

Dear Parents,

As per usual it is a very busy time of the year and we have many activities taking place. The Year 5 students have just returned from a very successful visit to Alexandria. As part of their current Unit of Inquiry they were able to visit ruins and discover some interesting and unusual facts about the Greeks and their voyages to distant lands.

Just prior to the break the Year 4 team went to Beni Sueif and looked at various environmental issues that were directly related to their Unit of Inquiry. At a later date, the Year 6 students will travel to El Alamein to look at some of the history of the Second World War.

All of these trips tie in with the current Units of inquiry that are taking place in the classrooms. While the students will certainly have fun and lots of down time, the trips are designed so that even without the confines of walls in a classroom, relevant learning experiences can still take place.

A brief reminder that Parent Conferences will take place next week. You should have received a note for sign ups which is due to be returned today. For those who have not yet returned the slip, please return by tomorrow. It is very important that parents attend these conferences to maintain the partnership between home and school.

Invoices for school fees were distributed last week. If you did not receive an invoice please contact the Finance Department directly.

On Monday March 15th we have Val Bloom visiting our school. Val is an author/story teller and she will be working with the Primary/Dutch Students during her time here. You will receive a note today that tells a little about Val and gives you the opportunity to pre order some of her books.

During the recent mid term break our family was fortunate enough to travel overseas together and while the boys have really started to co-operate at lot better, there were still those frustrating moments where the bickering and fighting drove us to the point of distraction. Sibling fighting is common but not inevitable. I thought it may be worthwhile sharing a few strategies and ideas on the things to watch out for when dealing with sibling rivalry issues.

Sometimes we as parents get drawn into sibling disputes when they don't involve us. And we become part of the problem, and become involved in the conflict. Here are ten common ways (and behaviours to be wary of) children use to involve parents in their sibling disputes:

1. Beware the teller of tales because they can draw you into disputes you don't need to be in. "Tell Tale children" tend to involve parents in fights and disputes when they don't need to be. Tales also invite parents to take sides, which may mean a fight stops momentarily. However it will begin again at another time as there may be lingering resentment about you taking sides. A good question to ask of the Tale teller is, "Are you telling me this to get someone out of trouble, or are you telling me to get someone into trouble?"

2. Beware the blame gamers for it is never, ever their fault! Some children will blame other siblings for wrongdoing but will rarely see their side in a dispute. It usually takes two or three to tango so make sure you point out their place in the dispute.

3. Beware the tantrum-throwers as they divert attention away from themselves. Kids who throw a wobbly when a sibling even looks at them in the wrong way have found a great way to keep mum or dad busy with them.

We often back off when kids throw a wobbly.

4. Beware of children's tears as they can make us feel pity rather than look at the whole story. A child who comes to you with tears in their eyes and a tale of woe sure knows how to get their parents onside. Tears work really well to gain sympathy but sometimes the person who cries the loudest is the child who caused the dispute in the first place.

5. Beware of children who say that they couldn't help hitting, hurting or misbehaving. Children always have a choice. They just choose the easy way or a way that suits them a lot of the time.

6. Beware of the child who is always, always the victim. Sometimes they revel in this role. Some children, particularly youngest kids, love to play the victim in fights and arguments with their siblings. "He always picks on me" is their catch cry. Don't give these children too much attention and give them some options about how they can keep away from their siblings if things look likely to 'cut up rough'.

7. Beware of the child who acts like the Police, always giving orders and bossing others around. They can make life unpleasant at home. First born boys can sometimes act like police officers and believe it is their job to keep peace on the 'family range'. Only trouble is they use methods more akin to the 'wild west' than you would learn in any negotiation skills workshop. Violence and power is their preferred methodology. Keep a firm eye on these kids and don't put them in charge of the 'family range' too often.

8. Beware the donkey who whines and whinges about his siblings -"Hee Hawlways picks on me!" Give them some ideas about how to deal with their siblings and refuse to drawn by incessant whining. Mind you, like water torture, whining gets to you after a while.

9. Beware children who bring home poor attitudes and behaviours that they learned at school or pre-school. You can tell sometimes what is happening in the schoolyard as children can bring home the same conflict resolution skills that they practice in the schoolyard and it is not always pretty. We treat each other well in this family is the message!

10. Beware of the home environment that uses power to resolve disputes and conflict. Children will often reflect the way that the significant adults in their family resolve conflict so make sure you use the same methods to sort out issues and disagreements with your partner that you want your children to adopt. Children tend to live what they see so make sure they see conciliation and compromise rather than bullying and power. Make sure they see assertiveness rather than aggression. And make sure they see you looking at both sides of the picture rather than your side all the time.

Kind Regards,

Nick Kendell
Head of Primary