



School Times

Lower Plenty Primary School

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OUR SCHOOL VALUES

CARE • HONESTY • ACHIEVEMENT • RESPECT • RESPONSIBILITY • FUN

Greetings, Parents, Students and Friends!

It is with great pleasure that I am writing my first piece of correspondence as Acting Principal of Lower Plenty Primary School. If you are receiving this, it means that you have been very clever and logged in to Compass and activated your account. On Monday, I will be forwarding home a paper copy of this introductory Newsletter to all families.

I would just like to take a little of your time to introduce myself to you. My name is Bruce Kearney. I am currently the substantive Principal of Reservoir West Primary School and am in my fourteenth year of that role.

On the Wednesday of the last week of Term 2, I received a phone call from Chris Thompson, the Executive Officer of the North Eastern Metropolitan Region Schools, asking if I would be interested in taking on the Acting Principal position at LPPS while the school undertook the selection process to appoint a new Principal for your school. I had undertaken a similar role last year at Findon Primary School in Mill Park and found it to be an extremely valuable learning experience and most enjoyable. I was keen to take on the LPPS role, but felt a bit guilty about stepping out of Reservoir West for a significant portion of the year so soon after doing the same thing last year. To ease my conscience, I emailed all of the families of the school, explaining the situation and asked for feedback to assist me in my decision. Over ninety-five percent of the responses, either in person or via email were extremely supportive and encouraged me to take on the challenge. Maybe they were just trying to get rid of me! However, I did have to promise that I'd be back by the start of Term 4 at the latest.

Reservoir West Primary School is a large school of just under 600 students. It has twenty-five classes and a large leadership team, many of whom do not have large teaching responsibilities and the Assistant Principal has had many occasions in the past when she has undertaken the Acting Principal role. I am confident that the school will be able to continue to flourish in my absence. When I think about it like that, I am probably the least indispensable person in the organisation!

I have had a few connections with Lower Plenty Primary School over the years. Mark Turnbull is a close friend of mine and he and I have played together in a band since the late eighties. We have actually performed at a couple of the Car Boot Sales at LPPS over the years. I also know the Mifsud family as they are a former Reservoir West family. We had Brielle and Keira at the school and Tyler was scheduled to commence the following year in Foundation (Prep) when they bought a business in Lower Plenty and moved to LPPS. Small world.

A little more about me:

- I turned 60 last year in December but the kids keep me young
- I live in Greensborough (no Ring Road for a term – YAY!)
- Married to Gill for 34 years
- Two children – Christopher 29 and Sophie 27. Unfortunately Sophie still lives at home but we are hoping her boyfriend is going to pop the question very soon
- Likes: music, golf, gardening, VB, painting (the house, not landscapes), happy students
- Dislikes: yapping dogs (my street in particular), rap music, three-putting and bunkers, craft beer, unhappy students

Unfortunately, with the late notification of the Acting role at Lower Plenty, a great deal of planning had been put into place for this term at Reservoir West. It was essential for me to participate in a fair bit of it. When discussing the possibility of the role at Lower Plenty with Chris Thompson, I explained that I had a number of commitments to Reservoir West that I was very keen to honour. He agreed to that compromise. The times that I will not be at Lower Plenty this term are set out below.

- The morning of Tuesday 17th July
Conducting a tour for a second Assistant Principal position at Reservoir West
- The afternoon of Thursday 19th July
Conducting the Bastow Institute Inspire Program for young leaders in the Yarra/Darebin Schools Network
- All day Tuesday 24th and Wednesday 25th July
Attending Year 5 Camp at Ballarat for two days/nights - back Thursday morning
- The afternoon of Thursday 9th August
Inspire Program
- All day Tuesday 14th and Wednesday 15th August
Attending residential conference for School Improvement Partnership on Improving Middle Leaders - back Thursday morning
- All day Thursday 30th August
Victorian Principals' Association - Continuous Reporting (morning)
Inspire Program (afternoon)
- The afternoon of Tuesday 18th September
Inspire Program

It does seem like I will be missing quite a bit, but over the ten-week term, it equates to seven out of fifty days that I will have commitments elsewhere.

However, at this point, it is not known exactly how long the Principal selection process will take. The general consensus is about eight weeks from beginning to end, but as Term 3 is of ten weeks in duration, it makes sense to me to have the new Principal commence at the beginning of Term 4. That is something that I will discuss with the LPPS School Council at our first meeting. I am flexible in my arrangements, so maybe having the whole term to complete the process, including a two-week appeal period, would be the cleanest outcome for the school, the new Principal and me.

I am very excited about taking up the challenge of managing Lower Plenty Primary School this term. I have a few goals that I will endeavour to achieve during the term. The one I place as my highest priority is to learn all of the students' names. I like to boast that I know the name of every student at Reservoir West and most of their parents' too. To do this at LPPS, I need to spend time in the classrooms and in the yard. I will be able to watch the teachers at work and observe how they interact with their students. I have asked to be scheduled on Yard Duty before and after school every day so that I can meet the students and their parents as they arrive at school and farewell them when they leave in the afternoon.

Another early goal for me is to ensure that all parents activate their Compass accounts. Reservoir West has used Compass for the last three years and it has been an absolutely fantastic school management system. SkoolBag is going to be phased out in the next few weeks and all such activities as listed below are going to be completed through Compass.



Compass is the school management system for parents and staff. The Parent Portal allows parents to access up-to-date and meaningful information about our school and their child's progress. The many features include:

- Enter reasons/approve absences
- Access a News Feed
- View the School Calendar
- Update your email address and mobile number
- Download your child's Semester reports
- Book Conferences (Parent/Teacher/Student Interviews)
- Provide consent and pay for excursions and other school activities

Please ensure that you activate your Compass account as soon as possible by doing the following:

Account set-up

- Use a browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Chrome, Safari – it is easier on a desktop or notebook) to go to <https://lowerplentyvic.compass.education>
- Use your provided temporary login details
- Change your password
- Click 'Update Details'
- Then grab your phone or tablet and see below:

Mobile devices

- Download the Compass School Manager app from the App Store on all of your mobile devices (phone, tablet)
- Go to Settings > Compass > Allow Notifications

One of the many features of Compass is the module that will automatically send out an SMS to parents if a child is absent from school and no explanation has been provided by parents. The Department of Education and Training has mandated that same-day notification of unexplained student absences is to take place from the start of Term 3, 2018. As we are only just starting up Compass, a week's grace will be given before this commences. If a student is absent from school and the school has received no explanation, a SMS (text message) will be automatically send at 10.30 am to the parent's mobile phone advising them of the fact and asking for approval. Each text message is at a cost to the school so, obviously, we will be trying to minimise this as much as possible. Please make sure that you inform the school of any student absences before school commences each day. You can also authorise any future appointments or holidays.

Further information on how to manage student absences on Compass will be sent home this week. Please see the Fact Sheet for Parents/Carers regarding unexplained absences later in this Newsletter.

Anyway, enough of the technical stuff. I'm a people person. I'm really looking forward to my time at Lower Plenty Primary School. I think I can make a difference in my short time there and

support the school and the community in this time of change. Please make a point of introducing yourself and your family to me. I'll be in the yard nearly every morning and afternoon, hoping that I get a few people coming up to say 'Hi'. My door is always open in the Principal's Office for a chat, but I won't often be found there. I'll be in the classrooms with the kids and teachers.

Cheers,



Bruce Kearney
Acting Principal

Same-day notification of unexplained student absences

Fact sheet for Parents/Carers

If your child is sick or absent, you are required to notify their school as soon as possible on the day of absence using one of the following methods:

1. Online: log the absence directly using Compass
2. Telephone: the school office and let the staff know your child's name, class, date of absences and reason.
3. Email: the school and provide the staff with your child's name, class, date of absences and reason (you can do this through Compass)

Notifying the school of your child's absence either prior to, or on the day that they will be away, helps ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and will fulfil your legal responsibility.

Why do I need to notify the school if my child is absent?

Schools need to know when and why a child is absent and you need to know if your child isn't at school. From the end of Term 2 2018, all Victorian government schools are required to contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same day of an unexplained student absence. If your child is absent on a particular day and you have not contacted the school to explain why, the absence will be marked as unexplained.

This system also promotes daily school attendance. Going to school every day is the single-most important part of your child's education, they learn new things every day – missing school puts them behind.

What is your responsibility?

You are legally required to ensure your child attends school every day or you must provide an explanation for their absence. You should let the school know in advance of any upcoming absences or let them know in the morning if your child won't be at school. In order for schools to implement the same day notification requirement, it's essential that you provide the school with your most up-to-date contact details.

Generally one notification will be sent per family. Should there be circumstances that require both parents and carers to be notified, please contact the school to make the necessary arrangements.