

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT



Mr Michael Foster
Acting Principal

I'm delighted to be writing this report for the fifth edition of our school newsletter as we move into Guling or orchid season and celebrate a belated NAIDOC week at Ashwood High School.

Since joining as principal, I have been so deeply impressed by the depth of commitment to our school values that are lived every day. I wrote to the community at the start of the term to provide a little information about me and how dedicated I am to making sure that our school continues to build on the wonderful foundations that we have. I have valued the thoughtful and candid feedback that I have had from every student, colleague and community member thus far and I am open to hearing from everyone as we seek to move into our next strategic plan.

My sincere gratitude goes to **Ms Meg McLellan** and the rest of the leadership team who have guided our school through the last three terms with such skill and compassion. We are lucky to have had their wisdom and experience to draw upon.

The school review process highlighted so many of our strengths and we should be rightly proud of the breadth of great results that the reviewers commented on. The team also made some suggestions on what the next areas might be to focus on over the coming four years. Reviewing our senior pathways planning and refreshing our leadership team were two areas for attention that we will be looking at over the coming 12 months. School Council will be involved in providing insight into this from the perspective of parents and carers and we are open to feedback as to how we best meet the requirements of Victorian Curriculum 2.0.

This newsletter highlights some of the outstanding achievements of our students who really live our school values in some extraordinary ways.

We continue to work with the Victorian School Building Authority to progress works around Building B and a newly covered outdoor learning area. I hope that we will go to tender later this year. Thanks to the work of so many in our school community over the years to progress this project.

I have been struck by the rich and rigorous school experience we have at Ashwood High School and was lucky enough to attend an evening of debating earlier this term. All of our teams demonstrated a considered and erudite approach to some complex unseen topics with two teams progressing through to the next stages of the competition against some stiff opposition.

We have had some great successes on the sports field too with the very talented **Callan Wallace** (Year 12) being selected to represent Australia at hockey. This is a truly remarkable honour. Callan, the whole Ashwood School Community wishes you the very best of luck.

Our school community should be very proud of the variety of ways to live our values. It has been great to hear of real growth and challenges on camps, curious minds enjoying subject expos, and outstanding achievements recognised at the recent principal's awards.

Spotlight on Student Leadership within Mini-School Structure & Community Activities



Ms Andrea Van Olst
Senior School Leadership Coordinator



Ms Ruby Cameron
Middle School Leadership Coordinator

Magic Moments Youth Leadership and Business Summit

Three students, **Bella Boteff** (Year 9), **Amelia Sim** (Year 10) and **Riannah Simos** (Year 12), were successful in their applications to receive a scholarship to attend the Magic Moments Youth Leadership and Business Summit. The Summit was held in the most recent school holidays.

My name is Bella, and I was one of the lucky students to get selected for the Magic Moments Youth Business and Leadership Summit, or YBLS as we called it on camp. After submitting my application and making it through the interview process, I was fortunate enough to spend the last five days of the school holidays exploring five key aspects of leadership and business: purpose, connection, entrepreneurship, bravery and legacy.

I can honestly say that that it's one of the best things I've ever done. Not only did I meet so many truly fantastic people, YBLS really allowed me to dive into who I am as a leader, who I want to become and how to get there. If I had to pick a favourite moment at camp (trust me, there are a lot, it was very hard to narrow it down) I'd have to say it was the people, specifically my group, the All Stars. Whether we were doing an activity, listening to a lecture or even just sitting down for lunch, I found that I was constantly smiling, trying to smother laughter or enjoying conversations that ranged from the complexities of being a teenager to how that one camp counsellor pronounces 'never' like 'nevaa'. I highly recommend looking into YBLS, even if it doesn't seem like something you'd usually be interested in, I make no exaggeration when I say it will change your life. If you have any questions, please feel free to come and ask me, I am more than happy to talk more on my wonderful experience at this camp.

Bella Boteff (Year 9)

Student Representative Council (SRC) - School Improvement

This year, the Student Representative Council (SRC) have been working hard to drive improvements within our school community. Last term, they took to the school yard to seek student feedback on where our school could be enhanced. They have since taken the time to sort through all the feedback, and will begin making plans to implement the changes that are in the best interest of the student body.

Ride to School

Throughout the last 2 weeks of Term 2, the SRC hosted the Ride to School initiative, encouraging students to brave the cold and take the greener approach of riding their bikes to school. Many students from all year levels and Houses participated, each receiving a raffle ticket for their effort which contributed to House points and a prize for the lucky winners. Congratulations to Paterson House for their outstanding win and to Lachlan Hart (Year 9), Owen Morris (Year 9) and Dhruv Kashetti (Year 9) who won canteen vouchers from the raffle! Additionally, this initiative helped promote the inclusion of Ashwood High School's expanded bike racks, with new bike racks for students situated outside of Building B. We hope students felt encouraged to ride their bikes and enjoyed the two weeks. We look forward to our next Ride to School Initiative next year!

Bethany Oh and Alexander Forgione (Year 11)

Interact Fundraising Update – Big Freeze!

This year's Big Freeze for FightMND was a fantastic day that brought the whole school community together in support of an important cause. The atmosphere was amazing, as students surrounded the amphitheatre to watch their fellow peers and teachers get dunked. The appearance of a guest speaker from the FightMND Foundation made the day even more special, delivering a meaningful speech about Neale Daniher and the foundation itself.

Prior to and throughout the day, students were encouraged to purchase merchandise, including beanies and socks. Additionally, the sausage sizzle held at lunchtime proved hugely popular, as hundreds of students purchased sausages and drinks.



COMMUNITY

of Learning and Trust



Through gold coin donations, fundraising, and merchandise sales, we raised an outstanding \$8,648.86 to support vital research into motor neurone disease. This achievement would not have been possible without the enthusiasm and generosity of our school community and families. We thank our Middle School Captains, **Tom Perillo-Phipps** (Year 9), **Mikaela Thomaidis** (Year 9), **Bella Boteff** (Year 9) and **Owen Morris** (Year 9), and our Senior School Captains, **Gilly McCann** (Year 12), **Ava Morrin** (Year 12), **Laura Gosbell** (Year 12) and **Josh Wilson**

Green (Year 8), **Estelle Moloney** (Year 8), **Michael Di Camillo** (Year 10), **Ankit Prasanth** (Year 7), **Bella Poynter-Raby** (Year 11) and **Lilly Scott** (Year 9), who all braved the icy water.

Undoubtedly, the most anticipated moment of the day was watching our very own teachers, **Mr Hayward**, **Ms Hoiberg**, **Dr Verity**, **Mrs Ketsakidis** and **Mr O'Toole** get dunked. The mystery surrounding which teachers would take on the challenge kept students intrigued in the lead-up to the event, making each fundraising milestone even more exciting as everyone waited to see who would be dunked.

The Interact Club would like to thank our entire school community for making this year's Big Freeze such an incredible success. The day was not only a memorable event for everyone involved but also a meaningful opportunity to raise awareness of MND and contribute to the ongoing search for better treatments and, ultimately, a cure.

Lily Wingate and Liyah February (Year 11)

Year 8 Camp

20 - 22 July 2026



Ms Shenae Dixon
Melba House Coordinator



Ms Ebony Hoiberg
Cowan House Coordinator



Ms Georgie Searle
Paterson House Assistant
Coordinator



Our Year 8 students recently enjoyed three memorable days at Roses Gap Recreation Centre, embracing new challenges, strengthening friendships and developing valuable skills beyond the classroom.

Students participated in a range of outdoor adventure activities including abseiling, canoeing, the giant swing, archery, raft building, low ropes and the Beehive Falls bushwalk. These experiences encouraged students to step outside their comfort zones while developing resilience, teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills.

We were particularly impressed by the support students showed towards one another throughout camp. Whether encouraging a classmate through a challenging activity, celebrating achievements or working together as a team, students consistently demonstrated kindness, respect and our school values.

Outside of activity sessions, students enjoyed opportunities to connect through meals, free time and evening activities including trivia, a movie night and our daily 'Superstar of the Day' celebrations, where we recognised students who demonstrated outstanding effort, leadership and care for others.

A special thank you to the dedicated staff who supported students throughout the camp experience. Their enthusiasm, care and commitment ensured students felt safe, encouraged and able to challenge themselves while creating lasting memories.

COMMUNITY

of Learning and Trust

Located almost 4 hours away, within the Grampians, the Year 8s went to Roses Gap Camp for 3 days of fun, action-packed activities, and rather chaotic bus rides. One of our favourite activities was abseiling which was a fun but scary experience. We climbed a 20-meter mountain and then abseiled on the way down.

Another activity that we enjoyed included the giant swing, which was terrifying, but such a great experience! Going to the top, we had no regrets and looked back on it as a highlight of the trip.

During the night, we had activities such as a movie, and a trivia game, involving awesome categories such as general knowledge, and guess the teacher by the images. Being able to chill and be with friends during this part of the camp made the experience even more memorable.

Overall, Roses Gap Camp was an event that we will look back on forever, and we are super grateful for the fun memories we made together.

Mila Lazarevski and Mackenzie Garreau (Year 8)



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Aspire to be Your Personal Best

English Learning Area Report



Ms Khwaish Madan
Debating and Public Speaking
Coordinator

Every Story Starts with Reading

Stories are at the heart of everything we do in English. Whether students are losing themselves in a novel, uncovering a family member's life story, creating imagined worlds or performing Shakespeare, this term has been a celebration of reading, writing and storytelling.

Our weekly library sessions continue to be a highlight across the middle school. More students are finding books they genuinely enjoy, sticking with a series, recommending titles to friends and discovering that reading can be something to look forward to, not just something they're asked to do. Just as importantly, students are developing the patience to stay with a story—slowing down, getting immersed in a book and experiencing the satisfaction of finishing it.



Beyond improving literacy, reading builds curiosity. It exposes students to different perspectives, encourages empathy, challenges their thinking and develops the focus needed to engage with increasingly complex ideas. These are skills that will serve students well long after they leave school. It's been wonderful to see so many students embracing reading this year, and we hope that many of them leave Ashwood with a lifelong love of books. We appreciate the support of families in fostering this passion too.

Bringing Stories to Life

While reading has been a major focus, students have also spent the term creating stories of their own and discovering the stories of others.

Year 10 – Every Person Has a Story

Sometimes the best stories aren't found in books. Sometimes they're sitting across the dinner table.

As part of their crafting texts unit, Year 10 students interviewed someone significant in their lives before turning those conversations into human interest stories and feature articles. They uncovered stories of migration, resilience, unexpected career changes and defining moments that may never have been shared otherwise.

The project reminded students that remarkable stories don't always belong to famous people. More often, they're found in our own families and communities.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Aspire to be Your Personal Best

Stories That Endure

It wouldn't be Semester 2 in the English Learning Area without a little bit of Shakespeare.

After spending the last semester discovering new stories, creating stories of their own and uncovering stories from the people around them, students across Years 9–11 have turned their attention to some of the most enduring stories ever written.

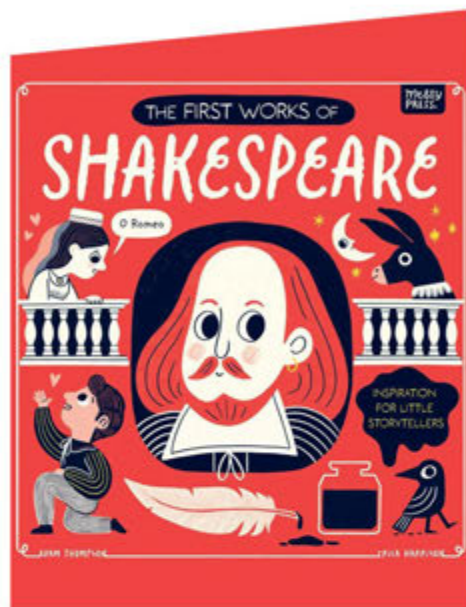
Year 9 students are exploring *Romeo and Juliet*, examining the destructive consequences of family conflict, impulsive decisions and young love.

Year 10 students are enjoying the wit and humour of *Much Ado About Nothing*, discovering that Shakespeare's clever wordplay, misunderstandings and larger-than-life characters continue to entertain audiences more than four hundred years later.

Year 11 students are delving into *Macbeth*, unpacking the tension between ambition and morality, and examining how the pursuit of power can corrupt even the noblest of individuals.

A Year of Stories

Every story has the power to teach us something, whether it's about ourselves, the people around us or the world we live in. This year, our students have immersed themselves in books, crafted narratives, uncovered family histories and brought timeless texts to life. We are incredibly proud of the curiosity, creativity and enthusiasm they continue to bring to English, and we hope these experiences inspire a lifelong appreciation for reading, writing and storytelling.



International Student Program



Mrs Yonghong Williams
International Student Program
Manager

Victorian Global Learning Awards 2025

The annual Victorian Global Learning Awards celebrate the outstanding achievements of international students and recognise schools for their excellence in global learning and engagement. The awards program is open to both government and independent schools across Victoria.

Ashwood High School is proud to celebrate the achievements of two of our international students, who received Commendation Awards this year. **Kexin Liu** (Year 10) was recognised with the Commendation Award for Student Leadership, while **Zihan Shen** (Year 12) received the Commendation Award for Community Engagement.



MIDDLE HIGH SCHOOL (YEARS 9-10) Student Leadership Commendation Award

Kexin Liu

ASHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Kexin Liu has shown affection, stable leadership at her school, enabled by a desire to bring people together and help others feel confident and included. As middle school international student captain, she has taken on roles that require courage and care. She served as master of ceremonies for major cultural celebrations, including Lunar New Year and Mid-Autumn Festival events, speaking with confidence and warmth to unite international and local students.

Kexin played a key role in Harmony Day, delivering a speech on unity and helping introduce a dumpling-making workshop that brought students, families and staff together in a hands-on experience. She has also represented her school at open-day events and interviews, sharing her story and welcoming families. Moreover, Kexin supports peers at the homework club, encourages international students to join sports and activities, and leads by example with high academic achievement. Her leadership is grounded in service, initiative and consistency.



"I encourage international students to participate in extra-curricular programs and get involved in student leadership roles by inviting them to join interschool sport with me. I also extend this supportive role to academics."

YEAR 11 Community Engagement Commendation Award

Zihan Shen

ASHWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Zihan Shen brings energy, kindness and creativity to every part of school and community life. He plays the drums in the school band, performing at major events like assemblies, the school musical and cultural celebrations. He also led international students in traditional Chinese music, helping classmates connect across cultures and feel included.

Zihan supports new international students as a buddy, guiding them online and in person, sharing study tips, all homework club and offering encouragement during mathematics assessments. He even went to build friendships, leading peers to join basketball competitions and helping students connect naturally.

Out of school hours, he volunteers at Clean Up Australia Day, school fundraisers and the Warrburra Town Play Centre, where his reliability earned him a part-time role. With consistent effort and creativity, Zihan has strengthened school culture, helped students feel welcome and shown how one student can make a lasting, positive difference in his community.



"I have helped create a community where international students feel safe and supported. Seeing my peers grow in confidence and happiness has been one of the most rewarding outcomes of my time at Ashwood High School."

The awards ceremony was hosted by the International Education and Partnerships Division, Department of Education Victoria, and held on Friday 22 May 2026, at the RACV City Club, Melbourne. The awards were presented by Ms Nina Taylor MP, Parliamentary Secretary for Education, who congratulated the recipients and recognised their outstanding contributions to their school communities and their commitment to global learning.

Congratulations to Kexin Liu and Zihan Shen on this well-deserved recognition. Their outstanding achievements embody Ashwood High School's CHIOR values, particularly leadership, community engagement, and academic excellence. Their success is a testament to their dedication and hard work and is a source of pride for our entire school community.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to all Ashwood High School staff for their ongoing support of our international students. We would like to thank Ms Meg McLellan, Ms Sarah Reynolds, Ms Caroline Servardei, Mr John Sheenan, and Ms Andrea Van Olst for their invaluable support and encouragement throughout the students' award applications. Their guidance and commitment played a vital role in helping our students achieve this well-deserved recognition.

OPTIMISM

Reflection and Resilience

Spotlight on Middle School



Ms Edwina Nolan

Middle School Student Engagement,
Wellbeing and Transitions Leader

There is a real sense of energy across Middle School as we begin Term 3 and look ahead to another busy and rewarding semester. With a new term comes the opportunity for students to reconnect, reset and look forward to the experiences that make school about more than just what happens in the classroom.

A key focus for Middle School this semester is continuing to provide students with opportunities to develop the skills they need to thrive both at school and beyond. As part of this work, selected Years 7 and 8 students will participate in the Time to Shine Program, delivered in partnership with Monash University. The program will support students to develop confidence, strengthen social and emotional skills and build positive relationships with others.

We are also excited to introduce a new partnership with Monash Men's Shed, providing a practical and engaging program for boys in Years 7 - 9. Through hands on experiences, students will have the opportunity to develop valuable life skills, learn practical skills and build confidence in a supportive environment.

Our commitment to helping students understand and appreciate the diversity within our school community will also be reflected in our Tutor Group program this term. Students will participate in a series of new House based workshops exploring topics such as cultural diversity, neurodiversity, inclusion, belonging and wellbeing. These sessions will provide opportunities for students to listen, learn and reflect, while developing a deeper understanding of the different experiences and perspectives that exist within our community.

For our Year 9 students, Term 3 marks an important point in beginning to think more seriously about the future. This term, all students will participate in their Morrisby Interviews, giving them the opportunity to explore their strengths, interests, aptitudes and potential future pathways. The insights gained through this process will help students better understand themselves and begin considering the subjects and educational opportunities that may align with their individual interests and aspirations.

Our Year 8 students will also begin looking towards their transition into Year 9. The Year 8 Subject Selection Evening will be held on Thursday 20 August 2026, providing students and families with the information they need to make informed decisions about the subjects and learning opportunities available next year.

We look forward to a Term 3 filled with growth, connection, curiosity and plenty of opportunities for students to challenge themselves and discover what they are capable of. We encourage all students to get involved, embrace new experiences and make the most of everything this term has to offer.



OPTIMISM

Reflection and Resilience

Spotlight on Senior School



Mr Tom O'Toole

Senior School Student Engagement,
Wellbeing and Pathways Leader

Ashwood High School continues to strive for community development giving our students the best possible opportunity. This was evident at the senior school subject selection information evening held for Years 9 and 10 students on Tuesday 26 May 2026. The evening involved presentations from all the learning area leaders about the VCE and VCE-VM subjects on offer for 2027. A huge thank you must go out to all the Learning Area Coordinators for their presentations about their subjects in 2027 organisation and the success of the informative evening.

The Ashwood High School Course Counselling process has begun for students heading into 2027 VCE subjects, we believe in providing our students with a well-rounded education that caters to their individual interests, strengths, and aspirations. The Year 10 into Year 11 and Year 11 into 12 Course counselling process is a crucial milestone in helping students make informed decisions about their academic pathways for the years ahead. The Course counselling process has been an opportunity for students to reflect upon their academic progress, explore different subject options, and receive guidance from our experienced staff. During this process, we assisted the students in selecting subjects that align with their passions, abilities, and future goals while also ensuring they meet the necessary prerequisites for further pathways beyond school.

The Year 10 students have also been working on understanding more about how pathways programs in our community work which included an excursion to the Carlton Football Club where key members of the club discussed and presented how the club works from a business model and how the players are educated including job opportunities in the future. The presentation included details of Pathways programs offered within the CFC to students who have finished the VCE program at Year 12. The Carlton Football Club Institute and RMIT University offer programs for students who are interested in business and sports management courses.

Our Senior School students have shown evidence through working together to improve all aspects of learning at Ashwood High School. To foster this development, we will have our VCE students, who undertake Units 3 and 4 subjects, attend school during parts of the Term 3 school holiday break. These students will be involved in the VCE practice exam program led by our Senior School Student Outcomes Leader, **Mr Dom Holloway**. This will give our students the best possible practice for the upcoming VCE Units 3 and 4 exams commencing at the end of October.

I wish all members of the Ashwood High School community a safe and happy break over the holidays, and I look forward to having a great Term 3.



Year 9 Subject Selection



Ms Niesha Moorad
*Director of Data and School
Programming*

With subject selections for our current Years 10-12 students now complete, attention turns to an exciting milestone for our Year 8 students as they prepare to choose their Year 9 electives for 2027.

Year 9 provides students with their first opportunity to personalise their learning through a wide range of elective subjects that complement the core curriculum. This is an important step in helping students explore their interests, develop new skills and experience the breadth of learning opportunities available. The Year 9 elective program for 2027 has been refreshed with an exciting range of new elective offerings alongside many of the favourites that have been highly regarded by students in previous years. This aligns with our values of innovation and high expectations.

To support students and families in making informed decisions, **an online Subject Information Evening will be held on Thursday 20 August 2026 at 5:15pm**. This session will provide an overview of the Year 9 curriculum, explain the subject selection process, and showcase the different elective subjects available. Following the Subject Information Evening, families are encouraged to explore the 2027 Middle School Curriculum Handbook, which will be available after the session, to guide discussions about the subjects that best align with each student's interests and aspirations.

Students will complete their selections through Edval, with individual WebCodes sent directly to their school email accounts on **Friday 21 August 2026 at 9:00am**. It is important that students submit their preferences by **Wednesday 2 September 2026 at 9:00am** to maximise opportunities during the timetabling process.

With student preference data entered into the system, work begins behind the scenes as the school commences the complex task of building our 2027 timetable. Every effort is made to accommodate students' preferences while balancing various timetabling constraints. Our goal is to create a timetable that provides students with the opportunities to pursue the subjects and pathways that best support their learning and future goals whilst taking the opportunity to explore subjects which may be entirely novel.



RESPECT

for Teachers, Students, School and Community

Assistant Principals' Report



Ms Meg McLellan
Middle School Assistant Principal



Ms Sarah Reynolds
Senior School Assistant Principal

The theme of this edition of the newsletter are our mini school identities. At the heart of Ashwood High School's ethos and culture are two guiding statements that support our shared vision of Vision Inspired Action: our Middle School motto, 'Laying Strong Foundations' and our Senior School motto, 'Forging Successful Futures'. These statements reflect our commitment to supporting students at every stage of their learning journey and provide a clear sense of purpose for our work.

Across both mini schools, our teachers and education support staff work collaboratively to ensure that rigorous, engaging and meaningful learning takes place for every student, in every classroom, every day. This commitment is underpinned by our CHOIR values—Community, High Expectations, Optimism, Innovation and Respect—which continue to shape the culture of our school and the experiences of our students.

We are proud of the outstanding work undertaken by our mini-school teams and acknowledge the leadership of Ms Edwina Nolan and Mr Tom O'Toole, Leading Teachers responsible for the Middle School and Senior School respectively. Together with their dedicated and highly capable teams, they play a pivotal role in fostering a strong sense of belonging, maintaining high expectations, and ensuring our vision and values are brought to life each day.

Upgrade to Facilities

We are pleased to announce that several upgrades to our school facilities were completed over the school holidays.

Outdoor Furniture

Thanks to the generous fundraising efforts of our Parents and Friends Network (PFN), we have also completed a significant upgrade to our outdoor learning and recreation spaces.

New outdoor furniture has been installed to create a versatile environment that serves multiple purposes throughout the school day. The contemporary furnishings provide flexible outdoor classroom spaces for learning, while also offering café-style seating where students can gather to eat, socialise and enjoy the shaded surroundings during recess and lunchtime.

We are sincerely grateful to our Parents and Friends Network for their ongoing support and commitment to enhancing the educational experience and wellbeing of our students. Their generosity continues to make a meaningful and lasting contribution to our school community.

Bike Racks

Also, many thanks to the fundraising efforts of our Student Representative Council (SRC), new bicycle racks have been installed on our school grounds. This initiative responds to the growing number of students who choose to ride to school and ensures they have access to secure and convenient bicycle parking as our student population continues to grow. The new bicycle racks are centrally located outside Building B, adjacent to the Amphitheatre, providing easy access for students while making effective use of a central location on campus. We thank our SRC for their initiative and commitment to improving our school for the benefit of the wider student community.



KEY DATES

Tuesday 11 August

Year 10 Mock Interviews

Friday 14 August

Year 10 Careers Day

17 - 21 August

Year 9 Morrisby Interviews

Friday 21 August

EMR Year 8 Interschool Badminton

25 & 28 August

Student-Led Conferences

Wednesday 26 August

Parent Information Evening – French Study Tour 2026

Thursday 27 August

Year 8 Interschool Sport

Tuesday 1 September

Parent Information Evening – French Study Tour 2027

Friday 4 September

Year 7 Interschool Sport

Thursday 10 September

R U OK? Day

Thursday 10 September

Mullum Division Athletics Carnival

10 - 11 September

House Performing Arts Festival

14 - 18 September

Year 10 Work Experience

Friday 18 September

End of Term 3