THE WAY

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

One of the great privileges of school life is seeing students grow not only in their learning, but also in their relationships. Friendships are an important part of a young person's development. They help children and teenagers feel known and connected, and they provide daily opportunities to practise kindness, patience, forgiveness and respect. It takes courage to open up to others and be vulnerable.

A strong sense of belonging matters deeply. When students feel that they are part of a safe and caring community, they are more likely to engage with their learning. This helps them to contribute positively, and seek support when they need it. Belonging is built in the small moments like when we are greeted by name or invited into a conversation, encouraged by a teacher, or noticed by a peer.

It is often the shared experiences that create the strongest memories and deepen students' sense of connection. We do seek to include such experiences in our calendar. Camps provide time away from the usual routines and enable students to learn ways to encourage one another and discover more about themselves. In Junior School, events such as the discos this week give students a joyful opportunity to be together in a space where they can both participate and belong. These occasions may appear simple, but they are powerful in helping students form friendships and build confidence in social settings.

This week we also welcomed back our Year 12 students after their Trial examinations with a relaxed morning together, enjoying donuts and hot chocolate. They chose to incorporate a mufti-

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style day, wearing pyjamas, which provided a light-hearted and appropriate way to reconnect after the focus and intensity of exams. It was a lovely reminder that relationships are nurtured not only in formal learning moments, but also through the informal times when students can pause and enjoy one another's company. We are really proud of this year's students.

Friendships, however, do not always come easily. Like any important skill, social skills take time. Students are learning how to start conversations, listen to one another and take turns. Equally repairing relationships when conflict arises is a skill. One that adults find difficult too.

At Thomas Hassall we want to support students in building healthy friendships that are based on respect. This happens in our classrooms as well as during pastoral care lessons and on the playground. We want to encourage students to understand that friendship is not simply about finding people who are exactly like us, but about learning to show patience and respect for others. I think we are all a work in progress. Sometimes we all make mistakes and can hurt others.

As a Christian community, we are reminded that every student is created in the image of God and is worthy of dignity. My hope is that Thomas Hassall will continue to be a place where students learn to be good friends, to include others, and to contribute to a community marked by kindness.

> *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*
>
> ***Ephesians 4:32***

Mrs Karen Easton
Principal

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