In 2016, Pakenham Springs is excited to become a part of the Alannah & Madeline Foundation’s Better Buddies Program. This program will involve our Year Prep and 4 students and will include opportunities for students to work together on cooperative tasks, share experiences during Assemblies and participate in some joint activities (i.e. some sports sessions, special celebrations, etc).

**Benefits to your child**

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation’s Better Buddies Framework is based on several years of research into buddy programs in schools. Buddy systems play an important role in helping to create safe school environments.

Buddy systems teach, and give children the opportunity to practise, the important values of respect, care, valuing difference, responsibility, friendship and including others. Through looking after and caring for smaller, vulnerable children who are just starting school, older children learn the skills associated with empathy and compassion through activities in the classroom and in the playground. This helps combat bullying and other forms of antisocial behaviour such as harassment and teasing. Teaching pro-social values and skills can also contribute to the development of resilience, a protective factor for children if they experience hardship or loss.

Better Buddies enables younger children to feel safe and cared for while older children feel valued and respected.

A buddy program can strengthen the school community and help to challenge stereotypes, misconceptions or fears that students hold about younger or older age groups. A buddy system can also help students to feel valued and supported, teach important social skills and create a caring ethos in the school. They can create connectedness that enables both older and younger buddies to bond more closely with their school, thereby increasing the likelihood of more positive social behaviour. It has been suggested that when students feel connected to their school, they also feel valued and safe and less likely to either bully or be bullied. Buddy systems help reduce negative behaviours such as bullying.

**What does the Better Buddies Framework do?**

- assists with student transition to primary school
- develops positive cross-age relationships
- develops pro-social values and skills
- involves parents
- develops responsibility
- builds self confidence
- provides opportunities for peer tutoring
- contributes to a positive and caring school culture
- develops empathy
- promotes inclusion
- discourages bullying,
- contributes to more positive behaviour by providing positive role models