

The Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.

Journeying with joy and respect

Respectful Relationships education at Abbotsleigh

Mrs Megan Krimmer
Headmistress

'Respect' is central to who we are at Abbotsleigh. Indeed, respect – treating ourselves and others with the utmost dignity, equality and kindness – was seen as so important to Abbotsleigh that many years ago, our girls and staff voted for it to be included as one of our core school values – integrity, **respect**, compassion, courage and perseverance. These are values which everyone in our Abbotsleigh community highlights, fosters and tries to live out all day, every day.

This year, our Director of Wellbeing and Counselling, Mrs Liz Cannon, and a team of Abbotsleigh Junior and Senior School staff have been working in partnership with Independent Schools New South Wales (ISNSW) and many other independent schools to augment the already excellent work that we all do in educating our young people about respect and the importance of developing healthy and respectful relationships.

'We are excited about the possibilities this project brings. By strengthening respectful relationships across our

school community, we are investing in a future where our students are not only academically capable but also emotionally intelligent, socially aware and deeply respectful of others.' Mrs Liz Cannon

As part of this excellent initiative, Mrs Cannon and our Head Prefect, Laura Jones, launched the Respectful Relationships Project to our Senior School girls in their assembly this week. In fact, Laura saw this project as so important that she used a break between studying and sitting for her HSC Trial Examinations to prepare a poignant speech and deliver this to the girls.

I warmly commend to you Mrs Cannon's assembly presentation, her encouragement for the girls to use their voice and become involved in the project, and Laura's speech below. I encourage you also to discuss respect and fostering respectful relationships with your daughters – treating ourselves and each other with the utmost respect is so important in our complex 21st-century world.



ABBOTSLEIGH

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Respectful Relationships

Mrs Liz Cannon

Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

Today we are launching an exciting new project at Abbotsleigh: Respectful Relationships.

While the name may be new, the concept is certainly not. For 141 years, respect has been at the heart of our community and is one of our core school values and something we strive to demonstrate every day in the way we learn, lead and care for one another.

We are also fortunate to be partnering with Independent Schools NSW as part of a wider Respectful Relationships project and with a number of independent schools including Knox Grammar, Shore, Wenona and many more.

Together, we recognise the importance of equipping you with the knowledge, skills and confidence to build healthy, safe and positive relationships throughout your lives.

At Abbotsleigh, we want every girl to feel known, valued and connected. Guided by our Christian faith and school values, we aim to help you flourish academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually and Respectful Relationships are a key part of making that happen.

Respectful relationships are about the way we treat one another every day. They influence our interactions with friends, family, partners, classmates, teachers, teammates and people we connect with online, and all sorts of people with whom we interact, e.g. shop assistants, bus drivers etc.

Respect can look like kind words, kind actions, kind thoughts and kind attitudes. Respect is also about:

- Listening to others
- Showing kindness and empathy
- Including others
- Valuing differences and not stereotyping people
- Treating people fairly
- Respecting boundaries, and being an ally – standing up for others when needed.

These may seem like small actions, but they help build trust, safety, equality, belonging and strong positive relationships.

Why is this initiative important?

Some aspects of respectful relationships are easier to talk about. Most of us understand the importance of being kind, showing empathy, listening well and treating others with respect.

But there are also aspects of relationships that are more complex and sometimes harder and more sensitive to discuss.



These include building safe and equal relationships, fully understanding consent and boundaries, identifying coercive or controlling behaviours, and understanding issues such as gender-based violence.

These topics can be challenging, but they are really important. As young women growing up in a complex world, you deserve opportunities to learn about them, ask questions and develop the skills to navigate relationships safely and respectfully at age-appropriate times, so that as you leave school you are fully empowered in this area.

If any of the information we are discussing is concerning to you or raises issues, please reach out to a parent, a trusted adult, teacher, tutor or the Kids Helpline 1800 551 800. We are here to support you.

As we know, this work on Respectful Relationships is not new at Abbotsleigh.

Many of these topics are already explored through our wellbeing programs, TRP, PDHPE lessons, assemblies, Chapel, guest speakers and presentations.

This initiative allows us to build on that strong foundation and ensure we continue providing the best possible support for you as young women, current and future leaders. Our school is working hard on this – our staff have done surveys and additional training to learn more about supporting you in this area.

And now we want *your voice*, as the most important part of this initiative is your input.

We do not want this to be something we simply deliver to you. We want it to be something we build together.

Throughout the year, we will seek your feedback through surveys and focus groups. We want to hear:

- What is already working well
- What challenges you are noticing
- What you would like to learn more about
- How we can further strengthen respectful relationships in our community.

Your voice will further help shape this work and the culture of kindness and respect at our school.



Moving forward together

This initiative belongs to all of us. The culture of our school is shaped every day through the choices we make: how we speak, how we listen, how we include others and how we respond when someone needs support.

Respectful relationships are not built in one big moment. They are built through small actions, repeated every day.

We are excited to begin this journey with you as we continue building a community where every girl feels known, valued, respected and able to thrive and flourish today and in the future.

Being an ally: Respectful Relationships

Laura Jones
Head Prefect

Respectful relationships also mean we have a responsibility to speak up or act when we see others being treated in a way where they are not being valued for who they are. We might call this being an ally, and it is just as important as standing up for ourselves. It can be difficult, and it takes a lot of courage, so learning how to be an ally is crucial.

On the screen, you can see some points on what being an ally looks like. It might mean:

- Including someone who feels left out
- Supporting a friend who is struggling
- Challenging stereotypes respectfully
- Speaking up when something doesn't feel right
- And remembering that sometimes the smallest acts can make the biggest difference to someone's experience.

Later in the term we will have an RU OK Day assembly where we continue to learn more about this, and about respectful relationships and being there for one another. But I thought it might be helpful to share some examples I have witnessed of others being great allies.

Believe it or not, and this is not an exaggeration, for the first part of Year 7 I sat by myself in every single one of my classes. This isn't supposed to be a pity story because I do have the most amazing friends now, but coming to Abbotsleigh as a new girl, I found it hard at first to feel included. Yet I distinctly remember the moment when I walked into a Geography class with my peers, and someone chose to sit down next to me. I didn't ask her to, and she didn't make a big deal of it, but in that moment I was made to feel included. It meant everything to me to feel like I now had someone, an ally with whom I could learn that 'lat is flat and first'. (Just some revision in case anyone has a geography assessment coming up – hopefully I got that right!)

Now most of you wouldn't have witnessed this (because it was before your time), but during Year 8 when COVID was still rife, I wore a duckbill mask to school every day. In case the name doesn't give it away, it is a gorgeous orange accessory that does indeed make you look like a duck. Now I did gain a bit of a nickname and overheard some people call me 'ducky'. Obviously, I didn't feel great



about it, but I do remember confiding in my debating friends, and before I knew it, we were laughing about the whole thing, and ducky became a term of endearment. I'm asthmatic, so wearing the mask was important for me to maintain my health, and I didn't really have a choice. But after my friends hyped me up, I wouldn't have had it any other way.

Finally, I distinctly remember one afternoon when I was in Junior School, my mum picked me up from school and so proudly told me about how my brother had been an ally. At his school, during lunchtime, some boys had singled out one of the quieter boys and were teasing him. It escalated, with more and more kids trying to encourage other kids to join in, but when someone jeered, 'isn't he weird, he doesn't have any friends', my brother replied, 'that's not true because I'm his friend'. This proved to me the importance of speaking up when something isn't right.

All of these examples of people's courage in being an ally help remind me of the importance of ensuring that everyone is treated with the respect they deserve.

Being an upstander or an ally can be scary, but you can probably all think of a time someone stood up for you. Think of how valued that made you feel because that is the positive impact you can have on someone else.

Respectful relationships have always been an important part of Abbotsleigh. In the process of educating us students about Respectful Relationships and ensuring this is the foundation of our school community, we really do need your voice in this process...



Chaplain

Respect

Rev Sarah Hobba
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

One of the great joys of belonging to a school community is knowing that we do not journey alone and we journey with a diversity of people. Each day, through conversations in the classroom, friendships in the playground, encouragement from teachers and the support of our families, we experience the care of others. God is a relational God, and created us for relationship with him and each other. It is within these relationships that we have the opportunity to reflect His love. The Apostle Peter wrote to Christians in what is now modern-day Turkey and called them to ‘show proper respect to everyone’. In a society marked by status and hierarchy, this was a radical reminder that every person bears God's image and is deserving of dignity and respect.

Respect is much more than good manners. It is expressed through everyday choices. Characteristics of respectful relationships include listening well, speaking kindly, including others, valuing differences and standing alongside those who may feel overlooked. Sometimes respect requires courage, particularly when we speak up for others or choose kindness when it is not the easiest path. Jesus demonstrates throughout the Gospels how he consistently treated people with dignity and compassion, regardless of their background, status or circumstances. He listened to those whom others ignored, welcomed



those who were excluded and showed grace to those who had made mistakes. In doing so, Jesus reminds us that every person is worthy of love and respect. Through his death and resurrection, he also offers forgiveness when we fall short of treating others, or ourselves, as God intends, as well as the transforming love and power to live differently. As we continue to foster respectful relationships within our community, may we look to Christ's example and seek to reflect His love through our words, actions and choices each day.

1 Peter 2:16-17

¹⁶ Live as free people, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as those serving God. ¹⁷ Show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honour the emperor.

Upcoming events

WHOLE SCHOOL

Parent Wellbeing Hive – parent wellbeing resources	Available to all parents on the Parent Portal	Click here to visit
Grace Cossington Smith Art Award exhibition	Saturday 18 July to Saturday 15 August	Grace Cossington Smith Gallery
2026 Foundation Gala Dinner	Saturday 15 August 6.30-11 pm	Doltone House, Darling Island Tickets available now: click here

JUNIOR SCHOOL

Years 1-3 Gateways Maths Workshop	Monday 10 August	Mt Colah Public School
Years 4-6 Gateways Maths Workshop	Tuesday 11 August	Mt Colah Public School
Stage 3 Science and Maths Week incursion day	Monday 17 August	Various JS locations
Stage 2 Science and Maths Week incursion day	Tuesday 18 August	Various JS locations
Stage 1 Science and Maths Week incursion day	Wednesday 19 August	Various JS locations
Year 4 MCA excursion	Thursday 20 August	Museum of Contemporary Art
Primary ensembles music concert	Friday 21 August 6.30-8 pm	Senior School Assembly Hall

SENIOR SCHOOL

Saturday sport	Saturday 8 August	Click here
Year 11 Agriculture excursion	Monday 10 to Wednesday 12 August	Quirindi
Years 8 and 9 Pastoral Care concert	Monday 10 August 12.45-1.15 pm	PDCH
Middle School Public Speaking competition	Tuesday 11 August 12.45-1.15 pm	Assembly Hall
Japan Concert Band rehearsal	Tuesday 11 August 3.30-5.30 pm	PDCH
IGSA Archdale Debating – tie-breaker round	Tuesday 11 August 4-8 pm	Various locations
Year 11 Bennelong in London theatre excursion	Wednesday 12 August	Sydney Theatre Company
Japan Jazz Ensemble rehearsal	Friday 14 August 3.30-4.45 pm	To be determined
SDN Debating competition – round 5	Friday 14 August 4-9 pm	Various locations
Japan Concert Band rehearsal	Tuesday 18 August 3.30-5.30 pm	PDCH
IGSA Archdale Debating – tie-breaker round	Tuesday 18 August 4-8 pm	Various locations
Year 8 Write a Book in a Day	Wednesday 19 August	Library seminar rooms
Year 7 vaccinations	Wednesday 19 August 8.20 am-2 pm	GLC
House debating	Wednesday 19 August 1.20-2 pm	Assembly Hall
Women in Epicurean Industries breakfast	Thursday 20 August 7-8.15 am	Library seminar rooms
Japan Jazz Ensemble rehearsal	Friday 21 August 3.30-4.45 pm	To be determined
SDN Debating competition – round 5	Friday 21 August 4-9 pm	Various locations

