



## **PRINCIPAL'S DESK [12/10/09]**

### Keeping Your Children Safe

As the search for the missing Auckland toddler continues we all feel deeply for the parents involved. This heartbreaking incident reminds us all about how vulnerable our young children are and how important it is to be extra vigilant about children's safety both at home and at school. Unfortunate incidents such as this one highlight the need for us to continue to focus our attention on the protection of children at school and the procedures that schools have in place in terms of safety and security.

Elmwood Normal School is committed to the care and safety of children at school and has a number of policies and procedures that provide guidelines for staff and the community. Additional security measures the school has introduced include new fencing, as well as a number of external security cameras on the buildings. The fencing not only looks impressive but is primarily designed to keep our young ones safe – the latches on the gates are higher than normal making it more difficult for the young ones to open. We prefer it this way as our very little ones should not be alone when outside their classroom and we have very helpful older children who take good care and assist when required.

Children are not permitted to leave the classroom during the school day without the teacher's permission. If this should occur, the child's teacher will immediately advise their senior manager and the school office. If the child cannot be located, parents will be contacted. (That is why we need correct contact phone numbers!) If the school has serious concerns for the safety of a child who cannot be located and the parents cannot be contacted, the school will seek support from the Police.

While the school accepts its responsibility for the care and supervision of the children from when the school grounds open at 8.30am to when the grounds close at 3.15pm, parents must understand that they need to accept responsibility for making suitable arrangements to get their children to and from school safely each day. Here are a few practical requests we ask of parents:

1. Encourage your children to make good use of the school road patrol service provided by senior pupils and duty staff. Road patrol crossings on Leinster Street and Aikmans Road operate each morning from 8.30am to 8.55am and in the afternoons from 3.00pm to 3.15pm. Parents should **not** encourage their children to ignore the crossing service.
2. We ask that those parents dropping children off in the morning or collecting them in the afternoon **keep their cars well clear of the YELLOW LINES** placed on the road side. These yellow lines are there for the safety of the children and cars that are parked in these areas, block vision. Also, if cones are placed on the roadside outside the school, please to not park in this area. The cones have been placed to reserve parking for buses that the children will be either departures or arrivals.
3. We ask that children not arrive before 8.30am and are on their way home by 3.15pm (unless being involved in supervised activity). The staff are not available to supervise

children outside of school times as they are busy with preparation work and planning meetings. Any children who are still at school after the 3.15pm bell are sent to the sickbay in the office reception area and will not be released until a parent/ caregiver calls to collect them. However we strongly ask that this not be a regular occurrence as we simply do not have the resources to provide this. We do have an after school 'user-pay' care service (Oscar) that is available for parents who are unable to collect their children after school.

4. While most parents deliver and collect their children we know that some children make their own way to and from school. For these children we encourage the use of the "Walking Bus" or that friends form groups to take care of each other. **We strongly advise that little children should never be left alone to walk to and from school.**
5. Please always contact the class teacher or leave a message on the school's absence phone line if your child is going to be absent due to sickness on any day. The school is always concerned at unexplained absences and has procedures in place to follow up. If your child is going to be away, apart from sickness, we need written notification of this, the reason and the dates of absence.
6. Please always keep our gates shut.

I take this opportunity to thank the many parents who are in and around the school on a regular basis. You add yet another care and safety dimension to our determination to keep our children safe.

Kevin Gooch  
Principal