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## Better Buddies customised for...Chilwell Primary School

Chilwell Primary School's Student Welfare Coordinator and grade five teacher, Catherine Burns, first heard about the Better Buddies Framework in 2011. Catherine felt the Framework would give the school's existing buddy system a clearer focus and structure.

"When we received the go ahead from The Alannah and Madeline Foundation and had a good look through the resources, we developed a program ready to implement at the beginning of this year," Catherine said.

The students at Chilwell Primary School in Geelong, Victoria, thoroughly enjoy the program and especially love Buddy Bear, the Better Buddies mascot.

"All Better Buddies activities involve Buddy Bear to some degree; one activity involved the younger students drawing themselves with their buddy, and then Buddy Bear linked them in the middle as a sign of friendship and inclusion," Catherine said.

Catherine said the staff members at Chilwell Primary School have seen a positive impact on the school's culture and the way in which students think about and behave in various situations.

"We introduced a Buddy Bear Bag containing an activity book and Buddy Bear that students can take home," Catherine said.

"The prep students write about Buddy's adventures then share this with their class.

"Reading through the activity books has been a great way to get the prep students writing, as well as developing a common language of respect, care and friendship.

"Students also think about how Buddy Bear would respond or act in a particular situation, and we've found they have developed a degree of empathy in situations that are linked to the bear."

Prep student Ineka Jarvis loves participating in Better Buddies.

"I love my buddy Julia, because she's fun and she takes care of me," Ineka said. "She tries to make me feel better and she makes sure I always have someone to play with.

"I love Buddy Bear and his name at our school is Ben. He teaches us to share and to look after each other."

The staff and students at Chilwell Primary School are looking forward to continuing their involvement with Better Buddies into 2013.

*Picture: Ineka Jarvis with her Buddy Bear.*

