



Principal's Update

March 2021

Our mission - building a caring and safe learning environment where great teaching supports and inspires all students to grow, develop and succeed.

School Improvement Plan – Parent Survey

Twenty-nine parents and carers have responded to the School Improvement Survey, offering their ideas on how the school could improve. While it would have been nice to see more responses, there is a clear trend emerging from the survey, with 90% of respondents rating literacy and numeracy growth as very important, followed by 76% of parents who rated intensive support to students, such as speech therapy and tutoring, as being very important. Another area that was rated highly in the survey was a focus on safe and responsible use of social media and technology (79%), as well as ready to learn skills – organisation, time-management and study skills (79%). Another notable area of parent focus is the management of student discipline in the classroom (83%), and using evidence of learning to set improvement goals (69%).

Vaping and Teens

Vaping is the inhaling of a vapor created by an electronic cigarette (**e-cigarette**) or other vaping device. E-cigarettes are battery-powered smoking devices. They have cartridges filled with a liquid that usually contains nicotine, flavorings, and chemicals. The liquid is heated into a vapor, which the person inhales. That's why using e-cigarettes is called "vaping."

What Are the Health Effects of Vaping?

Vaping hasn't been around long enough for us to know how it affects the body over time. But health experts are reporting serious lung damage in people who vape, including some deaths. Vaping puts nicotine into the body. Nicotine is highly addictive and can:

- slow brain development in teens and affect memory, concentration, learning, self-control, attention, and mood
- increase the risk of other types of addiction later in life

E-cigarettes also:

- irritate the lungs
- may cause serious lung damage and even death
- can lead to smoking cigarettes and other forms of tobacco use

Some people use e-cigarettes to vape marijuana, THC oil, and other dangerous chemicals. Besides irritating the lungs, these drugs also affect how someone thinks, acts, and feels.

Vaping: Key Statistics

In Australia, around 14% of 12 to 17-year-olds have ever tried an e-cigarette, with around 32% of these students having used one in the past month.

Students who had vaped most commonly reported getting the last e-cigarette they had used from friends (63%), siblings (8%) or parents (7%).

Around 12% of students reported buying an e-cigarette themselves.

Key messages

The Australian Medical Association (AMA), Cancer Council Australia and the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH) have published positions on e-cigarettes, sharing the following messages:

- There is increasing evidence of health harms.
- E-cigarettes may normalise the act of smoking and attract young people.
- E-cigarettes should be more properly regulated.



Helping Children Affected By Floods

Many families have been directly or indirectly affected by recent floods. A large number of children who may have suffered major disruption, losses, or lived through frightening experiences. Many other children have been affected indirectly, through hearing about the floods or knowing someone who has lost their home. These can all be challenging experiences for children. This information will outline some strategies you can use to help children recover from a flood.

Children cope with trauma in different ways, just as adults do, and there is no one 'standard' pattern of reaction to the stress of traumatic experiences. However, children are not always able to describe and express their emotions in the same direct way that adults do and therefore often do not show the same reactions to stress as adults. It is therefore particularly important to look out for changes in children's behaviour that suggest they are unsettled or distressed, such as:

- changes in their play, drawing, dreams or spontaneous conversations
- regressive behaviour – children behaving younger than they normally do
- talking constantly about the floods
- nightmares
- anxiety about sleeping alone
- trouble getting to sleep
- irritability or anger
- tantrums
- eating less/more or fussy eating
- tummy or other aches
- withdrawing
- wanting to stay close to a parent
- problems concentrating at school.

Children are usually very resilient and for most children these reactions will gradually reduce over time with the support of families.

Source: Australian Psychological Society

How you can help children recover

After a traumatic event, **children need comfort, reassurance and support**, and to know that they are safe and are being looked after.

Find out what your children know in case they have mistaken ideas or facts about the floods, and **correct any misconceptions**.

Listen to your children's concerns. Listen closely to what they are asking or saying, and think about whether they are looking for factual information, or if the questions are expressing anxiety about the floods.

Monitor how much your children are being exposed to media stories of the floods. Children can become re-traumatised by watching repeated images on the television and it is best to try to shield them from the media.

Be aware of how you talk. Adults need to be conscious of the presence of children when discussing the floods. It is a good idea not to let children overhear adult conversations about worrying things if they cannot join in at their own age or stage of development.

And most importantly, **look after yourself** as it is likely that you have also been distressed by the experience of the floods. When parents are feeling cared for themselves they are better able to respond to the needs of their children.

COVID-19 Update

Current advice on COVID-19 is available on the school's website and on the Department's website on <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/school-safety/novel-coronavirus>. NSW Health have processes in place to identify any close contacts with confirmed cases. NSW Health and the Department of Education are in constant and close communication, as is the school. In the meantime, I ask everyone to monitor their own health, seek medical advice if they feel unwell and maintain good hygiene practices – as we would in any case. If you or your child develop flu-like symptoms you should seek medical advice, get tested for COVID-19, and keep your child at home until they have recovered. If any case of COVID-19 is confirmed in your family, please advise the school promptly.