Dear Families,

**Third Australian Curriculum Pupil Free Day Update:**
The third pupil free day for 2016 will be on *Friday the 2nd of September*. The focus for our teachers will be on building further knowledge and skills in the Australian Curriculum in the area of Mathematics with our Heysen partnerships Maths coach Rosslyn Shepherd. This will support the learning and professional development that our staff undertake regularly both inside and outside of their work hours. Students do not attend school on this day.

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**What Is NOT Bullying?**

- Disagreements of opinions between two people
- Feedback that is meant for improvement
- One-time outbursts of frustration
- Being overlooked or unintentionally left out
- Questioning the credibility of another person’s information

*Children may be biased when they process social cues and interpret ambiguous situations as being hostile, when bullying is not actually occurring.*

*Students may perceive an action is bullying when it is not truly a bullying situation.*
When I was at Primary and Secondary School (not so long ago it feels) I spent my lunch and recess time outside in the yard hanging out with the other kids from my class or my sisters or cousins. In good weather we would play outside games like softball, netball, elastics, skippy or chase each other around the yard playing “made up/pretend” games. In bad weather we would be inside playing snap, board games, doing art and craft or building inside cubbies etc.

By doing this, and sometimes having trouble with my friends, I learnt about getting along with others, taking turns, how to negotiate rules for games and stick with them, how to act when I lost, how to control my emotions in a social setting, take risks in a safe environment, how to be fair and so on. These games were training devices for improving my positive social behaviour.

So many of our students now, don't have the opportunities to play, for a whole number of reasons which I'm sure you can think of. Often the games they play are in a cyber-world which does not give children the same personal contact and social feedback.

When children play games they develop self-control, resilience, persistence, empathy, concentration, cooperation and communication skills while having lots of fun. This is called play not bullying. Recently at our school I have found myself supporting children across the school to play successfully in the yard.

Our children have many stories to tell us all of which start with a play experience. When this experience ends with one party feeling upset this does not necessarily constitute bullying and most times can be resolved positively with the parties involved. When a child reports that their feelings are hurt or that they are uncomfortable with the actions of another many problem solving options are available to the children involved and should be provided. Blaming and shaming children by labelling the play actions as bullying is not helpful and can be detrimental to the success of the relationships being restored.

Participate to progress - school is about stepping bravely into the unknown. The unknown is often uncomfortable. The braver you are the more you learn.

Often fear and worry prevent children from participating (adults too!), I call this 'standing on the edge of the pool'. Once you jump in and start splashing around, you find that the water is just fine and you start to have fun.

Children can fear failure, ridicule, judgement, not living up to their own or others expectations, getting hurt either physically or emotionally, not looking "cool" or being better than everyone else. Often, as adults, we have the same fears and they limit us in reaching our full potential.

We need to discuss these fears both at school and home and help children not to "catastrophise" situations.

At school we use a wellbeing approach whereby we ask children to record on a thermometer chart whether or not what happened to them was a catastrophe or not? This takes practice and needs children to understand what a catastrophe would look like in their life e.g. their dog dieing might be a catastrophe for one child and not for another. We also ask them to rate their response to the issue and encourage them to reflect on whether or not they reacted appropriately to the situation or if they could’ve used an alternative strategy. This is an approach that is also useful for home when siblings are arguing or not getting along.

Of course, not all fear is bad, and children need to learn about what may be a genuine warning bell based on a realistic appraisal of the situation and what is not.

A useful strategy is to ask children

- What is the worst that can happen?
- What is the best that could happen?
- What, realistically, do you think will happen?
Making time for **worthwhile connections** with your children, making them feel that they **have importance to family and friends** and ensuring their **lives have value** and **purpose** in some way helps them have a realistic "alarm system".

It is **very hard for children with few meaningful relationships** and no belief that they are valuable to anyone to develop **hope and optimism**, therefore letting fear rule their thoughts.

Talking about fear and how it can help or hinder us and how we decide which is which, are important conversations for us all to have with our children.

**Remember we build real confidence from overcoming our fears** and achieving things.

Whereas Bullying in a school on the other hand is about intentional, constant harassment and is not acceptable...

**What Is Bullying?**

Most kids have been teased by a sibling or a friend at some point. And it's not usually harmful when done in a playful, friendly, and mutual way, and both kids find it funny. But when teasing becomes hurtful, unkind, and **constant**, it crosses the line into bullying and needs to stop.

Bullying is **intentional tormenting** in physical, verbal, or psychological ways. It can range from hitting, shoving, name-calling, threats, and mocking to extorting money and treasured possessions. Some kids bully by shunning others and spreading rumors about them. Others use email, chat rooms, instant messages, social networking websites, and text messages to taunt others or hurt their feelings.

It’s important to take bullying seriously and not just brush it off as something that kids have to "tough out." The effects can be serious and affect kids' sense of self-worth and future relationships. Our school staff take “play” seriously and we also deal with Bullying in a serious manner. We offer you friendly advice and a listening ear if you feel your child needs help with playing OR is being bullied. Please see a staff member or Mr Todd (school counsellor) immediately if you need help with either matter.

All of this learning is linked to building a growth mindset and being able to build persistence and resilience.

At dinner, in the car or at bedtime take time for your child to share the answers to these types of questions:

“**What did you learn today?**” (I LOVE this – so much better than “How was your day?”)

“**What mistake did you make that taught you something?**

“**What did you try hard at today?**”

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to be safe, happy and to be a life-long learner at our school and in their life.

**Kind Regards,**

Catherine Cox-Wallis
What is PALS?
PALS is a tried and tested buddy initiative aimed at engaging students in play and activity during the recess and lunchtime periods. This type of program is aimed at providing a comprehensive structure for schools who want to develop student leadership.

Students are trained to become peer mentors for Junior Primary Students. These mentors spent a day training in how to facilitate small groups in a variety of fun and active activities. Students learnt how to structure, instruct and co-ordinate younger children while also role modelling behaviour and building strong relationships. The PALS mentors give up their time to work with the younger students and are great leaders within the school.

The PALS program has had a positive impact on our senior students. I have seen students planning and organizing sessions for their peers and breaking down skills in order for younger students to increase talent in their area of interest. This flows through into yard play, where I see older students interacting with younger students in an encouraging confident manner.

Mrs Young – Room 12 Class Teacher