

**29 January 2026**

Dear Parents and Carers,

A warm welcome to the 2026 school year at Iona College. Today, we were delighted to welcome 338 new Year 7 students, 24 new students across Years 8–12, and 31 new staff members to our community. It is wonderful to see our College continue to grow and thrive as we begin another year together. To all new Iona families, we warmly welcome you to our community.



The new staff and students were welcomed to Iona with a smoking ceremony at the end of the day. This is a beautiful ceremony and an important part of the ritual of beginning the Iona College journey.



Tomorrow, we look forward to welcoming the rest of Iona for their first day of school.

To begin the year, Iona College staff joined with staff from the Catholic secondary schools across Geelong to celebrate Mass together at Sacred Heart College in Newtown. We were welcomed to country with a beautiful story about Wadawurrung Country that reminded us that everything we do, our work, family, food, breath and life, is connected to Country and we must walk with respect and care. This flowed through in the theme of the Mass: 'Footprints of faith, walking as one,' when Fr. Jim Clarke invited us to reflect on why we work in education and to remember the impact we have on others. He called us to walk connected to Him, to each other, to walk in faith as we work together for our young people.

The messages about connection and walking together were particularly significant as many in our community have been impacted by the recent bushfires. It is important during times of uncertainty that we stay connected and let people know they are not alone. As we begin this new school year, we pray for a strong and connected community.

***Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of community. We pray that you would bless our community and guide us to walk together in faith. Help us build strong and supportive relationships with one another.***

### Uniform Expectations

As we prepare for Term 1, we kindly ask all parents and carers to take the time to read through the current [Iona College Uniform Policy](#). Wearing the College uniform correctly and with pride reflects our shared values of respect, identity and belonging within the Iona community.

We encourage you to discuss these expectations with your young person as we commence Term 1, ensuring they understand the importance of representing the College positively each day.

On returning to Iona College, the following process will be followed for students not adhering to our expectations, particularly around the wearing of jewellery:

- **First occurrence:** Families will receive a reminder via SIMON (PAM). The jewellery item/s will be collected for the day and safely stored, then returned to the student at the end of the school day.
- **Second occurrence:** A flag will be recorded on SIMON and shared with families. The jewellery item/s will again be collected and securely stored during the school day, and returned to the student at the end of the day.

- **Third occurrence:** The matter will be referred to the relevant Year Level Wellbeing Leader. The jewellery item/s will be securely stored at Main Reception and returned to the student at the end of the school term. A meeting will also be arranged with parents/carers to discuss ongoing support and expectations.

Your support in reinforcing these standards is greatly appreciated.

### Everyday matters: Improving school attendance in 2026!

In Australia, about 40 per cent of students, more than 1.2 million, miss at least one day of school every two weeks. These absences add up quickly. Missing one day of school a fortnight is the equivalent of missing four weeks a year – and missing a whole year between the first day of school and the end of Year 10.

At Iona, we monitor student attendance closely and must admit we are concerned about the growing problem. Reasons for absence include family holidays, increased rates of illness and mental health concerns – all have increased in the past few years. Year Level Wellbeing Leaders and Community group teachers monitor attendance closely and will continue to support those students who struggle with attendance.

This is a big and growing problem Australia-wide: since 2018, attendance has fallen in 96 per cent of Australia's schools. **School attendance matters.** The more a student misses school, the worse their academic results are likely to be. Missing out on school can also affect students' social skills and emotional and mental well-being. Federal, state, and territory Education Ministers have committed to getting school attendance back to pre-pandemic rates by the end of the decade. Hitting this ambitious target will require a fundamental rethink of how we prioritise school attendance in Australia. New approaches – by politicians, principals, parents, and the wider community – are needed to encourage attendance and overcome barriers to going to school.

### We need your help!

Parents/carers, we need you to assist us in getting students to school. School is not just about lessons and tests; it also helps them become well-rounded and socially and emotionally intelligent through the everyday interactions with their teachers and peers.

We will continue to monitor and follow up on absences and ask that you join us in helping each Iona student get to school every day.

Kylie Power and Nathan Pisani

*Deputy Principal (Wellbeing) and Director of Culture & Pedagogy (Wellbeing)*

## Back to School eSafety



Iona College is committed to helping students develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be safe and respectful users of technology. We are working towards this by explicitly teaching social emotional learning skills, embedding eSafety and safe use of technology into Wellbeing for Learning lessons and the general curriculum.

We are also aware that students' online experiences often move seamlessly between Iona and home, and are therefore aiming to develop, with your support, a whole-of-community approach to keeping our students safe online.

We will be sharing a range of information, tips and resources for parents and carers from the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety.gov.au) that you can use with your family to help create positive experiences for your children online.

We encourage all parents and carers to keep an eye on our weekly newsletter, website and social media channels for information you can use to build your knowledge, skills and understanding of online safety.

Our first tip is focusing on:

### **Reporting when something goes wrong online**

If your child experiences something harmful online, such as **cyberbullying, image-based abuse** or **illegal and restricted content**, you can report it directly to the social media service, game, app or website where the incident occurred.

Often, young people will need the support of an adult to report. The eSafety Commissioner (eSafety.gov.au) advises taking the following steps:

**1. Collect evidence** before reporting to the platform or taking other action. If the issue is ongoing, Make sure you collect screenshots showing what has been happening and for how long.

**2. Report to the platform** where it happened. Use [The eSafety Guide | eSafety Commissioner](#) to help you. After you report, the service may remove the content straight away. They may also block those responsible or delete their account. If the post involves something illegal like grooming, they may refer it to law enforcement or another agency to take further action.

**3. If the platform does not take action, you or your child can** report it to [Report online harm | eSafety Commissioner](#). eSafety will ask you to complete an online reporting form and include evidence.

Kylie Power and Elizabeth Grayland

*Deputy Principal (Wellbeing) and Pedagogy and Curriculum Instructional Leader – E-Learning*

### School Photos 2026

Annual school photos will be taken by Arthur Reed on Tuesday, 10 February 2026. Student access codes and order details will be provided to you when the images are ready to view and purchase online.

**Year 12 Cohort Photo and Sibling Photos** will be taken on Friday, 27 February 2026. If you would like your children to be photographed together, please follow these simple steps.

1. Grab your phone and go to <https://arphotos.typeform.com/to/dKNPbIDB>
2. Enter the name and community group of the eldest sibling
3. Enter the names and community group/s of all other siblings to be included in the photo

Mark the date in your calendar or save it on your phone so you can get organised before the event. Having the date set in advance means you can make sure they have a clean uniform and, as is often needed, a post-holiday haircut before their annual school photo.

### Uniform

As a parent/carer, you'll have the task of ensuring your child's formal uniform is ironed, clean and ready to go on photo day. Please make sure that you are familiar with the [most current school uniform policy](#).

Items that are not part of the College uniform policy, including additional earrings, bracelets and necklaces, will be asked to be removed and will be returned to students at the end of the day. Fake nails, nail polish and false eyelashes are not permitted under the uniform policy. Makeup should be minimal. We acknowledge that this may add an extra step to morning routines; however, a consistent, collective effort is important in maintaining our uniform standards.

Turning into Teens Program



# Tuning into Teens

Emotionally Intelligent  
Parenting

A six-session emotion  
coaching parenting  
program



Iona College will be running a series of **Tuning into Teens** programs for our parents throughout 2026. This is a highly sought after program which will be offered free of charge to Iona parents.

Spaces will be limited so please contact [molly.morris@iona.vic.edu.au](mailto:molly.morris@iona.vic.edu.au) for more information and to express your interest.



**Would you like to learn how to:**

- Talk with your teen?
- Better understand your teen.
- Help your teen learn to manage their emotions?
- Help to prevent behaviour problems in your teen?
- Teach your teen to deal with conflict?



**Tuning into Teens provides information on how to help your young person develop emotional intelligence. Research has shown that adolescents with greater emotional intelligence:**

- are more aware, assertive and strong in situations of peer pressure
- have greater success with making friends and are more able to manage conflict with peers
- are more able to cope when upset or angry
- have fewer mental health and substance abuse difficulties
- have more stable and satisfying relationships as adults
- have greater career success – Emotional Intelligence may be a better predictor of academic and career success than IQ.



## Year 7 Applications & Tour and Information Sessions - Reminder



If you have a young person starting Year 7 in 2027, applications are now open. Families are encouraged to complete the online enrolment form before Friday, 8 May 2026.

Applications [can be made online via the following link](#).

ENROL ONLINE NOW



We are also pleased to share the dates for our upcoming Tour and Information Sessions:

- Monday 16 March – 4.15 pm to 5.45 pm
- Tuesday 17 March – 11.00 am to 12.30 pm
- Wednesday 18 March – 9.00 am to 10.30 am
- Wednesday 18 March – 4.15 pm to 5.45 pm
- Thursday 19 March – 9.00 am to 10.30 am

Bookings for these sessions can be [made online via the following link](#).

BOOK A TOUR & INFO SESSION



## Canteen Reminders – Student ID Cards

A reminder to all students to please ensure they have their student ID card with them when attending the canteen. Students are encouraged to carry their ID card with them at all times.

### Graduate Visits Government House

Congratulations to Ashton (class of 2025), who was invited to attend the Australia Day Reception at Government House, Victoria, on Wednesday, 21 January 2026. Ashton joined other students alongside community members, volunteers and leaders from across Victoria to celebrate Australia Day. The invitation recognises his commitment and hard work during his VCE VM studies in 2025 and provided a special opportunity to experience the hospitality of Government House.



## Music News

The Music Department is once again looking forward to a great year of “music making”. Over the holiday period, we had four of our musicians represent Iona College at the annual Geelong Summer Music Camp. These students joined 275 other musicians in a week of music making with the final concert in Costa Hall. Congratulations to Sam, Jacob, Lucinda and Helaina for their wonderful work throughout this week.



## Music Lessons

Lessons for Year 8-12 students begin from Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. Year 7 students enrolled in music lessons will have their lessons scheduled from Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> Feb.

How to check your time?

- Timetables outside the Music Rooms
- Music Class Pass in your timetable on SIMON (scroll through the week to see these)

While we will help students in these first two weeks of lessons by emailing times, it is a student's responsibility to look up the time of their lesson. Lessons missed with less than 48 hours will be charged as per “Terms and Conditions”. There are spaces available for orchestral instruments such as flute, saxophone, trumpet, trombone and clarinet. Email [music@iona.vic.edu.au](mailto:music@iona.vic.edu.au) with any questions and enquiries.

## Music Ensembles – Commencement Dates

- Choir begins next week and rehearses on Monday lunchtime and/or Thursday after school until 4.10 pm.
- String Ensemble will commence in Week 3, on Tuesday, 10 February.
- Contemporary Ensembles – students will be emailed directly with details once their ensemble is ready to begin.

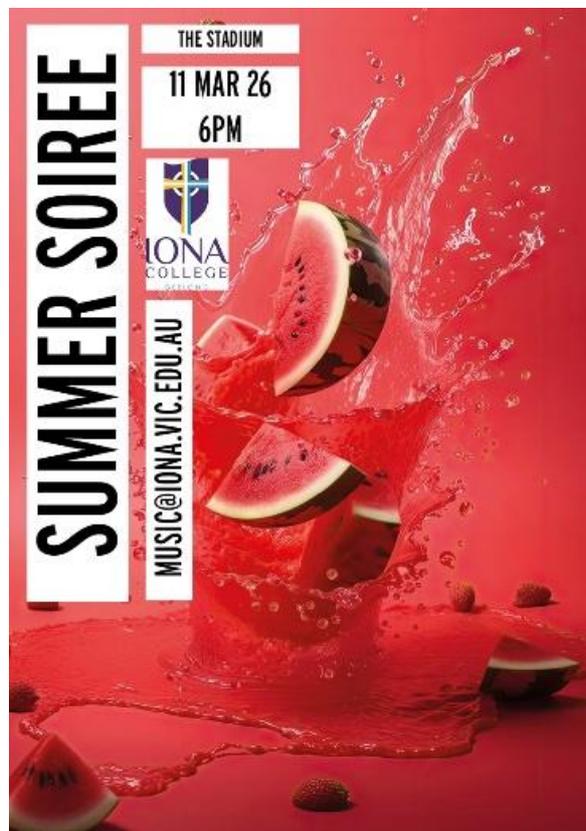
- Concert Band – first rehearsal will be held on Tuesday, 3 February.

If your young person is interested in being involved in a music ensemble, please email [music@iona.vic.edu.au](mailto:music@iona.vic.edu.au).

### Summer Soiree

Our first concert of the year is our Summer Soiree on 11<sup>th</sup> March. A sign-up sheet will be placed outside the Music Rooms on Monday, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. Students should **ONLY** sign themselves up if they know they will have a piece of music ready to perform.

Parents can book tickets to the soiree (free) [via the following link](#).



Please feel free to contact the Music Department directly with any questions or enquiries you have by emailing -[music@iona.vic.edu.au](mailto:music@iona.vic.edu.au)

Jodie Townsend  
*Head of Performing Arts*

### Iona Pathways Press

The 29 January edition of the Iona Pathways Press [can be found here](#).  
In this edition, you will find information about:

- Dates to Diarise in Term 1
- What can the Pathway Hub can assist you with?
- Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT)
- Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2026
- UK Gap Year Program in 2027
- Medical Work Experience Overseas for High School Students
- Melbourne Defence Careers Information Session
- Torrens University Open Day – Melbourne
- White Card Training (Year 10)
- World Of Work ~ Health Immersion (Year 10)
- Exploring The Career Landscape~ where the jobs are growing.
- EOI for Structured Workplace Learning for Victoria Police (Year 11 & 12)
- Tax File Number (TFN)



**Find & Subscribe to the Pathways Press Newsfeed.**

For Students: Visit the College Career website, click on 'for students' choose Newsfeed and subscribe: [ionacollegegeelong.com.au](http://ionacollegegeelong.com.au)

For Parents: Visit the College Career website, click on 'for parents' choose Newsfeed and subscribe: [ionacollegegeelong.com.au](http://ionacollegegeelong.com.au)

To contact the Pathways team, please email [pathways@iona.vic.edu.au](mailto:pathways@iona.vic.edu.au)

## Welcome to New Staff

We warmly welcome all our new staff to the Iona community. We hope you feel at home and supported, and we look forward to a fantastic year ahead together!

Name	Position	Last Organisation
Kimberley Tedford	Teacher/ Director of Culture and Strategy (Catholic Identity)	John Paul College, Frankston
Danielle Mott	Teacher/ Head of Junior School Year 7-9 Student Management	Mount Waverley Secondary College
Kimberley Goodwin-Watson	Teacher/ Pedagogy and Curriculum Instructional Leader - Curriculum	Loretto College Ballarat
Tim Nunn	Teacher/ VCE Vocational Major Learning Leader	SEDA College
Kate Reed	Teacher/ Year Level Learning Diversity Leader Case Manager (Year 11)	Armstrong Creek School
Ruby Mangesdorf	Teacher	Graduate
Taneisha Sampson	Teacher	St Augustine's College, Kyabram
Chad McLauchlan	Teacher/ Year Level Wellbeing Leader- Year 10	Belmont High
Will Batson	Teacher	Graduate- LSO at Westall Secondary College
Kristin Davey	Teacher/ Year Level Learning Diversity Leader Case Manager (Year 9)	MacKillop College Werribee
Marianela Tobon-Cortes	Teacher	Graduate
Elise Ward	Teacher	Geelong Grammar
Kate Otto	Teacher	Saint Ignatius
Shelby Hackett	Teacher	CRT at Iona College, Geelong (via Clonard College)
Mollie Hill	Teacher	Graduate
David Baulch	Teacher	Bannockburn P-12 College
Bianca Koch	Teacher	Newcombe Secondary College

Declan Jones	Teacher	Graduate- LSO at St Joseph's College, Geelong
Nicolas Nadile	Teacher	Graduate- LSO at Beaufort Secondary College
Ami Hodgkinson	Learning Support Officer	LSO at Leopold Primary School
Jessica Janakievski	Learning Support Officer	Sacred Heart College
Claire Abreu	Learning Support Officer	Trainee at Iona College, Geelong
Alana Beeson	Learning Support Officer	LSO at Mt Duneed RPS
Kellie Martin	Learning Support Officer	LSO at Wimmera Lutheran College
Amy Raleigh	Sport, PE and Outdoor Education Administrator	Sacred Heart College, Newtown
Ainsley Moore	Receptionist	Covenant College
Sandra Kaden-Brunne	Learning Support Officer	Private Industry
Loretta Davis	Learning Support Officer	Private Industry
Jane Tabak	Teacher	Geelong Baptist College
Chris Thanasenaris	VET Administrator	Federation University
Sarah Roberts	Learning Support Officer	The Gordon TAFE

## Term 1 2026 Dates to Remember

If you would like to download a printable version of the schedule above, [please access it here](#). This link will be updated each week in the newsletter as new events are added to the calendar.

Date	Event
Thursday 18 December - Tuesday 20 January	Iona College Admin Office Closed for Christmas Break
Wednesday 21 January	Iona College Admin Office Opens
Thursday 29 January	Term 1 Commences for Year 7, Year 12 and All New Students to the College (Formal Uniform for Year 7s and all New Students to Iona)
Friday 30 January	Years 8-11 Commence
Tuesday 10 February	School Photo Day (Formal Uniform)
Tuesday 10 February	Yr 11 & 12 VCE Parent Information Evening (6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Iona College Stadium)
Wednesday 11 February	Whole School Mass (Formal Uniform)
Tuesday 17 February	Year 7 Parent/Carer Welcome Evening (6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Iona College Stadium)
Thursday 19 February	Whole School Assembly - 2025 VCE & VOC Major High Achievers Awards and 2026 Leaders Induction (Formal Uniform)
Wednesday 25 February	Year 7 Maths Parent/Carer Information Night (6:00 pm - 7:00 pm)
Friday 27 February	Year 12 Group Photo (Formal Uniform for Year 12s)
Friday 27 February	School Photo Catch-Up Day and Sibling Photography Formal uniform required for all students being photographed.
Monday 2 March	Swimming Carnival
Monday 9 March	Labour Day Public Holiday
Tuesday 10 March	Units 3 and 4 Student Progress Meeting (On-site)
Wednesday 11 March	Teen Mental Health Matters Webinar with Dr Sarah Barker (Online)
Monday 16 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (4:15 - 5:45)
Tuesday 17 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (11:00 - 12:30)
Wednesday 18 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (9:00 - 10:30)
Wednesday 18 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (4:15 - 5:45)
Thursday 19 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (9:00 - 10:30)
Thursday 19 March	Student Progress Meetings (Onsite)
Friday 20 March	Staff Professional Development Student Free Day
Tuesday 24 March	Student Progress Meeting (Online)
Thursday 2 April	Term 1 Concludes (2:05 pm)
Monday 20 April	Staff Professional Development Student Free Day
Tuesday 21 April	Term 2 Commences

## Construction - Increased Congestion

Please note that due to construction on site, there is reduced parking as well as space for drop off and pick up. Traffic will be very congested, so you will need to allow for additional time. As an alternative, we kindly ask parents and carers to consider dropping off and picking up their young person in neighbouring streets where possible.



### Newsletter Format Update

Based on feedback received in last year's survey, we will be trialling a new newsletter format this term. Rather than sending a full newsletter each week, a full edition will be shared every second week, still on Thursday afternoon. In the alternate weeks, families will receive a shorter update highlighting key dates and important information. The first key dates and important information edition will be sent out in Week 3 of Term 1.

We look forward to a fantastic year ahead and are excited to welcome all year levels back tomorrow.

Thanks for your support.

Damian, Kylie and Melissa