

Media Release

21 May 2020

Back to school

It's time to dust off lunchboxes, wash uniforms, and reclaim those dining tables for their original purpose – school's almost back.

Christina Susanto is among thousands of parents across Victoria who will breathe a collective sigh of relief – tinged with some sadness – as her son returns to school on Tuesday.

Matthew, aged 11, is among 60 students who attend VMCH's specialist school in Balwyn, St Paul's College. Christina said she was hopeful two transition days back at school will help Matthew – who has Autism Spectrum Disorder – cope with the change from learning at home.

"I'm quite relieved he's going back. Virtual learning has been good but he's a bit shy on video so it will be good for him to return. He's been missing his friends and the teachers especially because they're very caring."

Principal Tim Hemphill said the school is doing all it can to make the transition as smooth as possible for returning children.

"St Paul's has already commenced a staged return from remote and flexible learning for 17 students since the start of term two, and before school starts on May 26, another 43 students will have the opportunity to attend for a minimum of one full day."

Tim said although students may be excited about returning, their emotional needs should also be nurtured.

"We need to remember they've been disconnected from face-to-face learning for many weeks. We should encourage students to express how they feel about going back to school and validating their concerns. They need to know that feeling a bit worried is very normal. St Paul's is a happy place to be and we're all confident that once our students are back with their teachers and their friends, they'll quickly settle back in."

The safety of students, staff and families is also paramount, Tim said, with temperature checks, physical distancing, changed drop-off and pick-up arrangements and hygiene measures, like hand sanitiser, all in place to help protect against the spread of COVID-19.

Tim said overall, parents were "incredibly relieved" with the return of school. Christina agreed, though admitted she would miss Matthew.

"I've enjoyed having him around but it's good for him to go back. One of his favourite classes is art – he loves to be hands on – so he'll enjoy that."

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic not for profit organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren't just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we've been around for over a century, we're always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

