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Sutherland Hospital offers learning for children and adolescents

For many young children, hospitals can be daunting places. To reduce fears and learn about what goes on in a busy public hospital, Sutherland Hospital hosts hospital orientation tours for local year one and year two primary school students.

More than 1,000 students join the hospital tours every year. Each Tuesday, around 26 students take part in a comprehensive tour that familiarises them with the hospital building, hospital workers, medical terminology and medical equipment.

Hospital School Principal Jacqueline Conwell said Sutherland Hospital has been hosting orientation tours for local school children for more than 20 years.

“Orientation tours provide students with the opportunity to visit hospital wards, including Medical Imaging (x-ray) and the Child and Adolescent Unit. They are shown x-ray procedures; learn about the human skeleton; see how medical equipment is used for routine observations; learn about the importance of healthy blood and the dangers of smoking. They also have the opportunity to view an informative DVD about a child’s admission to hospital,” Ms Conwell said.

“A popular component of the tour is the ‘dress up’ segment where students dress in theatre gowns, caps and stethoscopes. Music and dance are also included in the tour with students learning the ‘Bones Song’ to consolidate their knowledge about the skeleton – they are also introduced to our resident skeleton, ‘Bucky’.

“From an education perspective, the hospital visit focuses on a unit of work covered in the HSIE curriculum called *Workers in the Community*. The Orientation Tour not only serves to reduce possible anxiety that children may have about a sudden hospital admission, but encourages healthy lifestyle choices.”

For children and adolescents who have to spend time in hospital, Sutherland Hospital has a school located on the Child and Adolescent Ward for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. They attend on a daily basis for periods ranging from several days to several months.

Ms Conwell said the hospital schoolroom – which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year – is well equipped with a mini library, computer laboratory and teaching resources for Primary and High School students.

“Students aged five to 18 years work on individual projects and in group situations and can attend the schoolroom, or work can be taken to their hospital room. The school ensures continuing education for sick children and programs can be modified to suit the individual,” Ms Conwell said.

“Educating and providing medical care to sick and injured children and adolescents is an unusual mix, however, school staff work closely with healthcare professionals to ensure optimum educational and health outcomes.”

South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

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