



St Michael's Catholic Primary Lane Cove students (from left) Xavier Russell, Ella Carseldine, Declan Mackey and Anwen O'Farrell.

# A unique way to navigate friendship

## Interactive program helps boost students' self-esteem

A program with a unique view of friendship has given students in Years 2 to 6 at St Michael's Catholic Primary Lane Cove the tools to belong wherever they go.

Friendology is an interactive six-week program designed to teach girls and boys ways to navigate friendships and have positive self-esteem.

Student welfare and wellbeing coordinator Lisa Netting said the boys and girls attended separate sessions — named GirlPower and GoodGuys — in a relaxed space outside their classroom. They kept a journal of the things they discussed and activities that made each more self-aware.

After positive feedback from parents and students (including Year 6 graduates who said the program

helped them make new friends in high school), the program will be extended this year to include Year 1 students.

Anwen O'Farrell, 10, said the program helped her navigate conflicts within her group of friends.

"I used the 'friend-o-cycle' which goes through four stages. Gradually you confront the problem, talk it out and you're back to being true friends. It gave me a strategy and made me more confident," she said.

Steve Pryde, one of two male teachers who ran the boys' sessions, said it was useful for them to have male role models to talk through the GoodGuys concepts.

"We talked about bravery with surfer Mick Fanning as an example — not only about how he dealt with a

shark attack in the water but how he spoke of it afterwards," he said.

"And we showed that it is OK to talk about your feelings ... we really encouraged those discussions, and that if people are putting you down there are ways to deal with it."

Year 6 student Declan Mackey, 11, said the Friendology program had taught him conflict resolution skills that had changed the way he would respond to situations.

"I think it gave me more options. If you'd said something disrespectful to me in Year 4 or 5, I would have just walked away and wouldn't look back at it," he said.

"After Friendology you'd see I would do much more. It really changed the way we thought."