

Recognition and praise happens every day in the classrooms

The school places considerable emphasis on rewarding and celebrating successes. There is no doubt that children gain pride and a boost to their self-esteem from being recognised for their efforts and excellence in a range of school activities. Whether it is through sport, performing arts, classroom achievement, national / international tests or simply being caught being good, the rewards and recognition are an important aspect of school life.

The school celebrates success through a range of recognition and award procedures to value achievements. Parents will be aware of the regular Celebration Assemblies, Excellence Awards presented for academic achievement, Annual Prize Giving for Y6, newsletters, public presentations of student work, website promotions of achievements, sports awards, productions and musical performances. However, the most often overlooked recognition happens every day in the classrooms where teachers are providing positive reinforcement and high praise for effort and achievement through the sharing of children's work. Inside every classroom everyday praise and recognition are strategies used by teachers that ought to be sending children home with positive feelings of having had a successful day at school.

However, the praise and recognition needs to be earned if there is to be any value placed on the praise. Children earn their recognition and praise through their active participation in the classroom, outdoor and extra-curricular activities offered to them. Teachers recognise that children have different starting points and needs. When a child responds well to the instruction, and there is a learning gain, teacher praise can do much to reinforce the learning habits being encouraged. What the child is feeling inside is often expressed in the body language shown. The sparkle in the eyes, the smiles, the spring in the step and the eagerness to explore further, are just some of the indicators of success. Reinforcing positive behaviours and recognizing those through praise and reward, is perhaps the most effective motivational strategy teachers have in their range of teaching techniques (*box of tricks*).

It needs to be said that most Year 3 to Year 6 children know when their efforts are high or low. They are smart enough to recognise for themselves when they are worthy of recognition and reward, and they know they need to earn it in order to receive it. There has to be a certain degree of credibility in the 'reward and recognition' processes. As the children get older the realities of competition emerge. Children become more independent learners and the ownership of their performance at school very much swings towards themselves. They do not expect to be rewarded for mediocrity because they know that does nothing towards adding value to their self-esteem. Yes it gets harder to gain the first prize as they get older and some may not get the top academic or sports accolades. But children learn to understand and make choices about the activities they enthusiastically participate in, and also their behaviours.

For example at our regular Celebration Assemblies, the Principal's Award is allocated to a range of children from different classrooms. This Award needs to be earned and should not be something that is received by every child as of right. It can be earned by *any* child in a class for excellence and for achieving at a high level, based on their own individual potential. Should your child come home with a Principal's Award, it is my expectation that classroom teachers have nominated your child because the Award has been well deserved and is a cause for celebration.

Kevin Gooch
Principal