



Term 3 | Week 6 | Date: 19th August 2021

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Dear Parents and Friends of St Mary's

"The child who has restricted opportunities for play is like a fruit tree that is planted in a small pot and therefore cannot bear good fruit." Friedrich Froebel who thought that play was the most spiritual activity in which a child could engage.

Our little school has been in overdrive since Saturday's sudden lockdown. We mobilised ourselves pretty smartly, getting student Chromebook devices out to families on Sunday afternoon and started our planning for our first week of remote learning. It's great that our children have their own individual learning devices, enabling them to easily access the learning activities we are pushing out to them online. Our staff are in touch with families and I strongly encourage anyone who has any concerns to contact the school so that we can work together to address issues that may arise - please don't hesitate - we're here to help.

I read the recent Guardian Essential Poll which reported that two-thirds of parents are concerned that lockdowns are affecting the mental health of their children, with half worried about emerging behavioural problems.

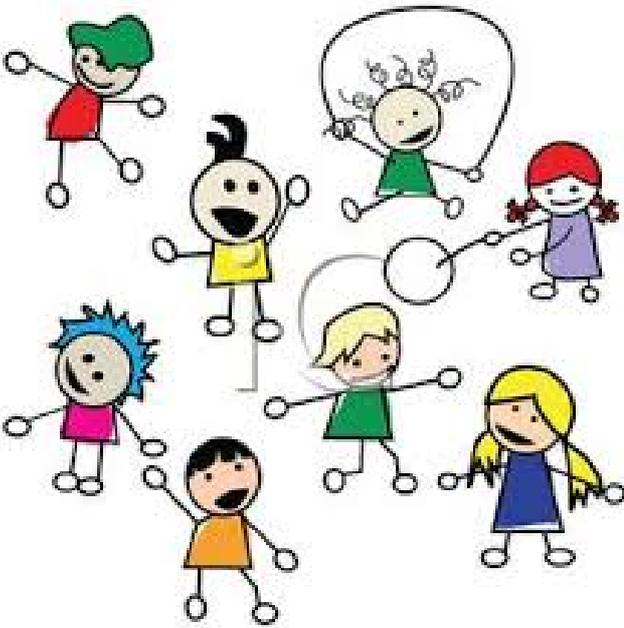


Most parents and carers (69%) report being worried that their children are missing out on socialising with their friends, peers and teachers, while 61% say their children are falling behind in their learning. There's no doubt that the pandemic can make us adults more paranoid and fearful of other people and if we're not careful we can transmit this sense of fear to our children through what psychologists term '*emotional contagion*' - we literally infect them with our fear. From a child's perspective, the past couple of years of lockdowns, closed schools and playgrounds has given a message that the outside world is dangerous, that we should stay away from people and that it's safest at home. Social media reinforces this grim message

about the dangerous world we inhabit with the posting of such Facebook messages as *"I was at the shops yesterday and there was a man staring at my child. And he had a van outside. I'm certain he was a trafficker."*

All of this is a far cry away from the way most of us remember our childhoods, I'm sure. I recall being banished from the house on weekend and holiday days and not being expected to return until feeding time in the early evening. It was all about being out in the fresh air, exploring the environment and playing lots of sport and games with groups of friends where we pretty well made our own entertainment free of annoying adults. Even before the pandemic struck, children were spending far less time outdoors than previous generations. This has been the case both at home and at school.

It is a tragedy that 'Play' which is the foundation of our children's wellbeing and future success is being seen more and more as a waste of time that gets in the way of true learning. One leading educationalist, Professor Pasi Sahlberg, has coined the term 'The war on Childhood' to describe the way politicians and policy-makers world wide are depriving children of their basic human right to play and destroying the place of play in learning, replacing it with standardised testing and stress. All of this can only have a negative impact on children's wellbeing which is of course the critical building block for their learning.



In my message to children during lockdown I told them to use the opportunity to get outside and get curious about nature. Playing in nature is incredibly important because nowhere else will you get all the domains of the physical, social, emotional, the fine motor and gross motor growth, imaginative play, creative play and the building of resilience all in one handy place - outside. At the same time I encouraged them to eat healthy stuff and not to spend too much time on their technology devices once their schoolwork has been completed. Mr Mychael, our student teacher, has created a great online video exercise class for the whole school to use, getting our

bodies and minds fired up for learning. Here's an example of where technology can be used productively to enhance both physical and mental wellbeing.

My message: make 'Play' a priority of your children during Lockdown time and indeed during any and every time.

Wishing you a playful week ahead!

Vince

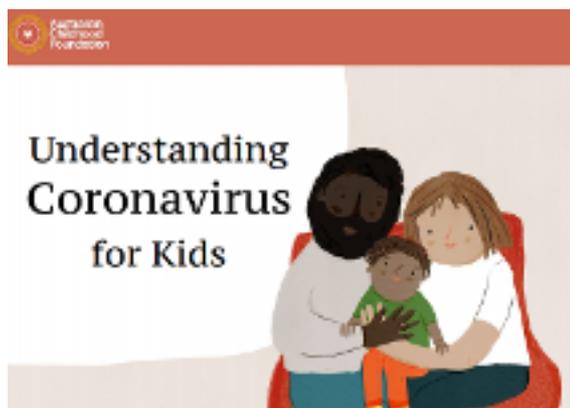
Corona-virus

Children can get upset and fearful at times when they hear so much information about the dangers of the pandemic. The links below will take you to a couple of short books that you could read with your children to help explain about Coronavirus to them in a very simple and non-threatening way. I can commend them to you.

The below links will be sent to you via Compass message as well

<https://www.childhood.org.au/app/uploads/2020/03/Talking-to-Children-COVID-19-Social-Story.pdf>

<https://www.childhood.org.au/app/uploads/2020/04/At-home-together-with-the-4-Ms.pdf>



Your guide to driving and parking safely near schools

The beginning and end of the school day are busy times for pedestrians and vehicles outside the school. That's why you need to take extra care in 40km/h school zones.

- Park safely and legally, even if it means walking further to the school gate. Parking signs are planned with children's safety in mind.
- Slow down to 40km/h in the school zone and stay aware of crossings.
- Always park and turn legally around the school.
- Never double park as it puts children at risk.
- Manoeuvres such as U-turns and three-point turns are dangerous.
- Never park in a bus zone or in the school bus bay.
- Make sure your children use the Safety Door (rear footpath side door) to get in and out of the car.
- At a supervised crossing, observe the directions of the school crossing supervisor.
- Model safe and considerate behaviour for your child – they will learn from you.

Remember to always give way to pedestrians particularly when entering and leaving driveways. Don't park across the school driveway or the entrance to the school car park. It's always a good idea to use the drop off and pick up area suggested by your school. This will help keep all children as safe as possible during the busiest times of the school day.

For more information on keeping our kids safe around schools visit the parents section on safetytown.com.au