



THE WAY

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FROM THE HEAD OF JUNIOR SCHOOL

In many ways, it is a natural instinct as parents to want our children to be happy and protected from difficulty. Of course we do. However, I would like to gently challenge this thinking with a question for reflection.

What would you do if your child forgot their lunch or PE uniform?

Would you immediately step in to smooth the path, or would you allow your child the opportunity to navigate the situation themselves?

Drawing on the work of Justin Coulson on anxiety, our Junior School approach of encouraging students into the “learning pit,” and the concept of “lighthouse parenting” coined by Kenneth Ginsburg, there is a consistent message: children need opportunities to struggle safely in order to grow.

Lighthouse parents are steady, reliable and always visible. A lighthouse does not jump into the water after every ship, nor does it remove every rock from the shore. Instead, it stands firm - offering guidance, boundaries and reassurance. In the same way, lighthouse parents are present, loving and trustworthy, yet they avoid hovering or rescuing too quickly. They allow space for children to take appropriate risks, make mistakes and develop resilience.

This approach is widely regarded as the gold standard for fostering confidence, problem-solving skills, emotional intelligence and resilience. When we allow children to experience manageable setbacks, we are not being unkind; we are equipping them for life.

Allowing a child to forget a lunch once, or manage the consequence of a forgotten uniform, can be far more powerful than rescuing them every time. Safe failure builds capable young people.

I warmly invite further conversation on this topic at our upcoming Parent Café. In the next edition, I will explore practical principles of lighthouse parenting and how we can apply them in everyday family life.

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Head of Junior School
