School’s out but sporting life begins

By Eva Tejszerski

WHEN the bell rings at the end of the day at Bexley Public School, the afternoon lesson does not end for a handful of children.

The school is part of a program called “Active After School Community”, which gives pupils an extended opportunity to develop their sporting skills.

Funded by the federal government and managed by the Australian Sports Commission, the program offers children afternoons of coaching in a sport activity by a trained sports coach.

The free program is open to pupils from kindergarten to year 6.

From 3pm to 5.30pm up to three times a week, children can hone their talents outside of class.

Schools can choose from a wide range of up to 70 different sports and 20 structured physical activities.

There are traditional sports including basketball and soccer, and others which have become more popular, such as badminton, lawn bowls and orienteering.

The program aims to inspire children traditionally inactive in sport by giving them a positive experience, and possibly get them to join a sporting club.

Bexley Public School has offered the program since the start of 2007. It was previously nominated for the “supersite” award in St George.

A total of 60 pupils participate each week.

It utilises external coaches including junior club volunteers or parents, and six teachers are also trained to help.

Principal Steven Mead said the initiative focused on a “playing for life” approach.

He said it used games to introduce a particular sport in a fun, safe and inclusive environment.

St George regional co-ordinator of the program, Mark Fulton, said there was a big demand.

“Some kids are selected on their reluctance to participate in class during school hours, and it develops a life-long love of sport.”

BENEFICIAL OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAM:

- Improved participation in structured physical activity, particularly organised sport, at the community level through leadership and targeted community-based sports activity.
- Increased participation in sport.
- Engages primary school children in structured physical activity.
- Provides opportunities for future participation in organised sport.

Engaged: (From left) Seth Farrell, Nicole Sefo, Jackson Cole and Ranya Mousselamani go from indoor to outdoor learning with the afternoon sports program.

Picture: Jane Dyson