



# MURRAY BRIDGE SPECIAL SCHOOL

RESEARCH INTO ACTION

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AN ANXIOUS CHILD IS NOT A LEARNING CHILD

## Murray Bridge Special School Newsletter



### **Special Welcomes!**

A warm and special welcome is extended to our new learners and their families. We are privileged to welcome into our community the very wonderful and precious **Sophia Peter, and Raeshawn Mathie**. Please join us in welcoming them!

Welcome also to **Kerry Lienert and Casey Barnett**, two very experienced School Services Officers who have been working across the school to replace our own School Services Officers when they are on leave. Kerry currently works part time in the Inclusive Education Centre at Murray Bridge High, and Casey works part time at Murray Bridge South School supporting students with complex learning needs. They are an invaluable asset to our team!



### **Important Reminder Information**

This coming Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 is a Public Holiday. The school will be closed on this day.

The Winter school break commences Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> of July for our beautiful young learners. **School finishes one hour earlier**. Although still weeks away, we all wish you in advance a wonderful and safe time during the break with your families. School recommences **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> of July**.

## **Term 3 Dates For 2021**

**Term 3 – Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

### **COVID-19 Update**

We have been extremely fortunate so far in South Australia that gradually and carefully we are getting back to some sense of normal. In order to remain safe and continue to move forward there are still a number of practices we need to maintain. Although the size of gatherings that can occur has increased significantly, there are still restrictions. This means for now we will need to continue to **stop adults gathering in the foyer area of the school** at drop off and pick up times due to the small size of the area - there simply isn't enough safe space.

Physical distancing continues to apply and probably will for some time. **Face to face meetings, including with your child's Learning Facilitator still go ahead**, however don't forget to negotiate a time first as the Learning Facilitator will need to book an appropriately sized space. If entering the school, please don't forget to check in using the school QR code. **Good hygiene practices are essential, including frequent effective hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes.**

**It is my understanding the additional day cleaning of the school will continue in term 3.**

Kirsty our super school cleaner has been doing an extraordinary job and many thanks go to her for continuing to assist keep our precious learners safe.

Thank you to the many parents and carers who are respecting and helping us with the school entry rules which are also building their own children's independence and resilience. I do wish to thank everyone sincerely; including our incredible learners, their families and our wonderful staff for their patience and understanding as we negotiate our way through continuously uncharted waters. **Everything will be okay again in time, we just need to keep supporting one another and demonstrating the overwhelming patience and kindness I am witness to every day!**

### **Thank You, Thank You, Thank You**

Protecting the health and wellbeing of our precious learners is a priority. Many of our learners have fragile unpredictable health concerns and/or require frequent ongoing medical assessments and appointments. **It is important our learners attend only in appropriate circumstances.** For example if a learner is unwell or significantly stressed; is recovering from a recent illness; has had recent surgery or hospitalization, or requires a standard of health or psychological care outside of the duty of care abilities of teaching or school support staff, then it is not in the learners best interests to attend, and if they come to school you will be contacted to take them home where they can receive the care and attention that cannot occur in a school setting. If a child is unwell or has other pain or illness, then very little if any learning occurs. Rather they can end up having an uncomfortable or distressing day at school. There has been an overwhelming number of virus' and other nasties circulating this year. We are finding families are keeping their children home when they are not well to recover in the comfort and love of their families. Thank you for not only caring for your own child, but for those around them who may be significantly impacted by your child attending when unwell.

## **A Focus On Health – Can Medical Issues Cause Aggressive Behaviour?**

In this newsletter for our shared learning we reprint information sourced from TACA (The Autism Community In Action). Although this information is specifically shaped for families with children with Autism, it is relevant for any family who has a child with additional needs. TACA use the term 'aggression/aggressive', however I would prefer to use the term 'anxiety or distress that is communicated through unsafe behaviours'.

.....'Several underlying medical issues, common to autism, can cause or contribute to aggressive behaviour. However, when these medical issues are properly treated, challenging behaviours may decrease or even disappear altogether, significantly improving your child's outcomes and quality of life.

As parents, we understand that behaviour is a form of communication. In other words, our children are not purposefully hurting themselves or others. While many doctors may dismiss behaviour as just part of autism, our children often use their behaviour to communicate to us that they are in pain or don't feel well.

Therefore, it is crucial to:

- Find and work with a doctor who can effectively identify and address any underlying medical issues that cause or contribute to aggression.
- Familiarize yourself with the signs and symptoms of medical issues that trigger aggression so you can effectively advocate for your child in medical settings.
- Add qualified and experienced doctors and other specialists to help you pinpoint how to address aggressive behaviour medically. If you need to add a gastroenterologist, neurologist, immunologist, or another specialist to your child's team, please look for providers who are knowledgeable about autism or disability.

## medical causes of **aggression** in autism

### • **Pain Caused By:**

- Gastrointestinal Issues
- Dental Issues
- Headaches/Migraines
- Sinus Infection/Congestion
- Earaches/Ear Infection

### • **Seizures**

### • **GI Issues:**

- Constipation
- Overgrowth of Pathogenic Gut Bacteria
  - Clostridia
- Eosinophilic Disorders
- Parasites

### • **Low Cholesterol**

### • **Chronic Underlying Infection:**

- PANDAS/PANS
- Lyme and Lyme Co-Infections

### • **Medication Side Effects**

### • **Low Blood Sugar**

### • **Endocrine Issues:**

- Thyroid Issues
- Adrenal Fatigue/Low Cortisol

### • **Vitamin/Mineral Deficiency:**

- Lithium
- Potassium
- Folate
- Magnesium

### • **Hormone Imbalance:**

- Excess Androgens
- Impaired Serotonin Activity

### • **Anxiety/OCD**

### • **Food Allergies/Sensitivities:**

- Phenols and Salicylates



Pain - As mentioned above, behaviour is communication. Many of our children cannot express their pain in any way other than with behaviour. This pain is most often caused by:

- Gastrointestinal issues (see more below)
- Dental issues
- Headaches or migraines
- Sinus infection/congestion
- Earaches/ear infection

Gastrointestinal issues are the most common medical cause of aggression in autism. Not only can they trigger aggressive behaviour in response to the pain they cause, but they can also alter neurotransmitters, which influence mood.

Constipation is extremely painful and can cause aggression in a child or adult. Children can have bowel movements daily and still be constipated. The best way to check for constipation is with an abdominal x-ray. If it shows constipation, a proper clean-out should help constipation, relieve the pain, and help the aggression.

The gut is our second brain. It produces neurotransmitters and controls mood. Unfortunately, we know that GI problems are four times more common in children with autism than neuro-typical children.

One such pathogenic bacteria is Clostridia. There are over 200 known Clostridium strains of flora in the gut, but a select few cause behaviours when they get overgrown. These behaviours can include screeching, aggression, and stimming.

Parasitic infections are often missed, and they are more common than most people realize. When the immune system is weakened, or the pH of the stomach is too basic, parasites can take hold. Chronic digestive issues, aggression, irritability, behavioural changes, and autoimmunity are all signs of a possible parasitic infection.

Low cholesterol can present as aggression and hostility. Fortunately, a simple blood test can check cholesterol levels. You can treat low cholesterol through nutritional modifications. For example, you can include more foods that are high in cholesterol in your child's diet, such as eggs.

If your child's blood sugar drops, you can see aggression and extreme moodiness. So, if your child wakes up in the morning or after a nap crying, try feeding your child a high fibre and high protein meal before bed. If low blood sugar is triggering your child's aggressive behaviour, try feeding him/her more frequently. Doing so may help prevent their blood sugar from dipping.

Hormones - Androgens are hormones that are involved in reproductive activity. The main androgens are testosterone and androstenedione. A large number of studies have found elevated androgens associated with autism spectrum disorders.

When serotonin in the brain is too low, or the breakdown and clearance of serotonin in the brain is impaired, you will see symptoms such as rage, depression, difficulty sleeping, and more. Neurotransmitters are made in the gut; therefore, a healthy diet free of processed foods can be beneficial.

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies are another medical issue that can cause aggression. When trying to determine if a vitamin or mineral deficiency is causing your child's aggressive behaviour, please be sure to ask their doctor about lithium, potassium, folate, and magnesium.

Anxiety can cause kids to get aggressive, even if they don't mean to be. Many underlying medical issues can cause anxiety, and there are many ways to treat anxiety in autism.

Medication Side Effects - Please be sure to keep detailed notes when starting a new medication or supplement. There are some medications and supplements that are more



likely to cause aggression as a side effect than others. None of our children are the same; therefore, their reactions to medications and supplements can vary widely. Unquestionably, there is a lot to sort through to determine if a medical issue is causing your child's aggression. **Recognizing that behaviour is communication is the first step to success.** You need to follow the clues to see where they lead you. As the parent, you know your child best. You are their trusted advocate. For this reason, you hold great power in getting your child into a better place. With the right resources, you can do this. It is not an easy road, but your child is definitely worth it!

### **External School Review**

Every three years all sites undertake an external school review. External school review is an evidence-informed external evaluation of an individual school's capacity to improve student learning. External school review strengthens a school's focus on learning by providing an expert external perspective to verify or challenge internal self-review processes and findings, the rigour of improvement practices, and the school's capacity to achieve or sustain learning improvement over time.

External school review:

- is transparent and intentional
- generally happens every 3 years
- does not include everything a school does

The ESR addresses:

- the impact of previous external review directions on school improvement
- school improvement planning processes
- 2 - 3 other points of interest (lines of inquiry) determined by the principal, ED and Review Officer prior to the review.

The ESR is conducted by review officers from the Review, Improvement and Accountability Team. Review officers are senior educators with extensive experience of leading and managing schools.

The review is conducted in 4 stages which include:

- data analysis
- pre-review to determine lines of inquiry
- on-site visit
- reporting

Our external school review is scheduled for week 2 term 3 2021.

### **THRIFT SHOP—SOUP KITCHEN**

Serving a selection of soups and dessert @ the Uniting Church Hall, Monash Terrace on Wednesday June 16th 2021 between 11.30am and 1.00pm.

Come and enjoy friendship over a shared meal.

Free or a gold coin donation.

## **A Reminder - School Fees**

If you are eligible for School Card, please **complete an application on line** as soon as possible. The online application is available at **[www.sa.gov.au/ education/schoolcard](http://www.sa.gov.au/education/schoolcard)**

**If you need any assistance applying online, just contact Donna at school and she is very happy to help you complete the application. Donna has done this with other families and it only takes approximately 10 minutes.**

# APPLYING FOR A SCHOOL CARD



## All types of School Card applications **are now online.**

You can access the online forms from any device that gets internet, including mobile devices, such as tablets and smart phones, as well as laptops and computers.

Applying online is easy! Simply follow the steps below.

- STEP 1** Visit **[sa.gov.au/education/schoolcard](http://sa.gov.au/education/schoolcard)**
- STEP 2** Select the type of School Card you would like to apply for (for example 'Type A') and follow the prompts.
- STEP 3** Complete all mandatory fields.  
*Please note: you cannot submit your application unless all mandatory fields are complete.*
- STEP 4** Once you have completed a page click on the 'NEXT' button.
- STEP 5** Once you have filled out all pages click the 'SUBMIT' button.  
*Please note: if you exit the form without clicking 'SUBMIT' your details will be lost.*

You can save the form, and return to complete it at another time, by clicking on the 'SAVE' button.



[sa.gov.au/education/schoolcard](http://sa.gov.au/education/schoolcard)



Government  
of South Australia  
Department for Education

## Murray Bridge North School OSHC

Before School, After School and  
Vacation Care Programs.

### **Catering for your needs on your local school site**

Open daily 630am and close 6.30pm

*This service will operate a 6am start if there is a demand. Please contact the service or school to register your interest.*

Quality care, competitive prices, fun activities, friends to be made, games, arts, crafts, good food and special events all in a home like environment.

**Contact OSHC 08 85310179 or 0417825455**

**“When little people are overwhelmed by BIG emotions it’s our job to share our calm,  
NOT to join their chaos”** L.R Knosk Child Development Researcher U.S.A

**Enjoy Every Precious Moment Together!**



Warmest Regards Always,  
Vicki Smith  
Principal  
June 2021



Government of South Australia  
Department for Education