

The John Berne School

Hope Always

Issue 3 2021 Newsletter

Dear parents, carers, and friends of Berne



As I write I am mindful the end of Term 3 is fast approaching. This term has been one of tremendous uncertainty and change due to the Covid-19 pandemic. An entire term of remote learning has meant our way of life has changed dramatically, our community has been physically separated for a long period of time and the co-curricular activities so integral to our program have had to be cancelled. With this in mind I would like to thank our students, staff and families for their patience and understanding in these challenging times and commend you all for your willingness to comply with and adapt to the everchanging Public Health Orders.

In considering my message for this newsletter, I reflected on the following piece I recently read in regards to the Pandemic:

"Everyone is applauding everyone but our children. These little heroes have stayed indoors more than they've ever known. Their world's been turned upside down and they don't know why. All these rules they've never known. Not being able to see family or give hugs. Vaccinations, sports and activities, play dates and school cancelled. Adults talking about others being unwell, news reporting death after death. Our poor children's minds must be racing. Every day their resilient bodies get up and carry on despite all that's going on. So here's to our little heroes, today, tomorrow, forever."

What a powerful message and what food for thought during this time of endless new protocols and advice. It would be easy for our students to disengage during this time of uncertainty but I am very proud to say this has not happened. Instead, it has been wonderful to see our students have shown exceptional commitment in these challenging times and drawn upon their resilience and courage to persevere. It is through courage and resilience we show our faith in God our saviour and our trust that we can tackle anything that comes our way if we have God in our heart. In much the same way as Jesus had the courage to die on the cross for us, Mary had the resilience to carry on when her son was crucified and Marcellin Champagnat had the commitment to love and nurture the students entrusted into his care, our students' faith in themselves and God has prevailed. What an amazing group of young people! It would be remiss not to also mention our parents and staff who have no doubt felt overwhelmed and worried during this time but have also persevered and shown faith in our wonderful students and themselves.

Continued next page

Upcoming Events

18 September – 3 October

School holidays

4 October

Public holiday

5 October

Staff day

6 October

School resumes Term 4

22 October

John Berne Day Mass

25 October

Parent / staff meetings

1 November

All Saints' Day

2 November

All Souls' Day

26 November

Year 10 Graduation

3 December

Last day Term 4 Yrs 7,8,9

6 – 10 December

Staff week

28 + 31 January

Staff days

1 February

School resumes Term 1

As we continue to navigate these uncertain times, I ask you to consider the many other positives to come from remote learning and lockdown. In a recent study it was found students were reported to experience personal growth, increased independence and further development of hobbies and interests. They have also learnt to adapt to change and seized the opportunity to express their creativity during lockdown. In response to this, our Berne staff have also adapted and developed new and creative ways to engage students this term as you will see in this newsletter.

I am eagerly awaiting a return to school for all our students and staff. I pray they will continue to show their inner strength and ability by engaging with staff even though their world has been turned upside down. I will keep you all in my prayers and look forward to the return to school mid next term.

Hope Always

James Le Huray
Principal

Berne Staff and Community News

Congratulations Gemma



We are delighted to share the news with you that School Counsellor, Gemma, has welcomed her new son. Congratulations from everyone at Berne. We send Gemma and family our love and best wishes and look forward to you visiting us soon.

Welcome New Staff



We extend a very warm welcome to Tara Auchterlonie to the Berne staff. Tara is a counsellor and art therapist who has experience working with a non-government organisation providing assessments of young people's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing as well as their sensory needs, to guide the development of individual therapeutic plans.

Tara enjoys working collaboratively with staff, families and other service providers. She has highly developed interpersonal and communication skills. We welcome Tara to the Berne community.

Maternity Leave

We would like to take this opportunity to wish Phoebe all the very best as she finishes at the end of this term to begin 12 months maternity leave. The staff, students and all in the Berne community are very happy for Phoebe and Ben as they prepare to welcome their first child. We will all miss Phoebe's commitment, passion and love of work and wish her well as she embarks on this new chapter in her life.



We also welcome Andrea Mihura-Figueroa who will be joining our staff next term. Andrea is a dedicated psychologist, teacher and Mindfulness trainer who is collaborative and enjoys engaging with groups and individuals. Andrea has strong planning and organisational skills and is well equipped to understand the individual.

Andrea is passionate about working with young people and wants to contribute to their holistic development as individuals. We welcome Andrea to the Berne community.

Will Devenish Practicum



This term we welcomed back Will Devenish to complete his final four weeks teaching practicum with Stage 4. Will had worked with great dedication and enthusiasm in Term 2 and we were fortunate he chose to return to us in Term 3.

Whilst completing a teaching practicum by remote learning during lockdown is not ideal, he worked tirelessly to support our students and their parents with daily phone calls, zoom sessions and assigning daily work across four subject areas. We really appreciated Will's great commitment to our students and his wonderful support of the staff.

Thank you Supi

Teacher's Aide Appreciation Week was celebrated 31 August to 3 September and we take the opportunity to say a big thank you to Supi Taufa'ao who has been part of our Berne community since 2019. Supi is currently in his final year studying Social Work at University and works with us as a Teachers' Aide with both Stage 4 and Stage 5 groups.

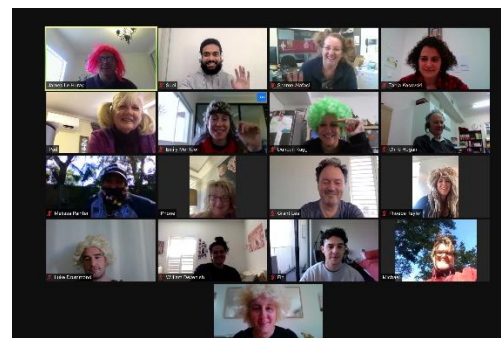
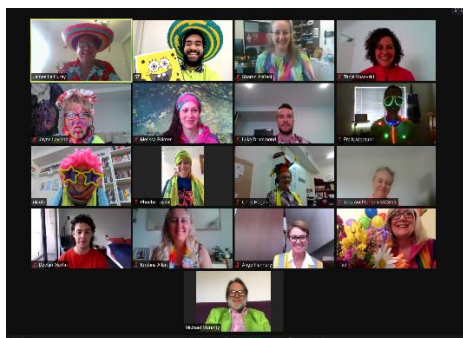
He also assists Br Chris with Literacy Support and is our in-house, highly skills and creative social media and graphic design expert. You can follow Supi's fabulous posts on both The John Berne School's Instagram and Facebook.

Thank you so much Supi for all that you do at Berne. Your wonderful smile and enthusiasm are contagious. We are very grateful and fortunate to have you as part of the Berne team.



Staff Meetings

The whole Berne staff continue to meet during lockdown every week, by Zoom of course. For a bit of fun, we've been having a different theme each time we meet – 'Bad Hair Day', 'Messiest Room' and 'Most Colourful' to name a few.



Meanwhile, back at school



With no students coming into school most days this term and staff working from home, a big shout out to Sharon who has soldiered on in the office all this time, answering the phone, managing emails and texts and coordinating connections between parents and staff. We have heard from parents what an important role she has played in supporting them during this difficult time. Thank you!

Our thanks to Br Chris too who also has been coming to school every day doing a great job maintaining the school grounds. He has been keeping very busy mowing the lawns, pruning, weeding and keeping the vegetable garden in good shape ready for our return.

School Executives James, Tanja and Nicole have also been coming into the school, alternating days so to not be there at the same time, to work with any students on site.

LOL (Love of Learning)

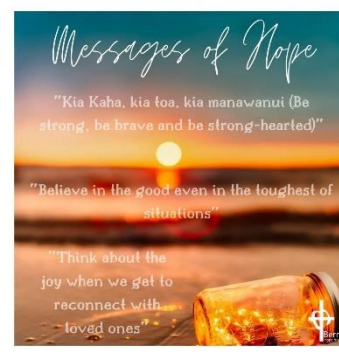
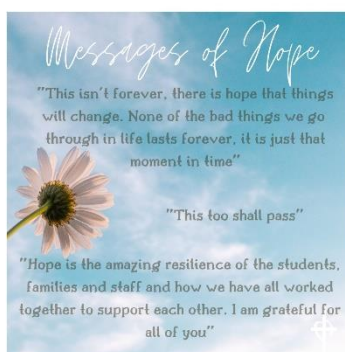


Last year, with camps, outings and activities not possible, we introduced LOL (Love of Learning) Days at school. During lockdown this term teachers have conducted fun-filled weekly LOL workshops online with students and staff joining in sharing skills such as pizza making, crepe making,

gardening and stove-top Science.

Teachers had the opportunity to share a little about their interest and students to learn new skills with equipment they have at home.

Messages of Hope from Berne staff and students



Season of Creation



Celebrating the Season of Creation which this year began with the World Day of Prayer for Creation on 1st September until 4th October, the feast of St Francis of Assisi. This prayer is taken from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.
O God of the poor,
help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so
precious in your eyes.
Bring healing to our lives,
that we may protect the world and not prey on it,
that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.
Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain
at the expense of the poor and the earth.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united
with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.
We thank you for being with us each day.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Love of Learning: Gardening Edition

To celebrate the arrival of Spring, staff and students had a zoom session on gardening and seed propagation. Tanja's workshop included tips how to use additives such as Perlite and Vermiculite to ensure successful propagation.

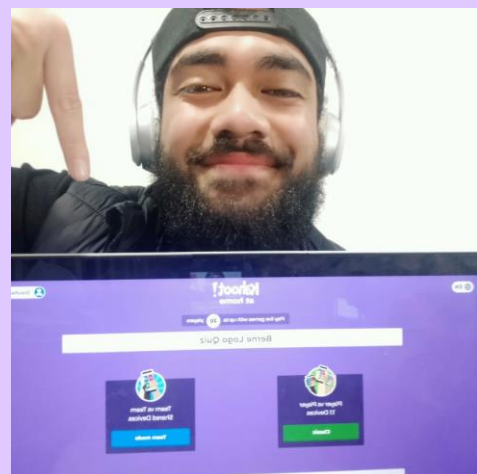
We are looking forward to planting some of the seedlings in the school garden once they are big enough. Hopefully there will be an abundance of salad greens and tomatoes to share around in the summer.



Berne Zoom Trivia



Hosted by our fabulous quiz master, Supi, Berne Zoom Trivia is a weekly activity that provides fun and enjoyment to help keep students motivated about school when their school work becomes challenging. This activity is facilitated online via Zoom. We get to explore some of the students' interests with them deciding the themes for the trivia questions. It's a wonderful opportunity for our students to socialise with staff and each other in a positive and safe environment. This activity is wellbeing focussed, giving our students a 'brain-break' all while exploring new interests.



Stage 4 Remote Learning



Overall, Stage 4 settled into remote learning well. Some students engage each day with their work and have a solid routine, however other students have really struggled with not being at school and have found remote learning to be a real challenge.

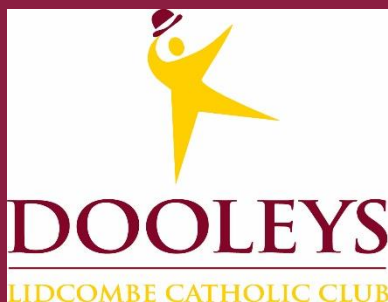
One of our students, whose attendance at school prior to lockdown was minimal and when he did manage to attend school he completed very little work, initially avoided the daily phone calls from his teacher during lockdown and was doing no work at all. He was sleeping all day, every day.

Thankfully, his teacher persevered with maintaining connection with daily phone calls and finally, by Week 5 he started to engage and began insisting his teacher call him every day at 2pm to help him with his work. So this has become their daily routine and the teacher calls at 2pm and talks him through each piece of work and he actually completes it. Great progress and a very good news story!

We also run an 11am Zoom sessions each day with Stage 4 students and staff. We begin each Zoom meeting by going over the work for the day which is aligned with the normal school timetable. We always end each Zoom with something fun like a game or a quiz. The Zoom sessions have been a vital life line for some students who really need help with their work and need the interaction with their peers. It's great to see their faces every day!

– Nicole Arathoon, Stage 4 and Curriculum Coordinator

Thank you



Our sincere thanks to Dooleys Lidcombe Catholic Club for their grants totalling \$7,700 in support of our Breakfast Program and to buy five laptop computers for our students. Dooleys has been one of our major sponsors for many years and with Clubs doing it tough with COVID restrictions, we are especially grateful for their generous donation at this time.

Welcome

We would like to welcome Dean, a new Year 9 student in Stage 5 who has recently enrolled at Berne. His classmates and teachers look forward to meeting him in person when lockdown is over.

Stage 5 Remote Learning

My challenge as a teacher in lockdown is nurturing learning, growth and giving students a reason to smile.

Like all teachers, I am reworking learning units to suit online and distance education: creating tailored online activities every day to meet the immediate needs of my students; searching the web for suitable resources to integrate into students' learning tasks; amending existing school resources to make them visually appealing on-screen – more guided and less wordy. But more important than all this is maintaining, or re-establishing, the caring connection from our school community to the students at this difficult time.



Students are struggling to see and respond to the relevance of school. As the lockdown continues, their emotional and social needs are increasingly

bypassed. Home can feel like a pressure cooker. School is just another burden, especially when it is harder to focus, and when enthusiasm is hard to rouse.

So, I enjoy making contact with the students, helping them with any “bumps in the road” that might prevent them from learning, having a quick chat, and reminding them that they belong to a school that cares.

– Grant Lee, Stage 5 Teacher

Teaching online has definitely been a learning experience. I have been thoroughly impressed with my students' work ethic throughout this process.

Online learning, unlike the name suggests, involves more than simply completing work on the internet. A large proportion of it involves connecting over the phone and through Zoom calls.

Every day I phone students and parents and I take so much enjoyment from this. During these phone calls we often talk about both student and parent wellbeing as well as the day's class work. Oftentimes conversations will extend beyond this to the latest COVID-19 news, recipe suggestions and the best shows and movies to watch on TV.



These calls are a regular reminder that what we are going through is a shared experience and that our John Berne School community is still present and strong.

Working with students one-on-one over the phone has allowed me to continue to help students in their learning and I have found success in building confidence and improvement in students' literacy and numeracy ability.

Despite the days feeling ever so groundhog-esque, we have been able to find new things to keep students present and engaged. Zoom classes have created a great opportunity for our class to complete class work, but also importantly to interact with each other. A prime example of this our reading of a play where we all dressed up in character. It has been wonderful to see students enjoy and take satisfaction in their work, creative projects and having regular exercise.

My students have become champions of modern renaissance individuals. They have been cooking new cuisines, waging war on home workouts, attempting artistic masterpieces, scribing short stories, penning powerful poems, writing raps and composing original music pieces as well as acquiring ne aquarium abilities.

This lockdown period and process of online learning has given me a new perspective and an even greater appreciation for my students. I am astounded at their resilience and ability to adapt to the current circumstances. On occasions students have expressed their frustration and lack of inspiration to complete work and it has been important to remind them that it is okay to feel like that sometimes, especially considering our current circumstances.

– Declan Martin, Stage 5 Teacher

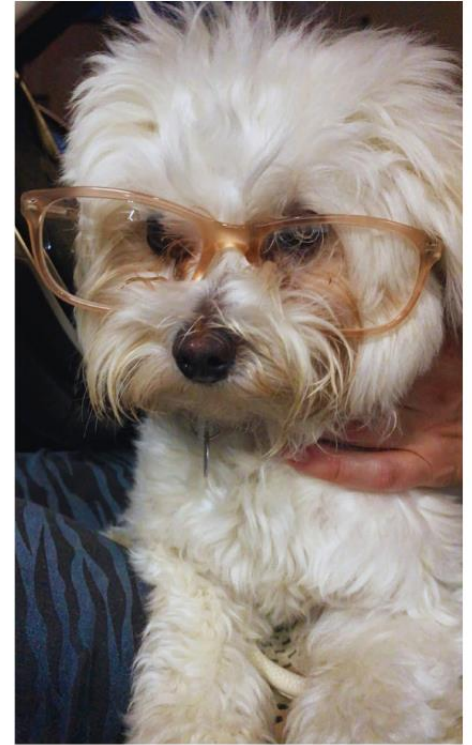


Berne Pets



The benefits of pet ownership for health and wellbeing are well-documented, providing companionship, reducing anxiety and lifting mood. In lockdown our pets are helping to keep us on track, helping us tackle our feelings of isolation and anxiety. One staff member said, "I've found that when everything is so crazy out there, it's really nice having my dog around to keep me company and remind me that life goes on. I need to feed her and take her for a walk every day. She keeps me happy." Another staff member's family has adopted a 'pet' pigeon. "Peggy Pigeon flew into our yard and was walking around our feet and has never left! She sleeps on the top of the laundry door and sits on the roof during the day, flies around then returns in the afternoon. We are busting for a dog but for now, it is a pet pigeon. Haha. She must be the reincarnation of a loved one watching over us or something like that ..."

We asked students, parents and staff in the Berne community to share with us photos of their beloved pets. They give us joy!







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