Dear Parents,

As mentioned in last week’s newsletter there have been a number of changes in Department of Education and Communities (DEC) Attendance procedures for 2015. I have outlined some of the key changes for you and also I have included some general reminders.

Positive Student Attendance

- Attendance is vital to a child’s success with their learning and your child needs your support.
- The Education Act of 1990 requests regular attendance at school (or requires that students are home schooled through the Board of Studies).
- Arriving at school on time & not leaving early is also vitally important. Please read the attached information about this. Not only does it impact often on your child’s confidence & self esteem but it can also disrupt the classroom. Punctuality is very important and it is a lifelong skill and an important aspect of an adult working environment.

Change to Holidays Procedures

- Holidays will no longer be exempted & will continue to be considered for approval by the principal. If approval is provided it will be recorded as leave, if not it will be recorded as unjustified. Families are actively encouraged to travel during the school holidays rather than school term time (again please refer to the attachment).
- New consolidated forms have been developed and are available from the office. Documentation also needs to be provided and clear, specific reasons provided please for consideration.

Phone Intervention Program

- Research shows that one of the most effective ways of reducing the level of unexplained absence is ‘same day calling’. The Phone Intervention Program (PIPS) has been implemented by Picton Public School for a number of years now, to supports our families. This is a very intensive and time consuming program & the office staff do a wonderful job. Please don’t be offended when you are asked for the specific reason for absence – this is a DEC requirement, eg a child was sick with vomiting (not just sick). However, we appreciate you initiating the call to inform us of your child’s absence and taking the responsibility for your child. The only phone number to record absences on our answering machine is 02 4677 1497. Parents are also encouraged to provide a medical certificate for frequent, explained absences due to illness; a medical certificate should state ‘the child is unfit for school’.
Student Attendance 2015

Please note that the DEC strongly recommends that the attendance in private lessons such as dance or music should normally be outside school hours. Approval to attend private lessons during school hours should only be granted in exceptional circumstances (such as sitting examinations). Medical and dental appointments are also encouraged not to be in school time.

Students with Unsatisfactory Attendance Patterns

If school based interventions are unsuccessful a referral may be made to the Home School Liaison Officer Program to help support the student’s attendance or a compulsory school attendance conference may take place. If this proves unsuccessful then prosecution may occur. (Penalty for offences carry a maximum fine of $11,000. Please refer to attached DEC information for further clarification).

We are all working together in partnership to develop the strongest foundation for successful learning for now and the future. Lifelong learning is paramount for all of our students. If your require further clarification please don’t hesitate to contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

Lyn Fraser
Principal