

Cartoon: Jacob Hassall

Be wise and get kids immunised

EDITORIAL

By **ELOISE PURDON**

PARENTS – listen up. Do you want your child to be healthy and not get serious diseases? The solution is simple – vaccinate today. A little jab could be lifesaving.

If children aren't vaccinated they could get serious yet preventable diseases such as measles, mumps and whooping cough. These are only some of the diseases that our National Immunisation Program protects children against.

I can hear some of you argue that your child was vaccinated but still ended up sick. The vaccine doesn't guarantee immunity against diseases but reduces the severity of the infection. Imagine if your child wasn't vaccinated and became infected? It could possibly lead to death.

In the past there have been many myths and scare campaigns about immunisations. Some popular myths are that vaccines are unsafe and are not tested properly, vaccines can weaken the immune system and mercury in the vaccines can cause autism. The Department of Health's website explains the myths and that they are untrue.

The federal government's Department of Human Services have recently made changes to child welfare payments to encourage parents to vaccinate their children. Parents must meet immunisation requirements to receive some payments. If it came to the decision to have their child vaccinated or have their payments taken off, I am sure the majority of parents would vaccinate.

You may think that in 2015 it would be rare for children to not be vaccinated, but you may be surprised to hear that "more than 70,000 Australian children are not fully vaccinated" (National Health Performance Authority).

It is important to be vaccinated to help stop the spread of diseases. Vaccination can help prevent the spread to family, friends, co-workers and other children at schools or in care. Unimmunised children may be asked to stay at home if there is an outbreak of a vaccine preventable disease in a child care facility or school.

There are no excuses; the NSW government has a website and free smartphone app to help remind you of upcoming vaccinations.

It's clear: the benefits outweigh the reasons not to vaccinate. The more people vaccinated the more control there is over the spread of serious preventable disease.

The changing face of children's homework



Isabelle Cauchi, Matilda Ellis and Liam Canny deciding what to choose for homework.

Picture: Jordana Solomons

By **AMBER HALE**

SPELLING lists copied over and over, pages of number drills and home readers are some of the activities that are traditionally associated with homework. While worthwhile, these activities are being revamped and joined by a host of new activities.

Some schools, including St Paul's, are starting to implement homework grids as a part of or as the school's main form of homework. This new and effective way allows students to choose from a wider range of activities. Set over a fortnight, students and their parents have

more flexibility to fit homework into their busy schedules.

The homework grids have been changing the face of homework as we know it. Activities come from a broad range of areas and can include reading at home, a maths-focused task, writing a prayer, playing a card game, choosing a nutritious dinner, cooking and housework. A sport option keeps the homework active and fun.

Matthew Perkins, a primary co-ordinator and kindergarten teacher at St Paul's, introduced the grids to the school at the beginning of the year. He believed that the new system would be more fun and

encourage the students to do their homework while involving the parents more too.

Mr Perkins believes that the grids allow for consistency for parents and children as the children go through the grades. "They keep the same style of homework every year, so they don't have to learn a new way to do it the next year," he said.

The grids have been popular with students from the whole school. Students have found the grids to be more enjoyable and simpler to understand. Year 6 student Katie Bevan is a fan of the homework grid: "They are amazing, they are easier to do and it puts more fun into it".

Students no longer in knots over laces

By **MEG KENNEDY** and **AMELIA ROLLS**

SHOELACES can be a troublesome topic for teachers, parents and students alike. An Australia-wide program is aiming to help students (and their parents and teachers) with this issue.

Ascent Footwear is providing an opportunity for students in years 1 and 2 to learn the all-important life skill of tying one's own shoelaces.

This unique idea of teaching young school

children to tie their own laces was born over a simple cup of coffee. Ascent Footwear's Levi McFadden was having a coffee with another parent who mentioned her daughter couldn't tie her own shoelaces and the parent didn't know how to teach her. This resulted in Ascent Footwear and a lady called Susan Elliot coming up with the idea to visit schools.

In Term 1, Mr McFadden approached St Paul's principal Doug Garnett with the idea.



Year 2 students Lucus Smith, Ashley Horne and Arki Hearn feeling confident after their shoelace tying lesson. Picture: Hayley Sansom

Afterwards, the children were given a certificate and an easy nine-step guide to tying their laces with their parent's help.

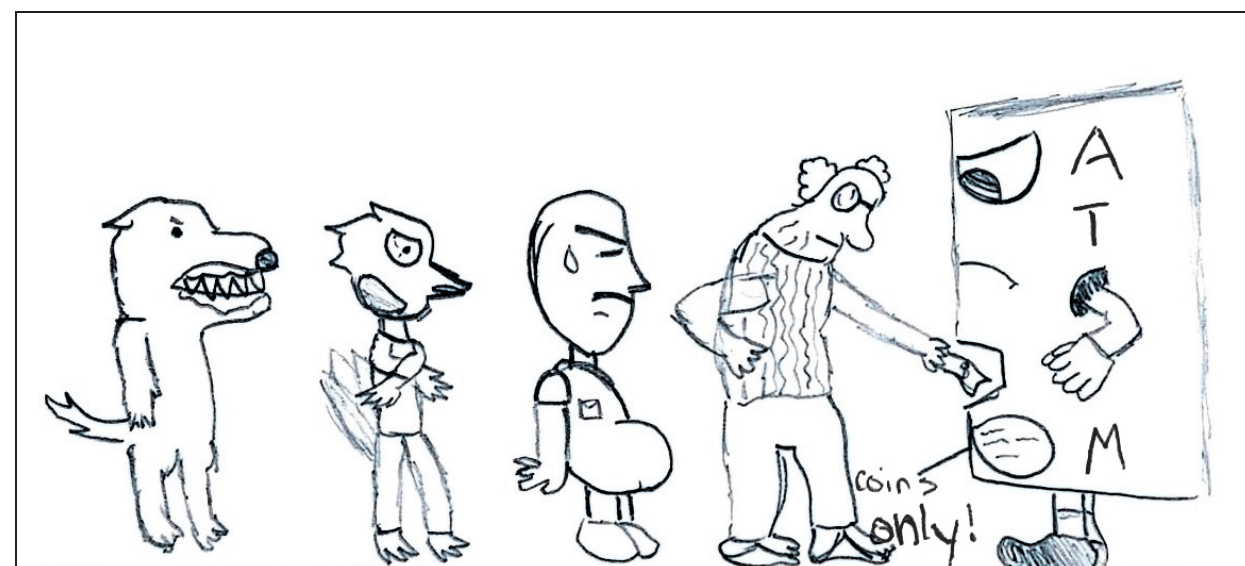
Starting in May 2014, the program began in the Bondi and Coogee area. Lessons have been conducted in 41 schools so far and many more booked in.

It was welcomed by teachers. Stage 1 children had their shoelace training soon after.

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