Bullying Prevention

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Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/

Bullying involves a desire to hurt, a hurtful action, a power imbalance and repetition. Typically, the protagonist gains enjoyment while the victim feels oppressed.

In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying, it is helpful to note what bullying is not. It is not:

- Mutual conflict where there is an argument or disagreement between students, but no imbalance of power. Both parties may be upset and usually both want a resolution.
- Social rejection or dislike. It is not feasible for every student to like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party, is not bullying.
- Single episode acts of nastiness, meanness, aggression or intimidation. While such acts cannot be ignored or condoned, they do not constitute bullying.

Action

To address bullying effectively, staff, students and parents all have roles to play.

Staff members will:

- Watch for early signs of distress in students. These could be evident in any aspect of school life.
- Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately.
- Offer immediate support to the person at whom the bullying behaviour is directed, and explain how help will be provided.
- Work with the person exhibiting bullying behaviour to ensure the behaviour stops.
- Educate all students about their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions with students, parents or colleagues.

Students will:

- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted student, teacher or other member of staff
- Actively support students who are the targets of bullying behaviour
- Refuse to become involved in bullying including as a bystander.

Parents will:

- Watch for singes of distress in their child such as unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or stomach upsets, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothing.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life.

- Contact their child's teacher or Head of House or any other member of staff if they believe their child is being bullied.
- Keep a written record if the bullying persists including the details about who, what, where and when incidents occurred.
- Advise their child to tell a trusted teacher.
- Tell their child that there is nothing wrong with them.
- Not encourage their child to retaliate.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions with others.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to engage in deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour to hurt others. This may include nasty messages or posts. Cyber-bullying can be difficult for adults to monitor since children are often more technologically literate. Unfortunately, its impact is greatly magnified by the possibility of a global audience, and the incredible speed with which information can be transmitted. In this form of bullying, the home is not a refuge since children are accessible wherever they have a device.

Parents could consider the following:

- For younger children, parents could use filters, labels and safe zones so they can restrict access to sites and apps – see the CyberSmart website at http://www.cybersmart.gov.au for advice
- For younger and junior secondary students, parents could keep the computer in a public area of the house so they can see what sites are being accessed and the type of messages being received and sent.
- Parents should talk to their children about the ways they can protect themselves when using information technologies, for example
  - Not giving out their telephone number or online handle
  - Not sharing personal information numbers (PINs)
  - Not believing what they are told online by someone they have not met in person
  - Never sending a message while angry
  - Never opening a message from someone they do not know
  - Being polite in text messaging

If a child reports that she/he is being cyber-bullied, parents should advise them

- Not to respond to messages
- To report the bullying to parents and/or teachers
- Not to erase or delete messages since they can reveal information about the perpetrator
- That it is not their fault
- To report the message to the Internet Service Provider (ISP) since they may be able to trace the sender.

Since cyber-bullying often occurs outside of school, it is difficult for schools to control. However, it will be treated in a similar way to any form of bullying. Most importantly, students will be educated about appropriate and safe online behaviour.