

Anti - Bullying Campaign

OUR SCHOOL POLICY ON BULLYING

We would like to work in partnership with families to develop a School Policy on Bullying. Early next term we will invite parents to participate in a forum. The forum will help us to decide what to include in the policy -What is important for us as a school and what is important for the wider community?

Please read the following document published by the Department of Education that describes bullying and the impact it has on those involved.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

Types of bullying behaviour

There are some specific types of bullying behaviour:

- **verbal or written abuse** - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
- **violence** - including threats of violence
- **sexual harassment** - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation
- **homophobia** and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality
- **discrimination including racial discrimination** - treating people differently because of their identity
- **cyberbullying** - either online or via mobile phone.

What is not bullying?

There are also some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying:

- **mutual conflict** - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

- **single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying
- **social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Bullying Roles

It is important to recognise bullying behaviours and make it clear they are unacceptable, but it is also important to try not to label students as 'a bully'.

Bullying is not acceptable

Most students don't want bullying to occur but often don't know what to do about it. It's important that all forms of bullying are taken seriously and that schools, parents and students work together to ensure that everyone understands that bullying is not acceptable - ever.

Bullying roles

People in a bullying scenario may take on one of the following roles:

- a person who engages in bullying behaviour
- a target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour
- an assistant who assists the bullying behaviour and actively joins in
- a supporter who encourages and gives silent approval to the bullying, by smiling, laughing or making comments
- a silent bystander who sees or knows about someone being bullied but is passive and does nothing, this may be an adult bystander
- a defender who supports the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

All adults, including teachers, school staff and parents, should model positive bystander behaviour and intervene if they observe bullying behaviour occurring between students. Standing by and doing nothing, or leaving students to 'sort it out' themselves, sends the message to the whole school community that the bullying behaviour is being condoned.

Young people are still learning and practicing social skills. Everyone has the capacity to change their behaviour but being given a label can stick and make these changes much harder.

The Impact of Bullying

Bullying has a negative impact on everyone involved; the target, the bully and the bystanders.

Impact on students who are bullied

Students who are bullied are more likely to:

- feel disconnected from school and not like school
- have lower academic outcomes, including lower attendance and completion rates
- lack quality friendships at school
- display high levels of emotion that indicate vulnerability and low levels of resilience
- be less well accepted by peers, avoid conflict and be socially withdrawn
- have low self-esteem
- have depression, anxiety, feelings of loneliness and isolation
- have nightmares
- feel wary or suspicious of others
- have an increased risk of depression and substance abuse
- in extreme cases, have a higher risk of suicide, however, the reasons why a person may be at risk of suicide are extremely complicated.

Contributing factors to being bullied may include:

- depression
- family problems
- history of trauma
- belonging to a minority group, where isolation or lack of community support is an issue.

Impact on bullies

Students who frequently bully others are more likely to:

- feel disconnected from school and dislike school
- get into fights, vandalise property and leave school early.

In addition, recent Victorian research has shown that bullying perpetration in Year 10 is associated with an increased likelihood of theft, violent behaviour and binge drinking.

Impact on bystanders

Students who witness bullying may:

- be reluctant to attend school
- feel fearful or powerless to act and guilty for not acting
- have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.

Impact on schools

When bullying continues and a school does not take action, the entire school climate and culture can be negatively affected. This impacts on student learning and engagement, staff retention and satisfaction and parental confidence in the school, which can lead to:

- the school developing an environment of fear and disrespect
- students experiencing difficulty learning
- students feeling insecure
- students disliking school
- students perceiving that teachers and staff have little control and don't care about them.