the peak period for productivity. When children arrive late and take time to settle as they inevitably do, valuable learning time is lost.

### It takes strong parenting...

As a parent myself I know how persuasive children of all ages can be when it comes to taking a day off school. It takes a strong will to resist the persistent pressure that kids can bring to bear, particularly if they play the guilt card with comments such as "It's not fair that I have to go school today because Auntie is coming to visit!"

Nice try. But the answer should be "No!"

As parents we need to make a commitment that our kids make the most of their precious time at school. That means that we send them to school every day, on time and ready to make the most of the school day.

Of course, there will be times, such as illness or genuinely extenuating family circumstances, when kids should be away. But these need to be a rarity rather than the norm.

It's reassuring to know that you increase their chances of future success just by making sure they turn up to school every day. And of course regular school attendance also helps kids prepare for the workforce, where it will be expected that they turn up each day work-ready. The real world is unforgiving of those who stay away with NO EXCUSE.

parentingideas.com.au parentingideas.co.uk parentingideas.co.nz

Michael Grose Presentations

PO Box 167 Balmarrig Vic 3926 p + 61 3 5963 1798 f (03) 5963 1722 e office@parentingideas.com.au

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