Dear Parents,

Welcome back to the new school year. I hope everyone has had a great holiday and enjoyed the time with their families.

We have had a really great start to the 2015 school year. The children have all settled into their new classes so smoothly and already I am seeing great signs of positive student learning and exciting things being planned for this year.

I would also like to welcome our new families into our school. I am really pleased that many of you have introduced yourselves to me and already letting me know how happy their children are to be here at Silverton. A special welcome to our new Foundation children who have settled into school so well. We were really impressed with how their first day of school went. I believe a number of things contributed to this including how well, you as parents prepared your child for the start of school, the staggered start, the organisation by the teachers and certainly the cooler weather had a major impact as well.

I want to update you on a number of things before the first newsletter goes out to you next week.

STAFFING

With our increased enrolments and a number of staff taking leave or moving overseas we have employed a number of new teachers to join our school this year. I would like to introduce you to our new teachers for 2015. Ms. McAllister Fl, Ms. Greenham 1-2R, Ms. Fitness 1-2V, Ms. Smyth 3-4N, Ms. Dal Ben 3-4O, Ms. White 5-6S, Mr. Thompson P.E and Ms. Kavanaugh. Welcome back also to our school to Mrs Wallis 5-6V and Ms Hanley 5-6L after leave in 2014. We also have joining us Mr Godwin who will be teaching in our Instrumental Music program this year. I am encouraged already with our new staff in what they bring to our school and how quickly they have adopted our school’s culture of making the children’s learning and wellbeing paramount to what we are about.

I also wanted to let you know that Ms. Tyme will be absent from our school for the first few weeks due to ill health but will be rejoining us as soon as possible. In the interim Ms. Williams will be staying with us until she leaves on her trip to Canada.
SCHOOL COUNCIL
Nominations opened on Monday 2nd February for the 2015 School Council with closing date being Monday 9th February. If you have an interest on being a member of School Council please complete the nomination form that can be obtained from the school office.

NEW FACILITIES
You may have noticed that the Department has located a new portable classroom at the front of our school. Due to our increased enrolments this year we created a new Learning Centre. We are really excited how this has turned out and already we have received many favourable comments from those who have seen it. The children tell me on a regular basis how much they love it. As a result we will be relocating the Library Resource Centre to the new portable. This should be completed in the next few weeks.

PARENT CONTRIBUTIONS 2015
Thank you to all of those families who have paid the 2015 Parent Contributions. Your support is really appreciated and will go a long way to ensuring our programs are fully resourced and the children have all the necessary equipment they will need to support their learning this year. School Council expects that all families will make the Parent Contribution, and this is a friendly reminder that if you have forgotten about it could you please make the payment ASAP. If for any reason you are having difficulty finding the money to pay, we are open to making arrangements so this can be paid. Please contact the office to discuss this further.

As you may know the Government has decided to “no longer” provide targeted Education Maintenance Allowances to families, instead allocate some funds to the neediest schools who qualify, from 2015. This does not affect any other payment you may be receiving such as Schoolkids Bonus, which is provided directly to eligible parents to assist with education costs. School Council has determined that the very limited amount of funding that Silverton received under this revised allocation would be best spent on subsidising the many programs provided by our school in order to support our children. To this effect you will notice no increase to our Parent Contribution or Instrumental Music program this year. We will also be providing some incursions at no costs to our families and subsidising other programs including swimming. This will more than use the limited amount of funding we received under this area. All schools, who received some funding, are determining how best to support their families. Each school has determined a different approach depending on the amount of funding they received.

ELECTIVE PROGRAMS
At Silverton we provide numerous elective programs, over and above our normal curriculum programs, for children to participate in, if they are interested, at no costs or at a very minimal cost. These programs include Instrumental Music, Singing and Dance lessons for children in grade 3 to 6. Involvement in State Schools Spectacular, Robotics and Chess Including external competitions and Bands both junior and senior, including an end of year tour. Expressions of interest in these programs are sent home for families at various times throughout the year to consider. Already the Instrumental Music, Dance and Singing programs are filling up very quickly. In order to participate in these elective programs it is required that the Parent Contributions for 2015 be paid in order for your child to be eligible to participate.

One to One Laptop Program
Last year we introduced a One to One Laptop program in our Grade 3 and 4 Learning Centre. This was very well received and we were really pleased how well the children’s learning progressed with this initiative. We know from sound research the benefits of a good 1-to-1 program are many, and it is no surprise that there is currently an international move towards providing students with laptops. At Silverton PS we constantly strives to ensure its students are provided with the best educational opportunities that will keep
them alongside their counterparts in Australia and overseas. Enhancing learning in the classroom and beyond, learning that is initiated, independent, engaging and satisfying are but a few of the benefits of a 1-to-1 program. Giving families access to the latest technology in the home is a side benefit of such a program. This year we have extended this initiative into our Grade 5 and 6 Learning Centre.

The children who have returned their agreement forms and made the initial payments have now received their laptops. How excited the children were when they opened up the boxes and saw what they were getting. As a group they also spent time discussing how best to look after them and how to use them. I know a number of families, who haven’t returned forms yet or made the first payment, are still very keen to take up one of our many options for the one to one programs in grade 3 to 6. In order for your child to receive a device you need to complete the agreement and make the first payment. Forms can be obtained or payment of money can be made at the school office. I would suggest you don’t delay this decision too long.

“MEET and GREET” PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS
Shortly you will be invited to a friendly meet your child’s teacher meeting. This is an excellent opportunity to meet your child’s teacher and to discuss any concerns or issues you may have. At this stage it is not a discussion on your child’s progress but a chance to get to know you, your child and your child’s teacher a bit more. This is a valuable meeting and I encourage you to make the time to attend.

UNIFORMS
At Silvertown we are really pleased at how well our families embrace the wearing of school uniforms. A reminder also that in Terms 1 and 4 children must wear a hat when playing outside during breaks and during Physical Education and Sports lesson. This supports our school policy of being a Sun Smart School. I would also like to remind you to please ensure all of your child/ren’s clothing is clearly named in order to return them if misplaced. Last year we collected a lot of clothing, with no names on them, that remained unclaimed.

ASSEMBLIES
A reminder that our Monday morning assembly begins at 8.50am on the “green” area. This is an important time in our school and we hope that all children can be in attendance.

COMMUNICATION
At Silvertown we keep you informed of what is happening in our school including updates to calendars etc in a variety of ways. Our Web site of www.silvertown-ps.vic.edu.au TiqBiz app (download app), Email, Newsletter and Bulletin are updated regularly so please try to follow us whenever possible.

Finally I look forward to great year at Silvertown and I am really excited about the wonderful activities, programs and events that have been planned for our children.

I look forward to meeting you all at some time during the year.

Best wishes.