Well-being at St Joseph’s Alstonville

Frequently Asked Questions

Well-being of our students is of high priority to all the staff at our school. We have

- a Well-being committee which meets regularly,
- Enrichment team which supports the well-being needs of all students and offers services and referrals to deal with each child’s individual situation,
- a school counsellor who attends the school on a weekly basis and supports students through a referral system,
- Mission and Values facilitator who works with children in one on one situations, small groups and on the playground to help facilitate positive social situations,
- Enrichment tutors that work with students to both boost academic skills and self-esteem and of course class teachers who are responsive to the needs of each child in their class.

Sometimes parents are unsure where they can turn to if their child is experiencing difficulties with social skills, friendship issues, anxiety - related to school, home or performance, depression or a range of medical conditions or disabilities that can effect a child’s well-being.

Q. My child is anxious about a subject at school. How can I help them deal with and assist them with their anxiety related to their performance in this subject?

If you have any concerns about your child’s academic progress it is important to discuss this with your child’s class teacher to work out where your child is experiencing difficulty. Discuss with your child how this subject makes them feel and try and understand where their anxiety is coming from. Are they anxious because of unrealistic expectations placed on them by you or themselves?

Discuss a referral to the school counsellor or enrichment team that can offer extra support for your child. Listening to your child’s concerns and take the time to reassure your child that everyone learns at a different rate.
Q. My child is dealing with some difficult personal/ family/ social or friendship issues. What assistance can the school offer?

Firstly, make the school aware of issues that may be affecting your child’s behaviour, academic abilities or social relationships. Discuss with your child the importance of talking to a teacher if they are experiencing difficulties at school so that issues can be dealt with. Talk to their teacher about whether a referral to the school counsellor may be needed. The school often runs “circle time” which helps students to discuss their issues amongst each other in a safe environment with an adult mediator.

Q. My child says she has no friends at school?

This is a common statement made by children and it is important to discuss the situation with your child. Sometimes children have a bad day and one incident can be blown out of proportion. If this statement is becoming more regular, your child is showing changes in their behaviour, they are refusing to come to school or they are not happy please see your child’s class teacher and discuss the situation.

The school can monitor your child’s behaviour in class and on the playground to determine what is happening, a referral can be made to the school counsellor, support staff can help your child on the playground and help facilitate games.

As a parent try inviting friends over and engaging your child in social activities to help them build a group of friends.

Q. My child is constantly bickering or arguing with “friends”? What should I do?

This behaviour amongst friends is one of the most common schoolyard issues. It is important to listen to your child and work out what the full story is. What is your child’s role in this situation? Sometimes parents involve themselves in a situation without letting their children workout the problem for themselves.

Try and give your child some suggestions of positive ways to deal with the situation e.g. Walk away and find someone else to play with; compromise on the game or activity they are playing, talk about how your ‘friends’ are making you feel, try to see both sides of the argument (What could I do to make the situation better?, How are my words or actions affecting the situation?).
It is important to note that this issue is more common in girls as they try and work out their role and position in the social group, it can be an attention seeking behaviour and often resolves itself without adult intervention. If you are concerned you should always contact the school and discuss the matter. Do NOT ring around the parents to ‘sort it out’ as this often makes the issue bigger.

Q. My child is often saying he is sick and does not want to go to school. When he is at school he spends a lot of time in the sick bay.

Firstly, work out if your child is sick. Make an appointment to see your doctor and get them to give your child the once over. If this becomes a regular event and there appears to be no medical issue talk to your child about how they are feeling. Start with positive questions – What do you like best about school? What is your favourite subject? Who do you play with? What do you like to do at lunchtime? Allow your child to tell you what they don’t like about school and just listen. Ask them what time of day they feel most sick and try and establish a pattern. Discuss these issues with the class teacher. Some issues can be minor – a child feels sick during sport because they don’t feel they are good enough or they can be more serious – a child is being bullied by a group of students.

Q. My child has not been picked for a school team – sporting, choir, drumbeat etc? How can I address this issue?

There are a number of reasons a child may not be picked for a school team. Sometimes sporting teams have certain age requirements which your child may not fit into, there may be a number of children trying out for a team and your child is not skilled enough, your child may not have shown up to practice or training and demonstrated the commitment of other students, there may not be enough spaces in the team or group, the selection criteria may prevent your child from participating and sometimes it can be an oversight and children get left off by mistake.

If you feel that your child has been left or you are unsure about why they have not been selected it is best to make an appointment to discuss the issue with the teacher running the team or program in a non-confrontational manner.

However also keep in mind your reaction to this non-selection is important. Do not get upset in front of your child.
Q. How can I tell if my child is fitting in at school?

The best person to tell you how your child is fitting in at school is your child’s class teacher. If you think that your child is not settling, they seem upset or anxious about going to school or they appear to not be making friends then talk to your child about what is worrying them and contact the school to discuss the matter further. If your child comes home happy every day and loves going to school, chances are they are fitting in just fine.

Q. How can I help support my children in making friends at school?

The best way to support your child making friends is to talk to your child and be involved in fostering friendships. Involve your child in group sports and activities that have children from their grade, invite children around for play dates so you can get to know their friends, create social situations for your child to be actively involved in.

It is important to allow your child to choose their friends and not put restrictions on who they can and can’t play with. In the real world children will mix with a wide range of people in a variety of social settings which you will not be able to control. School is just the beginning of this process.

Q. What do I do if my child is making friends with children I don’t want them to be friends with?

Children often befriend other children who have similar interests to themselves. They may not always be the children we would choose for our child but this does not mean that this child isn’t a good friend. Discuss your child’s friends with them and ask them why they enjoy spending time with them. How do these friends make them feel?

Decide what YOUR issues are with these friends. Often these can be indirectly passed on to your child causing them anxiety about who they chose to play with. Your child will meet a range of people in their lifetime and school friendships are the way they begin to learn navigating personal relationships with others. If you have serious concerns about a friendship because your child is taking unsafe risks, their behaviour or school work is causing you concern or they are starting to withdraw from things they enjoy please contact the class teacher and school.
Q. Who can I contact if I am concerned about my child’s welfare?

The first person to contact is always the class teacher; they know your child best and will refer you to the relevant people who can help. If a matter is extremely sensitive and you are unsure about talking to someone then approach the school principal who can guide you in the right direction.

Your child may be referred to the school counsellor to help address the issues of concern. It is important to work with the school and the services provided to give your child the best possible outcome.

Q. What are the safeguards around confidentiality?

Schools are bound to confidentiality and your child’s information will only be given out to those people who are entrusted to help your child and with your consent. It is important to note that child protection legislation requires all staff members to report any situations that put the child at risk. If a child discloses information about being harmed in anyway further action will be taken by the principal.

Q. My child has lost a loved one, we have moved from another area or our family has changed (separation, new baby, remarried etc) and my child is not coping with this. How can the school help with this?

The first point of call is always the class teacher. Open communication between the teacher, school and home allows the individual child’s needs to be met. The school can organise for counselling with our school counsellor and students can be enrolled in the Seasons for Growth Program which runs annually if you wish.

Q. What is the Seasons for Growth Program?

Seasons for Growth is a program designed to help students who have experienced loss or grief through the death of a loved one, separation of families or parents remarrying, a move of location and fitting into a new area. All students from Yr 1 – Yr 6 are entitled to participate in the program, but parents must consent to their child’s inclusion into the program.
There are three levels that are run within the primary school setting and some of the high schools also run a level 4 program. Students participate in small group settings with an adult companion for 8 weeks. All information discussed is confidential. For more information regarding the Seasons for Growth program contact the school.

Q. What are some signs my child is not coping?

There are a number of signs your child may exhibit if they are not coping with a situation. Some of these are:

- Become quiet and withdrawn, especially in situations they were once comfortable in;
- Become aggressive, confrontational and have an ‘I don’t care’ attitude;
- Experiencing difficulties with their school work and not completing tasks;
- Becoming teary and emotional for no reason;
- No longer playing with friends;
- Refusing to come to school;
- Changes to their sleeping and eating patterns.

Q. What do I do if my child refuses to come to school?

School refusal is a serious issue and one that needs to be dealt with immediately. If your child starts refusing to come to school sit down and listen to them, sometimes the problem has nothing to do with school. Some children can begin to suffer from separation anxiety due to other stressful events happening in their life. Contact the school and speak to the class teacher and school principal to devise an action plan to get your child to school. Whilst it may seem easier to allow your child to stay home it can be a difficult scenario to break if you are not consistent. Be open to your child seeing the school counsellor and access outside counselling services.