

## Desley's Dialogue



Dear Parents,

Our first term at kindy is rushing to an end. No doubt you have found your child a little weary. This has been a time of enormous change and adaptation for all the children as they settle into the expectations of life at kindy. While we are encouraged to see child care and kindy as extensions of home, the reality is that group life can be **very different** from life at home. The greatest learning curve for the children has been the acceptance of being one of 22 children with only 2 (or 3) adults at everyone's disposal. Needless to say, this means that for many there has had to be a major adjustment in their levels of self regulation, patience, turn taking, listening and showing consideration for others. Over the past few weeks we have witnessed a significant level of development in all of these areas as we settle into life together.

Many may think that our focus on relationships, and children's social and emotional development in these early years, is a soft option in terms of education. In fact, it is crucial and will contribute to laying important foundations for each child's social and academic growth – throughout life.

In this newsletter I am including an article titled:

**We are Not ALL Friends But That's OK:  
Reassessing slogans for social guidance**

This article was presented as a workshop to early childhood teachers at the Early Childhood Teachers Association Annual Conference in 2017. Although it

was written for teachers and educators, I think it will help parents to understand the importance of the language that Yvonne, Karen and I choose to use with the children at Ballymore. I hope you find it interesting and would encourage anyone who may have questions or comments to please see me.

I have set aside two days in the final weeks of this term for individual discussions with parents. These are important opportunities to share information about your child in the group setting. Sharing knowledge between home and kindy helps us to know, and to



plan for your child in the most appropriate way. A list of available days and times will be left by the sign-in book. Please choose a time that suits you and if you prefer a phone conversation please leave your best contact number. If none of the available times is suitable please let me know and we can make other arrangements.

*Desley*

# President's Report



Hi Everyone,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to Ballymore Kindy. I hope that you and your little person have had a wonderful start to the year. We are so fortunate to have such a beautiful space and community of families at Ballymore, and a team of kind and talented staff. It is my fourth (and final!) year at Ballymore and it just keeps getting better and better.

The 2019 committee held our first meeting at the start of March, and due to the diligence, commitment, and organisation of the 2018 committee, we have well and truly hit the ground running. The 2018 committee are: Catherine Bonifant, President (Isabelle, Group 1), Christine Smith, Secretary (Josh, Group 1), Carla Lowe, Treasurer (Hannah, Group 1), Mel Smith, Working Bee Coordinator (Felicity, Group 1), Rebecca Ormesher, Promotions (Alexander, Group 1), Tracy Lamb, WHS (Cade, Group 2), and Jayne Robbins, Social Coordinator (Hayley, Group 2). If you would like to know more about what the committee does, or would like to be more involved, you are so very welcome to contact any one of us at any time.

As a parent group, we were fortunate enough to participate in an interactive information evening at the end of February with Desley, and the team, on what happens at Kindy. This provided a unique insight into the learning, growth and development that occurs in children when they are given the opportunity to play.

Term 1 is a busy time for the Kindy, with the first of our Working Bees taking place. I would like to extend a huge thank you to Mel for all her hard work, and to all those involved, and of course to those who have volunteered for future Working Bees.

The annual Ballymore Kindy alumni catch up was unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather, and a lot of sickness in the Kindy. The plan is to reschedule this, so keep an eye out for your invitation.

Be sure to note the dates for coffee catch-ups and playdates in the park in your diary, as well as one of the highlights of the Kindy calendar, the Wine and Cheese night. This is a fabulous opportunity to catch up with other parents in a relaxed environment, and the Kindy always looks so gorgeous by night, with tea lights glowing and music playing. Jayne will keep us informed of all the social events happening in the Kindy throughout the year.

And finally, if you enjoy social media, you can like and follow Ballymore Kindy on Facebook (Ballymore Kindy) and Instagram (ballymorekindy). And while you're there, it would be wonderful if you could take some time to write a Google Review for the Kindy – just google Ballymore Kindy, and on the pop-up box on the right of the screen, click the **Write Review** tab. Positive reviews help maintain Ballymore's exceptional reputation.

There is so much for our children to look forward to as part of the Kindy program in the coming year, as well as lots of opportunities for learning, socialising and developing for us as parents and carers to enjoy and embrace. I look forward to spending time with you over the coming months.

*Catherine Bonifant President 2019*

## Kindy Wish List



When you have your next spring clean please keep us in mind. There are lots of things we can reuse at Kindy:

- ❖ Mobile phones
- ❖ Laptops
- ❖ Small flat screens
- ❖ Cardboard boxes of all shapes and sizes including very big ones.
- ❖ Lengths of material
- ❖ Ribbons
- ❖ Paper – any shape, size, colour, thickness, lined and plain
- ❖ Used envelopes
- ❖ Cardboard rolls – toilet, gladwrap
- ❖ Old saucepans and plastic cookware
- ❖ Anything lends itself

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT BALLYMORE KINDY

**Kindy closes on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April for school holidays – Term 2 starts Tuesday 23 April**

**Kindy will be closed for public holidays on Thurs 25 April (Anzac Day) and Monday 6 May (Labour Day)**

**"Rainforest Experience" Puppet Show – Monday 3 June and Friday 7 June**

## We Are Not ALL Friends But That's Ok: Reassessing slogans for social guidance

It's a busy day working with a group of young children. Social situations come and go – someone has taken a truck; someone is looking for a playmate; someone else is complaining that they didn't get a turn. Often in the busy reality of early childhood education, practitioners resort to "fast" ways to respond and provide guidance to young charges. And particularly in the area of social interactions, and the complexities that come with them, it can seem so much easier and productive to rely on slogans such as:

- "We are all friends here."
- "Sharing is caring."
- "Use your words."
- "You were playing together, you work it out."
- "That's the rule at kindy."



You won't be alone if you have heard these at your centre but it may be time to stop and consider whether these slogans are as useful as some might think or whether, if we are going to use a slogan or saying or rule of thumb, there may be a more appropriate and effective one to employ.

Here is a scenario to consider:

*Brianna has just made a fairy game. She has a space in the play room marked out with pieces of material attached to posts. On her small mat she has arranged artificial flowers, a china tea set with glitter for food and small china fairies. Another child approaches Brianna's game and wants to play. As the educator working nearby what would your response be? What information might you need to guide your intentional teaching decision?*

Initial responses for most people might be: ask Brianna if she is happy for the other child to play, support the other child to build their own game nearby if Brianna isn't happy to include them, or support Brianna to allow the other child to join in, or even to say "Brianna, sharing is caring!". However, on reflection, might our responses vary if we know that: Brianna always plays alone, or that her mother is currently very ill and in hospital, or that this is the very first time that the other child has asked to join a game, or that the other child always wants to take over when they see new materials being played with?

Would sharing be caring if Brianna's mum is sick and Brianna has built this small game as a safe space for her to care for herself in? Is it caring if the child who always wants to take over when they see what someone else is playing with, actually gets their way? Who wins in this situation? – certainly not Brianna who has HAD to relinquish her safe space and certainly NOT the other child who has just learnt that if they complain loud or long enough or if they look sad and despondent, they will get their way. No support was given here in helping them to inhibit responses and to problem solve what else they might do if they see something they want to play with.

Slogans can become simplified notions of what relationships entail. By accepting and perpetuating these views, we diminish children and their capacity to understand the complexities of relationships and to interact positively in a range of situations and with a range of people.

Here are some other points to consider:

The saying "We are all friends here" seems, on the surface, to demonstrate a well-meaning sense of caring. However, if we consider the issues of friendships from other angles we may decide that this is in fact not a useful statement to make to young children. Expecting everyone to be friends is not realistic in any group, or at any age. But it is realistic to expect everyone to care for one another or to be respectful of one another. Friendships are complex relationships and often young children have not reached a level of development to understand the reciprocity of friendship, and that this does not have to be an insular relationship. Taking away the pressure "to be, or to have, friends" can allow children the opportunities to experience a range of relationships.

Likewise, a reliance on "rules" can have some unintended consequences. In supporting the development of self-regulation, it is essential to link children's cognitive, language and emotional development. When children verbalise the reasons behind certain actions – "We won't run and jump off the fort because someone may be underneath." – they combine these areas of development, building understanding and thoughtful action. This experience is more conducive to growth than attributing an action to the fact that "It's a rule at kindy".

Similarly a comment such as “You were playing together, you work it out” will not be helpful to young children who have not yet developed the Theory of Mind needed to understand and predict another person’s mental processes, including their intentions, emotions, motives, thoughts. When we leave children to “work it out” it seems likely that the person who is loudest, strongest or fastest is most likely to have the upper hand.

Working with large groups of young children, early childhood practitioners are often faced with making “on the spot” decisions bearing in mind all that we know about the individual child and group dynamics. Relationships are complex and there are often no black and white rules. A clear long-term planning strategy for positive relationships can, however, provide a useful tool in clarifying goals and guiding responses.

In evaluating and integrating the current science of early childhood development, *From Neurons to Neighbourhoods* asserts that positive relationships require:

- Reliable support to establish confidence and trust,
- Responsiveness to strengthen agency and self-efficacy,
- Protection from harm and unforeseen threats,
- Affection to build self-esteem,
- Opportunities to experience and resolve conflict cooperatively,
- Scaffolding of new skills and capacities,
- Reciprocal interaction to build understanding of the give and take of sociability and
- The experiencing of mutual respect.

(Shonkoff et al, 2000)



From current brain research we know that “...overall neurological development which is arguably the cornerstone of cognition, emotion and all other aspects of development, thrives when parents and caregivers ...nurture an environment of healthy relationships” Responsive relationships have been linked with “stronger cognitive skills in young children, fewer behavioural problems, enhanced emotional and social competence, and long-term achievement in school.” (Nagel, 2012, p157)

Research also points to the importance of emerging executive function skills (including working memory, inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility) for a young child’s learning and development and the strong links between these skills and social and emotional growth.

“Children’s executive function skills provide the link between early school achievement and social, emotional, and moral development” and “...some researchers have hypothesized that the complexity of human social relationships, rather than the need to do higher math, is why the human prefrontal cortex is so large and our executive function abilities are so advanced.” (Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University, 2011, p5-6 ).

It is essential to remember that:

- Positive relationships are essential for children’s overall development and learning.
- Relationships are complex and require ongoing observation, reflection, pedagogical challenge, and the use of both overt and subtle supportive strategies.
- There is a need for an overall coherent long-term plan in supporting the development of positive relationships rather than a reliance on spontaneous responses to incidents as they arise.
- That such a plan, with a focus on developing positive relationships, can form the basis of curriculum planning, meeting the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework, and can (and should) inform the intentional teaching decisions that underpin planning for all parts of the day in an early education/care centre.

If, however, slogans remain a preferred option in a busy early education or care setting maybe it’s time to consider some alternatives:



"We are all friends here."	"We are all practising to care for one another here."
"Sharing is caring."	"Let's think of ways to care for one another."
"Use your words."	"What words do you think you might say to...", or "Maybe you could try saying..."
"You were playing together, you work it out."	"Think about how you could solve this problem in a caring way. I'll be here to lend a hand."
"That's the rule at kindy."	"Why do you think this might (or might not) be the best thing to do?"

Relationships **are** complex, but when we remember that helping children to build attitudes and skills to navigate the complexities of relationships will in fact support all areas of their development, it makes the investment of time, patience, thinking, and energy so much more manageable.

**Desley Jones**

#### References:

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2011). *Building the Brain's "Air Traffic Control" System: How Early Experiences Shape the Development of Executive Function: Working Paper No. 11*. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

Nagel, M.C. (2012). *In the Beginning: The brain, early development and learning*. Camberwell, Aust: ACER Press.

Shonkoff, J.P. & Phillips, D.A. (2000). *From Neurons to Neighbourhoods: The science of early childhood development*. Washington DC: National Academy Press



## Social events at BK

Play in the Park – Tennis Ave, A'grove

Both groups welcome: Wed 20 March, 3.00pm

~~Alumni~~ rescheduled – Sunday 31 March

Invitations coming soon!!

## Donations of Paper:

We are hoping parents, grandparents, neighbours, friends, may be able to assist in building up our supply of paper for painting and drawing. Any size, shape, colour, thickness would be gratefully accepted. We are in URGENT NEED!!



## Thanks for the Working Bee

Thank you to everyone who helped out at the working bee on Saturday 2 March.

It was great to return on Monday and finding the whole centre in tip top condition.

Our recent improvements to the outdoor environment make this such an enjoyable space in which to work and play, and everyone's efforts at our working bees and on the mowing roster help to keep it that way!

## Playdough Recipe

From Mrs Matthews and Mrs Curling

Ingredients:

- 3 cups plain flour
- 1 ½ cups salt
- 6 tablespoons cream of tartar
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 3 cups water
- Colouring/food dye



Method:

1. Put all ingredients into a large saucepan
2. Mix thoroughly and consistently, until it all comes together
3. Knead well
4. Enjoy!!