Over the past week, there has been quite a bit of focus in the media on the new procedures regarding students taking leave during school term for the purpose of travel.

At Hurstville Public School, we have many families who travel overseas during the year and who need to be aware of these procedures.

Until this recent change, students taking leave for holidays or travel during school terms were required to apply for a Certificate of Exemption. When this was granted, the student's leave was marked as an exemption and was not counted as an absence. The student's attendance figures, therefore, were not a true reflection of the days in which they were present at school, or absent.

One of the main reasons that there has been concern about student leave and absences is the recent research which shows the impact that absence has on a child’s academic performance.

Dr Stephen Zubrick, from the University of Western Australia, was engaged by the Education Department of Western Australia to help establish the effect of being absent on academic performance. He examined the records of 420,000 children who were followed over a five year period, finishing in 2012. He accessed 2.4 million attendance records of students in government schools.

One of the major findings of his study was that every day counts – that, indeed, there is a clear relationship between attendance and academic performance. Each day that a child misses school has a slight impact on their academic performance, as measured in things such as NAPLAN results. These effects accumulate over time. The researchers found that absences that occurred two or three years prior to their NAPLAN results were still detectable. In Western Australia, the typical primary school student misses about 16 days of school a year, and this is fairly consistent across other Australian states. Even eight days missed each school term will add up to a whole school year by the end of primary school. Those days can be authorised or approved, or they may be unauthorised or unapproved. Dr Zubrick and his team found that the unauthorised absences have a much more dramatic impact on the NAPLAN score, but both matter.

Therefore, parents need to be very mindful and selective about taking students out of school. If it happens occasionally, research tells us there will still be an impact but it may be that alternative, rich, life experiences are being provided that have a benefit of their own. However, extended absences; travel that could be taken at other times; or repeated trips during school terms will need to be considered by the Principal and Deputy Principals to determine whether they can be justified (and approved) or are unjustified (and therefore will be recorded as an unjustified absence). In either case, these absences will be included on your child’s school report and records.

Irrespective of whether your child is absent for a holiday or not, the importance of regular, punctual school attendance is undeniable. Apart from illness, children do best academically, socially and emotionally when they come to school every day.

Where possible, I encourage families to choose to travel out of school terms or, where this is not possible, to
We have uploaded a copy of the Application for Extended Leave - Travel form on our school website. Please note: this form is to be used for domestic or overseas travel for whatever purpose (holiday, family visit, cultural celebrations, medical treatment, family bereavement, etc). Once completed, a meeting needs to be arranged with our Deputy Principals or myself. Please bring the form with you, as well as copies of any documentation such as airline ticket bookings, travel itineraries etc. If approved, a Certificate of Extended Leave - Travel will be issued to you.

Included below is an information sheet for parents on Compulsory School Attendance.

Mrs Anne Hewson - Principal
My child won't go to school.
What should I do?

You should contact the principal as soon as possible to discuss the issue and ask for help. Strategies to help improve attendance may include a referral to the school’s learning and support team or linking your child with appropriate support networks. The principal may seek further support from the Home School Liaison Program to develop an Attendance Improvement Plan.

What might happen if my child continues to have unacceptable absences?

It is important to understand that the Department of Education and Communities may be required to take further action where children of compulsory school age have recurring numbers of unexplained or unjustified absences from school.

Some of the following actions may be undertaken:

- **Compulsory Schooling Conference**
  
  You may be asked, along with your child, to attend a Compulsory Schooling Conference. The conference will help to identify the supports your child may need to have in place so they attend school regularly. The school, parents and agencies will work together to develop an agreed plan (known as Undertakings) to support your child’s attendance at school.

- **Application to the Children’s Court**
  
  If your child’s attendance at school remains unsatisfactory, the Department may apply to the Children’s Court for a Compulsory Schooling Order. The Children’s Court magistrate may order a Compulsory Schooling Conference to be convened.

- **Prosecution in the Local Court**

  School and Department staff remain committed to working in partnership with you to address the issues which are preventing your child’s full participation at school. In circumstances where a breach of compulsory schooling orders occurs, further action may be taken against a parent in the Local Court. The result of court action can be the imposition of a community service order or a fine.

What age can my child leave school?

All New South Wales students must complete Year 10 or its equivalent. After Year 10, and up until they reach 17 years of age, there are a range of flexible options for students to complete their schooling.

Working in Partnership

The Department of Education and Communities recognises that working collaboratively with students and their families is the best way to support the regular attendance of students at school.

We look forward to working in partnership with you to support your child to fulfil their life opportunities.

Further information regarding school attendance can be obtained from the following websites:

- **Policy, information and brochures:**
  

- **The school leaving age:**
  

Do you need an interpreter?

Interpreting services are available on request, including for the hearing impaired. The Telephone Interpreter Service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week on 131 450. You will not be charged for this service.

For further advice and questions, contact your educational services team:

T 131 536

Learning and Engagement

Student Engagement & Interagency Partnerships

T 9244 5129

www.dec.nsw.gov.au

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NSW Department of Education and Communities

The Belltower
Early Stage 1 (Kindergarten)

Next week we will be having free vision screening for Kindergarten students at our school. If you have not had your child's eyes checked recently, then we encourage you to return the permission note as soon possible so that your child’s eyes can be checked.

A note has also been sent outlining information about our science unit for this term. Please fill in the permission note so that teachers have information about the needs of students in their class and so that all students can participate in activities in the classroom. Each week students go to the library for a 30 minute lesson. Please make sure you return library books and bags each week so that students can borrow new books. KC, KP, KW and KM have lessons on Wednesdays. KE, KK, KL and KT have lessons on Fridays.

If it is raining in the morning, please take your child to their classroom from 8.40am. There is no supervision before 8.40am.

Mrs Jessica Maakaroun – Assistant Principal

Stage 1
Year 1

As part of the Personal Development program this term, students have been visiting the Life Education van. During these sessions, students have the opportunity to meet Healthy Harold and learn about keeping safe and healthy. Discussions and activities focused on topics such as the importance of eating healthily and having the confidence to make decisions to stay safe and healthy. Students will be completing a booklet in class to reinforce the topics discussed in these sessions.

Homework has commenced and we thank parents and carers for assisting your children to complete and submit by Friday each week, along with daily reading.

It is important that children are reminded to bring and wear their hat to school, even as we approach the cooler months.

Mrs Danielle Adams – Relieving Assistant Principal
Year 2

Year 2 has been learning about celebrations from all around the world. We have been learning about Chinese New Year, Ramadan, Christmas, ANZAC Day and Australia Day, just to name a few.

2K completed some artworks based upon Chinese New Year. Students completed a cherry blossom work based upon the theme of spring in China. The artwork was created using many materials.

Students started their artwork by drawing and colouring their cherry blossom tree using various oil pastel colours to represent the texture and colours of a real tree. The background (which shows the sunrise/sunset) was created using coloured chalk and then smudging the colours together to give the illusion of the sky. The chalk was then covered with hairspray to make the beautiful colours stand out. The final steps were created using the students’ fingers. The class used their thumb and little fingers with pink and red paint to leave various sized finger prints to represent the cherry blossoms.

2K had a marvellous time learning about many aspects of Chinese New Year and experimenting with different materials to create their cherry blossom artworks. We hope that the parents and families in our community, who celebrate Chinese New Year, had a wonderful time celebrating New Year with their family and friends.

Mrs Zaga Marinkovic – Relieving Assistant Principal

Stage 2

Last Friday, Stage 2 children were involved in the Clean Up Australia-Schools event. Each class worked hard to improve our school environment and clean up all areas. After we had finished there was no rubbish to be seen!! Everyone did a great job, cooperating with all of our stage to improve our school environment. Many classes thought it was good to make our school look better and are keen to do this activity again in the future. Thank you, parents and carers, for sending gloves and bags to help your children in this activity.

Year 3 children are currently studying the unit ‘Cooperating Communities’. As part of this unit, we will be going on a walking tour around our local area. We will be looking at important parts of the Hurstville area and photographing many of the interesting things we see for use back at school. There is no cost for this excursion. Please ensure that permission notes are returned as soon as possible.

As the weather begins to cool down, children are wearing jackets in the morning but often take them off during the day. Please make sure that all of your child’s clothing is clearly marked with their name and class so that good jackets and jumpers are not lost.

Class 3S enjoyed reading a book called The Flower. This book described a world where there were NO flowers. The children thought this may be because there was so much pollution in that world that much of nature died. We decided that all of us need to do whatever we can to look after the environment, even if it is something small. The children used watercolour paint to paint these beautiful flowers for our display.

Mrs Denise Storr – Class Teacher
Buddy Reading Program
Starting Week 7, a Buddy Reading Program will begin involving some Year 3 and Year 6 students. It will operate just before lunch a few times a week for 15 minutes per session. Year 6 students who are happy to help will listen to selected Year 3 students read, with benefits to both groups of students.

Mr Terry Hume – Learning and Support Teacher

Stage 3
Years 5 and 6

Every term at Hurstville Public School is busy, and this term is proving to be no different. Our Stage 3 students have already produced some outstanding work.

Thank you to all the parents for your prompt payment for school textbooks which enables our school programs to run so smoothly.

School Uniform Dress Code
The standard of school dress is set by the school community. The staff will enforce this as much as they are able. If your child is not wearing correct school uniform then there is an expectation that an explanatory note will be provided. Students are expected to wear black shoes Monday to Thursday.

Lunch Orders
A reminder to all the families that lunch orders must be taken to the canteen before 9am. Students are not to purchase their lunches at 1.20pm as this is the time to buy only a small snack or a treat.

Ms Kate Maymystova – Classroom Teacher

Support Unit
The Support Unit is very excited as one of our teachers has been using the produce from our garden to make some lovely chutney and jam. Ms Boardman used our green tomatoes to make chutney. She used our red tomatoes to make tomato and passionfruit jam.

Ms Boardman entered The Milton Show with both the chutney, jam and our tomatoes being awarded first place together with her tomato and passionfruit jam. CONGRATULATIONS, Ms Boardman. The jam was YUMMY!!!
Premier’s Reading Challenge

The Premier’s Reading Challenge has opened for 2015. Students and parents are now able to enter details of books as they are read.

The website may be accessed through our school’s website (as outlined in previous ‘Belltower’ edition), or by using the following address:


If you would like your child to participate it is important to follow these steps to register through the website:

1. Logon by selecting ‘logon’ from the left-hand side of the home page.
2. Type in the Username and Password the student uses to log on to the internet AT SCHOOL. This will allow him/her to type in the titles of the books that have been read. If you do not know the password please ask the class teacher. This information is NOT available from the Library.

Please make sure that you read the instructions regarding the books that should be read. Extensive book lists are shown on the website. If you have any questions or problems regarding the challenge, please contact me at the Library.

Please note also that students may read books from other libraries (Hurstville City Library has a large number of challenge books available), or from home.

Library Bags

All Kindergarten children should now have a bag to use for book borrowing. Please take care of the books and bags so that your child is able to continue borrowing. Also, please remember that Library bags are no longer sold at the Library. All-purpose bags are available at ‘My Schoolwear Shop’ located at 2/229 Forest Road (opposite the Post Office).

Scholastic Book Club

The first issue of our book club brochures have been distributed to children. There are now four methods of payment available; however, the Parent Online Payment (POP) system is not one of them, as the money here goes directly to Scholastic, not to the school:

- Credit card using the new LOOP facility
- Credit card by phone or online
- Cash
- Cheque made payable to ‘Scholastic Australia’

Orders must be returned by Wednesday of the following week. Unfortunately, late orders cannot be accepted.

Ms Leslie Hyde – Teacher/Librarian
Last week the SRC held our 2015 induction ceremony. At our induction, Mrs Hewson talked to the students about what role models are. She discussed the importance of having role models and that our SRC students are being role models to others wherever they go. Mrs Hewson also discussed with the students their roles and responsibilities as representatives for their class, our school and our community.

Thank you to Mrs Hewson as well as the family members and friends who were able to take time out of their busy schedules to join us at this wonderful event. All of our students demonstrated the school values through their behaviour and manners throughout the induction. They truly are role models for their classes and for the school.

Mrs Kate Carey, Ms Erin Piper, Ms Vanessa Hoskin, Mrs Anna Kakakios and all of the SRC students

Extracurricular News

Speech and Language Program
To ensure our students are given the very best opportunity to learn the specific skills necessary to be successful speakers, listeners, readers and writers, our school has again chosen to employ a Speech Pathologist for a specific project throughout Terms 1 and 2 of 2015.

Loren Apokourastos is a qualified Speech Pathologist who works for Educational Speech Pathology & Therapy Services. Loren will be working at our school every Wednesday and Friday for the first Semester of this year. Loren’s main role will be to work with our teachers in classrooms to support the speaking and listening skills of the students. In 2014 the program focus was in Kindergarten and Year 1. This year our school has chosen to focus the program in Year 2 and Year 3 classrooms.

Additionally, Olivia Green, a Speech Pathologist who also works for Educational Speech Pathology and Therapy Services, will be working in the Support Unit this semester on Wednesdays. She will be assisting teachers in supporting students to develop their communication skills.

In each Belltower issue, Loren and Olivia will provide a practical suggestion of ways that you can support the speaking and listening skills of your child at home.

www.educationalspeechpathology.com.au

On the weekend with your child play “I went to the shop and I bought”

How?
Play this game, taking turns at adding another item that starts with the same sound. e.g. ‘I went shopping and I bought sausages, soap, spaghetti etc.’

Why?
This will help your child to ‘tune into’ the sound system of the English language and develop their memory skills.

How do I help?
Remind your child to think of the sound the word starts with (not the letter).

How do I make it harder?
Ask your child to think of items with the same ‘end’ sound. E.g. carrot, meat, chocolate etc.
Zone Swimming Carnival
Congratulations to all the boys and girls who entered races and who achieved so many great results at the zone swimming carnival. It was amazing to see so many students compete in races and cheer on and encourage other competitors. Several of our students were fast enough to qualify for the regional swimming carnival. We wish them the best of luck as they compete on behalf of Hurstville Public School. ALL of our students demonstrated outstanding sportsmanship and manners.
A big thank you to the parents who helped on the day. We cannot thank you enough. We are so grateful for the time given to help with duties and the encouragement given to all the students.

Ms Kate Maymystova and Miss Bronwyn Moar – Classroom Teachers

Parent Teacher Interviews
Parent/Teacher interviews will be held in Weeks 9 and 10 this term. This is a great opportunity for parents to discuss their child’s learning with the classroom teacher. A note will be sent home in Week 8 detailing how to book your interview time online.

If you require an interpreter interview, you will need to complete the slip attached to the note and return it to the class teacher. Interpreter interviews cannot be booked online. Interpreter interviews will be held on Wednesday 25th March and 1st April.

School Photographs
Your child’s class photograph will be taken on Monday 23rd March or Tuesday 24th March. Please check the timetable below, which indicates the day that your child will need to bring their Photo Order envelope complete with payment. DO NOT use the school's parent on-line payment system for school photos.

Please ensure that your child is dressed in their correct summer uniform on their photo day and they are wearing correct shoes and socks. If it is a cool day, please do not dress your child with any coloured clothes that will show under their uniform.

Family photos will be taken on Monday 23rd March. If you require a family photo, please collect an envelope from the front office and return it on that day.
VOLUNTEER ETHICS TEACHERS NEEDED

Philosophical ethics classes are available to students from K-6 in NSW public schools. Ethics classes are an option for students who do not attend Special Religious Education (SRE) / Scripture.

Primary Ethics is the organisation authorised by the NSW state government to create curriculum and deliver ethics classes. All classes are taught by vetted and trained volunteers.

At Hurstville Public School we currently have one ethics class for Year 6, and two classes for K-2. We would like to offer more, but we need volunteers to teach these classes.

Ethics Teachers are given full training in how to run an ethics class. Classes are 45 minutes each week with groups of 8-22 children. Applications are welcome from anyone in the school and wider community to become a trained ethics teacher. To find out more about these roles and how to apply online, please visit: [http://www.primaryethics.com.au/volunteers.html](http://www.primaryethics.com.au/volunteers.html)

For further information about ethics classes, please go to: [www.primaryethics.com.au](http://www.primaryethics.com.au) or contact Hurstville Public School’s Ethics Coordinator, Neil Devine, on 0478 589 989 or by email devine.neil@gmail.com.

Regards,

Neil Devine
Ethics Coordinator
Chinese New Year Celebration
at
Hurstville Public School

On Monday 23rd February, all students from Kindergarten to Year 6, and their teachers, gathered for Morning Assembly to join with our Chinese community in celebrating Chinese New Year for 2015, the Year of the Sheep.

Students looked resplendent in their traditional Chinese costumes and their red clothing. Year 2 students, Silvia, Bertina and Angelina, spoke confidently about some facts they had researched about the celebration. The highlight of the assembly was the appearance of the dragon, which appeared and moved to the sounds of drumming music. We wonder who belonged to the legs that paraded that dragon around the playground!