

CAMMERAY

Kindness during class is en pointe

Dance school signs up to anti-bullying initiative

Andrea McCullagh

A LITTLE yellow wristband is helping children learn the importance of kindness.

You Can Sit With Me is an anti-bullying initiative that is being adopted by schools in Australia.

The Natalia Johnson Dance Academy in Cammeray has signed up to the scheme and it's proven popular with the young students.

"I've been very lucky not to see any bullying," said Ms Johnson.

"It's about having systems in place to hopefully prevent it in future."

Ms Johnson spotted the campaign on social media and thought it would be a great movement to be part of.

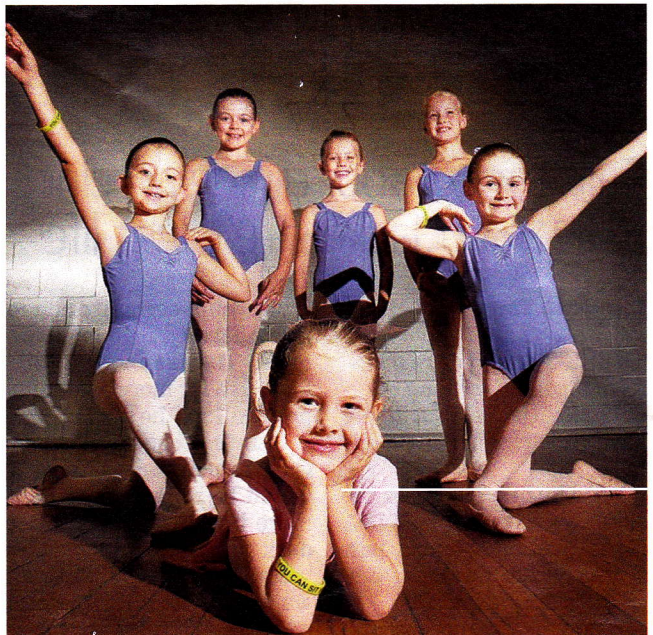
She gives out the band at the end of the class to a student who showed extra kindness or compassion, an act that she believes reinforces positive behaviour.

"I make sure everyone gets a turn," she said.

"Everyone likes to feel a little special one week.

"I make sure everyone is being kind to each other and that's as important as having fun when dancing."

You Can Sit With Me was founded by teacher Sophie Whitehouse after she became concerned about



Dance students Lara Cohen, Daisy Gallagher, Lucinda Hickey, Gemma Hickey, Lily Gallagher and Ariel Spencer (front),

children suffering from anxiety and depression as a result of feeling isolated.

It means that any child who feels lonely can sit with a peer who is wearing one of the wristbands.

"Even though education is moving forward, we seem to have that same problem where children feel anxious, they worry about going to school, and when they're at school they sometimes feel isolated and that they don't

have anyone to sit with or play with," Ms Whitehouse said.

"I noticed that problem isn't really moving forward, so I decided I needed to do something about it, and that's how it (the campaign) was born."

The Natalia Johnson Dance Academy teaches primary school children ballet and jazz.

For more information, see at youcansitwithme.org.