

School bans Tiggy

The fun's all over, Red Rover

David Murray

A QUEENSLAND primary school has banned popular chasing games Tiggy and Red Rover from the playground.

New Farm State School, in Brisbane's inner north, outlawed the popular lunchtime activities because of injury fears.

Students have instead been told to play safer games like chess and snakes and ladders.

NFSS principal Virginia O'Neill has outlined the "temporary" ban to parents and students, saying it is necessary to protect students from "Prep to Year 7".

The move has been roundly criticised as "safety madness" and another case of cotton wool kids.

Ms O'Neill said the chasing games have left first aid staff working overtime with frequent accidents and disputes.

Instead, pupils could play boardgames or could take part in organised sports such as soccer and netball.

Townsville's Belgian Gardens State School sparked outrage in 2008 after pupils were banned from doing unsupervised cartwheels.

It later emerged that some parents had lodged lawsuits seeking compensation for injuries they claimed their children had suffered at school.

Psychologist Karen Brooks said games were crucial to a child's development and physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

"Games like Tiggy and Red Rover teach kids about co-operation, teamwork and risk taking," Dr Brooks said.

"It's a way of accomplishing and achieving in their own peer group in a generally safe way where adults aren't involved. To ban it is just so ridiculous."

She added: "We're talking about an obesity crisis and here we are preventing them doing what kids naturally do."

Schools were likely being forced into extreme measures because of pressure from parents to prevent accidents, Dr Brooks said.

"Schools are just protecting themselves. This reaction is indicative of society as a whole and it's gone crazy."

Weight loss expert and former teacher Sally Symonds said the dangers of stopping children from playing outweighed the dangers of allowing them to play.

"Given the rates of obesity, it's certainly not a great way to go," said Ms Symonds, author of *50 Steps to Lose 50kg... and Keep It Off*.

"For kids, play is a really vital way of encouraging people to see activity as part of normal life."

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