Casterton Secondary College

School Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2026

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

On behalf of staff, I welcome returning and new students and families to our 2026 school community.
Students have had a smooth start to the year, in an environment where staff support them to focus on being powerful learners and to learn the behaviours needed to be successful, well-rounded citizens.

High expectations for every student promotes intellectual engagement and self-awareness. At CSC, we have high expectations of our students to be confident learners, to continuously improve and to reach their goals in a supportive and optimistic environment where students are taught at their point-of-learning. We ensure students are provided with learning that supports their progress, where students can be accelerated.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Year 12 students of 2025 who successfully gained entry to their preferred course at University, TAFE, were offered apprenticeships or entered the workforce.

The success of our students is a reflection of their focus and strength, their teachers' knowledge and commitment and of the support provided by their parents/carers and the school.

Special congratulations to the 2025 VCE DUX: Olivia Nolte and the **2025 VM DUX:** Reghan Parsons. Their achievements reflect the school values of Respect, Accountability and Persistence. I also acknowledge the support of Olivia's parents Joann and Mark, and Reghan's parents Janine and Tom. We often forget the important ways parents/carers prepare their children for the rigours of secondary school; particularly Year 12.

Following a rigorous process which included a written application, interview, and staff input I am pleased to announce the **2026 Casterton Secondary College:**
Captains: Abby Black and Kirby Vise
Vice Captains: Caitlyn Gorman and Myles Black.

Positive Relationships
Over the years, Casterton Secondary College has embraced the principles of Restorative Justice to promote a culture of mutual respect through the building of positive relationships by ***accepting responsibility for decisions made, establishing trust with and between people and repairing any harm that may have been done.***

The **"CSC Whole School Positive Behaviour Approach"**:

- complements the school's Restorative Justice principles
- creates and maintains a positive and safe learning environment
- reinforces our school culture
- maximises individual academic and social growth.

When students consistently demonstrate CSC expected behaviours, staff will note their success with positive reinforcement. The key component of our acknowledgement system is positive acknowledgement.

How It Works:

- Staff recommend a "Positive Acknowledgement Card" to the relevant Sub-School Leader (SSL) for a student who has ***consistently*** demonstrated positive actions and behaviours that reflect the school's values and expected behaviours.
- On approval from the relevant SSL, staff create a whole-school positive post on XUNO.
- The staff member gives a "Positive Acknowledgement Card" to the student and the SSL places another card in the relevant reward's box (one for each year level).
- The "Positive Acknowledgement Card" award is presented to a recipient from each year level at an end-of-term assembly (The recipient is drawn from the names in each box and have the opportunity to select a reward from the menu).

Examples Of "Acknowledgement Card" Menu Options

- Canteen voucher
- Gift cards
- Donation to charity of choice
- iTunes voucher
- Voucher to community businesses

It is vital that we all contribute to a respectful and inclusive culture that is underpinned by positive relationships and mutual respect.

Council Elections

Nominations for School Council are now open. Please refer to the information attached.
Information and nomination forms can be accessed on the school website or from the front office.

All parents/carers and students are encouraged to consider nominating to be a parent/carer or student representative on our School Council.

I thank all members of council, who have been passionate advocates of Casterton Secondary College within the school, local and broader communities.

From the 2026 school year, all Victorian school council members—excluding VIT-registered teachers and students—must hold a valid Working with Children Clearance (WWCC), either volunteer or employee type, when nominating for a role. Current members require a check upon re-election or co-option, aligning with Vic Gov and Vic Gov requirements.

Effective communication reduces misunderstanding, provides a link between home and school to relay information and relies on all members of the school community to play their part in the process.
If you have any concerns regarding the welfare of your children, please contact the appropriate person. Below is a list of reasons for contacting the school and the **person to speak** to in the corresponding column.

Concern	Who to contact
Absences	For absences where there is no exemption in place, a parent/carer must provide an explanation on each occasion to the school. Parents/carers should notify Casterton Secondary College of absences by: • Contacting the front office by phone, XUNO message or email. • Sending a note to the front office with the student on his/her return to school • Note of explanation in Student Planner If a student is absent on a particular day and the school has not been previously notified by a parent/carer, or the absence is otherwise unexplained, Casterton Secondary College will notify parents by phone or XUNO message. Casterton Secondary College will attempt to contact parents/carers as soon as practicable on the same day of the unexplained absence, allowing time for the parent to respond.

CSC Late Arrival/Early Leaver Process: • All students late to school will present a signed note (or the school has been notified), from their parent/carer to the front office on arrival before they sign in and before home group. • All students who need to leave school early will present a signed note, from their parent/carer to the front office on arrival before home group.	
Bullying/harassment, Well-being issues etc.	Years 7-9 Leader - Carina Barton Years 10-12 Leader – Chelsea Carter
Finance, school fees etc.	Business Manager - Renee Jukes
Careers advice	Relevant sub-school leader- Carina Barton or Chelsea Carter Careers Coordinator – Delma Fidler
Curriculum	Assistant Principal: Director of Teaching and Learning – Jo McKenzie
Enrolments	Assistant Principal: John Webb
Homework and subject	Subject teacher Relevant sub-school leader- Carina Barton or Chelsea Carter
Staff and general	Principal (Meridith Walker)

Please refer to XUNO, website, newsletter and Facebook for information about what is happening at the college.

The mantra "***high expectations – no excuses***" underpins the school's ethos, where teachers have high expectations of themselves and every student; and students have high expectations of themselves, to do their best at all times. Maintaining high standards and "living" the school values of ***Respect, Accountability and Persistence*** are integral elements of our mantra.
As soon as our students step onto school grounds they will be wearing the correct uniform, and students will contribute to an orderly, respectful and focussed approach to learning.
Classrooms will reflect rigour, quality teaching and learning, respect and engagement.

We have a strong partnership with parents/carers; one that shares a responsibility to ensure every student at Casterton Secondary College is receiving a high quality education in a safe and secure environment. Staff provide support and guidance during school hours whilst parents/carers provide support and guidance beyond school hours. We value this partnership.

Casterton Secondary College: is a successful school, a school that uses a cycle of continuous improvement to ensure the success of every student; a school that uses innovative methods to engage students with their learning, in an applied way; a school where the curriculum is linked to career pathways.

A school that I'm proud of and every member of the school community is proud of.

Meridith

Bushfire At-Risk Register - Schools

School procedures for the bushfire season

Fire danger ratings and warnings are used in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life.

Schools and children's services listed on the DET Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will be closed when a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined in their Bureau of Meteorology district. ***Our school has been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.***

Where possible, we will provide parents with up to four days' notice of a potential Code Red day closure by letter or phone and on our sign on the front lawn of the school. A Code Red day will be determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner no later than 1.00 pm the day before the potential closure. Once we are advised of the confirmation of the Code Red day we will provide you with advice before the end of the school day.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. It is also important to note that:

- No staff will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Code Red day.
- School camps will be cancelled if a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp is located.
- As a bus co-ordinating school all bus routes will be cancelled.
- Depending on which Bureau of Meteorology district is impacted bus route cancellations may affect our school.

On these Code Red days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – **on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the CFA advise that when Code Red days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Code Red day.

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have updated and completed our Emergency Management Plan.

EVERY DAY COUNTS

Secondary School Attendance

Going to school every day is the single most important part of your child's education. Students learn new things are school every day – missing school puts them behind.

Why it's important

We all want our students to get a great education, and the building blocks for a great education begin with students coming to school each and every day.

Students develop good habits by going to school every day – habits that are necessary to succeed after school, whether in the workplace or in further study.

Missing school can have a big impact on students academically and socially. It can affect their test results, including VCE, and, just as importantly, it can affect their relationships with other students, and lead to social isolation.

There is no safe number of days for missing school – each day a student misses puts them behind, and can affect their educational outcomes.

Each missed day is associated with falling behind in subject topics and assessment tasks, and lead to fewer subject choices and may impact on achievement in years 11 and 12.

Getting in early

It's never too late to improve attendance – going to school more often can lead to better outcomes. Even at Year 9, when attendance rates for all students are lowest, going to school more often can make a big difference. Every day counts.

Schools are there to help – if you're having attendance issues with your child, speak to your school about ways to address those issues.

What we can do

The main reasons for absence are:

Sickness – There are always times when students need to miss school, such as when they're ill. It's vital that they're only away on the days they are genuinely sick, and setting good sleep patterns, eating well and exercising regularly can make a big difference.

"**Day off**" – Think twice before letting your child have a "day off" as they could fall behind their classmates – every day counts.

Truancy – This is when students choose not to go to school without their parent's permission. There can be many reasons for truancy; the best way to address this is for schools and parents to work together.

While all absences are bad for academic performance, unexcused absences are a much stronger indicator of lower reading and maths achievement.

If for any reason your child must miss school, there are things you can do with your school to ensure they don't fall behind:

- Speak with your home room teacher or year level coordinator and find out what work your child needs to do to keep up.
- Develop an absence learning plan with your teacher and ensure your child completes the plan.

Remember, every day counts. If your child must miss school, speak with your home room teacher or year level coordinator as early as possible.

Openly communicating with your child's school about all absences is a good way to prevent attendance issues being escalated to a School Attendance Officer. A School Attendance Officer is a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Regional Director who has authority to follow up attendance issues. Attendance issues that are escalated can lead to an Infringement Notice.

If you're having attendance issues with your child, please let your year level coordinator, principal or other relevant staff member know so you can work together to get your child to school every day.

Further information

For more information and resources to help address attendance issues, visit:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/behaviour/Pages/studentattendance.aspx

Child Safe Standards

At Casterton Secondary College we are committed to the Care, Safety and Welfare of our Students.

As such, we have a number of policies, all of which have been approved by our School Council, which demonstrate our commitment to the Care, Safety and Welfare of Students.

These policies are on our website in the Policy section under the heading Child Safe Standards

I recommend that you periodically visit our website to read these and other policies and information about your college.

J. Webb

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Every Victorian child should have access to the world of learning opportunities that exist beyond the classroom. The Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund helps ensure that no student will miss out on the opportunity to join their classmates for important, educational and fun activities. It is part of making Victoria the Education State and the Government's commitment to breaking the link between a student's financial circumstances and their outcomes.

CAMPS, SPORTS and EXCURSIONS FUND (CSEF)

School camps provide children with inspiring experiences in the great outdoors. Excursions encourage a deeper understanding of how the world works while sports teach teamwork, discipline and leadership. All are a part of a healthy curriculum.

CSEF is provided by the Victorian Government to assist eligible families to cover the costs of school excursions, camps and sporting activities.

If you hold a valid means-tested concession card or support an out of home care student you may be eligible for CSEF. A special consideration category also exists for asylum seeker and refugee families. The allowance is paid directly to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your child.

The annual CSEF amount per student is $400 for all school students.

HOW TO APPLY

New applicants should contact the school office to obtain a CSEF application form or download from the website below.

If you applied for CSEF at your child's school last year, you do not need to complete an application form this year unless there has been a change in your family circumstances.

You only need to complete an application form if any of the following changes have occurred:

- **new student enrolments**: your child has started or changed schools this year.
- **changed family circumstances**: such as a change of custody, change of name, concession card number, or new siblings commencing this year.

Check with the school office if you are unsure.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about CSEF visit:
https://www.vic.gov.au/camps-sports-and-excursions-fund

ATTENDANCE

Every Day Counts – Students MUST strive for 100% attendance

1 or 2 days absent a week doesn't seem much but ……

He / She is only missing just ….	That equals….	Which is ….	and over 13 years of schooling that's ….	Which means the best your child can perform is …
1 day per fortnight	20 days per year	4 weeks per year	Nearly **1.5 years**	Equal to finishing in **year 11**
1 day per week	40 days per year	8 weeks per year	Over **2.5 years**	Equal to finishing in **year 10**
2 days per week	80 days per year	16 weeks per year	Over **5 years**	Equal to finishing in **year 7**
3 days per week	120 days per year	24 weeks per year	Nearly **8 years**	Equal to finishing at **year 4**

Being On Time to School and Class Counts

Just a little bit late doesn't seem much but ……

He / She is only missing just ….	That equals….	Which is ….	and over 13 years of schooling that's ….
10 minutes per day	50 minutes per week	Nearly 1.5 weeks per year	Nearly **Half a year**
20 minutes per day	1 hour 40 minutes per week	Over 2.5 weeks per year	Nearly **1 year**
Half an hour per day	Half a day per week	4 weeks per year	Nearly **1 and a half years**
I hour per day	1 day per week	8 weeks per year	Over **2 and a half years**

Did you know your child's best learning time is the start of the school day?

That's when every minute counts the most!!

John Webb

INDUCTION DAY FOR OUR YEAR 7 STUDENTS

Carina Barton

Last Thursday we began our new formal "camp" with the year seven cohort. We completed activities around the theme of inclusiveness that involved asking questions about each student's interests, experiences, personality, and future goals to build connections between the students and staff. We created an 'interest list' for each student that was then used as a shopping guide the next day in Mount Gambier, so that each student received a 'gift' from another student that reflected their interests and hobbies. Other activities that we engaged in on the Friday at Mt Gambier included 10pin bowling, with Mrs Fidler's record still standing after many years of year 7 camps, as well as visiting Valley Lake and having a very enjoyable pizza lunch. Our students were well behaved, and it was a pleasure to spend time getting to know them better. Thanks to Mrs Fidler for all her organisation and participation with the 'camp' 2026 has started very well for the new students and we look forward to this positive start continuing.

Natalie, Angel, Theo, Sylvia, Hudson, Ruby, Toby, Imogen

CSC HOUSE SWIMMING SPORTS

Carina Barton

Wannon Win Swimming Carnival

The battle between Wannon House and Glenelg House continued in the pool on the 30th of January. The competition was fierce all day with swimmers from both houses going stroke for stroke and ensuring the title went down to the wire.

The weather was great with fine and sunny conditions that stayed around the high twenties- low thirties for most of the event, only really heating up towards the end of the day. The sunscreen 'police' were out in force with students asked to 'slip, slop, slap' every 30 mins or so. We also put up extra shades this year so that students could avoid the direct sun.

Of course, the best way to stay cool was to jump in the pool and we had a bombing competition and a 'free swim' during the lunch break.

Many students competed not only in their own age group but also swam in higher age groups to help gain valuable house points. It was fantastic to see this great house spirit and commitment from these students, Well Done!

Thanks to all the staff and students (especially house captains) for their help during the day and to the parents/ carers and grandparents that came along to cheer students on during the day.

Once again, the help of the Casterton swim club, the Nolte family and the Casterton pool staff all contributed to helping make our first sporting carnival of the year successful.

Our age group champions were Sylvia Richardson and Alby Lane, Ruby James and Riley Gorman, Ruby Forbes and George Robbins, Ylana Grigg and Ayden Nolte, Rachel Forbes and Nate Longhurst, Kirby Vise and Myles Black.

The next level of swimming will be the Glenelg District carnival in Hamilton (19th February) and our next sporting event at CSC will be athletics trials (16th February) followed by our **House Athletics sports at the end of February (27th).**

Yr 12-Annual dress-up

Amelia, Makayla

Brydie, Nicole

Myles, Kirby,

Caitlyn

FRONT

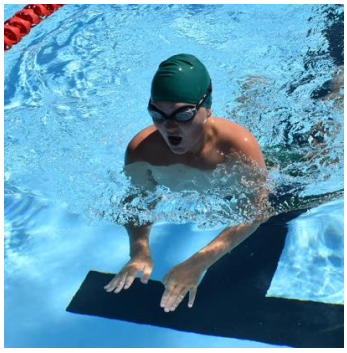
Eli, Abby

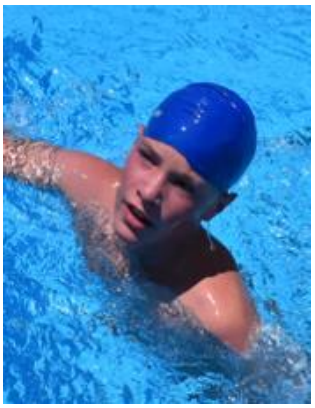
AGE GROUP CHAMPIONS

Myles, Rachel, Ylana, Sylvie, Ayden, Riley, Alby, Kirby, Ruby, Nate, George, Ruby

VICTORS-WANNON HOUSE CAPTAINS

Georgia, Riley, Maxx, Renee





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YEAR 9- HYDROPONICS

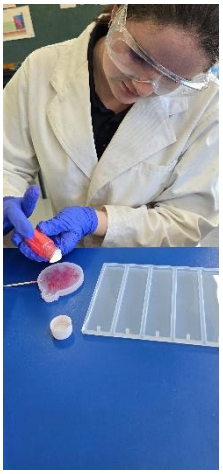
Gillian Russell

The Year 9 students have commenced a unit on Hydroponics. Seedlings have been planted and each week the students will monitor the water quality of the hydroponic system. Students will measure the temperature, pH and EC (Electrical Conductivity) of the water each week. Students will be learning how the pH level of the water impacts on the availability of nutrients to the plants.

ACTIVITIES at the end of 2025

Ann Hirst

One of the activities provided in the lead up to Christmas holidays was using resin to make Christmas baubles, bookmarks & coasters. The finished products turned out beautifully and we have no doubt some will have found their way into gifts for family members.



AYDEN NOLTE-SHINES AT SA STATE TITLES

SA STATE TITLES

Ayden Nolte attended SA State Titles held over four days from 4th to 8th February.

Ayden shot consistently over the four days, placing 2nd in B Grade State Title Championship scoring 413 out of a possible 475.

Ayden was awarded the SA Junior Champion Shooter with a score of 365 out of a possible 400. This excellent score has earned him a place in the South Australian Team to compete in the Nationals at Wagga in April.

One of the events Ayden competed in was the 50 Point Score Championship, in which he shot 143 out of 150, earning him 2nd in this event.

Adding to Ayden's successful weekend he was awarded the SACTA Junior Scholarship in recognition of being an outstanding Junior, this scholarship is to support his continued shooting career.

Harry Simson also attended the State Titles and had an outstanding weekend being selected as 1st emergency for the South Australian Team, scoring 329 out of 400.

On behalf of the school community, we would like to congratulate Ayden and Harry on their achievements at the SA State Championship titles. This is an exceptional accomplishment and a testament to their dedication, hard work, and talent.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER-DEBBIE WILLIAMS

Welcome back and all the best for 2026. I am the Mental Health Practitioner at Casterton SC. My days of work at Casterton are Monday and Wednesday.

Some of the issues I can assist students with include anxiety/worries, depression/sadness, stress, grief and loss, relationships with others, self-esteem, trauma, other mental health issues and general counselling. Referrals are made through the Year Level Co-ordinators, Carina Barton (Yrs. 7-9) and Chelsea Carter (Yrs. 10-12).

Debbie Williams

COMMUNITY