

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

WHY HAVE AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY?

We recognise that bullying can be one of the worst things that can happen to a person. The possible effects of bullying can have both long and short-term implications for bullies, victims and the whole community. (See appendix 3) It is vital to develop and implement a policy that educates, informs all and empowers those who feel powerless.

Moonee Ponds West Primary School is committed to creating a school environment where children, staff, parents and visitors feel safe.

This anti bullying policy outlines a process for dealing with bullying incidents and provides a framework of support for:

- ◆ victims
- ◆ bullies
- ◆ parents
- ◆ on lookers
- ◆ staff

BULLYING IS UNACCEPTABLE AT MOONEE PONDS WEST.

MYTHS ABOUT BULLYING

Bullying is part of human nature- it's always been around
It's growth enhancing - kids need toughening up!
It's society's problem - schools can't solve everything
Teachers already have too much to do

Unless everyone is determined to bring about changes and rid the school of bullies it won't happen.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is any hurtful behaviour whereby an individual's well being is threatened by one or more people.

Bullying can be:

- explicit
- implicit
- subtle

Bullying is often repeated and always uninvited.

It includes:

- ◆ physical violence - e.g. punching, pushing
- ◆ exclusion - e.g. leaving someone out of activities on purpose
- ◆ damaging, removing or hiding belongings
- ◆ racial and sexual remarks - e.g. ching chong
- ◆ spreading rumors and name calling
- ◆ put downs - e.g. humiliating or ridiculing another
- ◆ forcing someone to do something they don't want to do
- ◆ invasion of personal space
- ◆ intimidation e.g. threats
- ◆ body language e.g. eye rolling
- ◆ being an onlooker and doing nothing about it

Common and unacceptable excuses used by bullies.

It was only a joke

If the victim doesn't think it is funny then it is **not** a joke.

Someone told me to do it

It is important to know the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and that responsibility for making the right choice lies with the individual.

It was only an accident

If it was only an accident then the bully would do what people normally do - seek help for the victim. If the bully did not assist the victim then it cannot be accepted as an accident.

We were only playing

This is a poor excuse for leaving someone bruised or hurt.

They did it first/deserved it/started it

Nobody deserves to be hurt.

I found it

The school has a lost property section where goods can be taken. There is no reason for keeping property that doesn't belong to you.

They didn't ask me to stop

This is not taking responsibility for your action. Rather, this is blaming the victim.

Common thoughts of a person being bullied.

"I'll make it worse for myself if I report it."

To continue to let bullying happen will make it worse. The victim will be letting the bully know that it is okay to continue to hurt them and others.

"I don't want to cause trouble."

Bullying is usually sorted out quickly when reported. The victim needs to stand up for themselves and their right to feel safe.

"Everyone gets bullied at some time."

Everyone has the right to feel safe at all times and in all places. It is not acceptable or normal for people to be victimised.

"I won't have any friends if I don't do as they say."

Remember how it feels to play with someone who treats you well. Do you really want to play with people who treat you badly?

WHAT THE SCHOOL WILL DO.

In the prevention of bullying Moonee Ponds West aims to:

- send very clear messages to students as to what is acceptable behaviour, with consistent follow through
- create an environment where children care for and are interested in each other
- create a sense of connection between the people who are in a school, where they feel safe and respected
- teach how to solve problems and conflicts and practise these skills
- involve children in creating school rules
- encourage parent involvement
- have approachable teachers who listen to our 'kids' and act upon what they say

The role of the school is to:

Provide a supportive, safe environment, which includes:

- setting clear classroom and playground boundaries
- raising awareness with students in class
- following up incidents
- developing a climate of care, concern and mutual respect (of 'protectiveness' towards each other)
- new staff induction
- discussing issues out in the open

Provide material on bullying, tolerance and prosocial behaviours in the curriculum, teaching how to solve conflicts and providing opportunities to practise these skills. We can do this by:

- distributing our policy to community and staff
- raising awareness of bullying issues with children in the class - including it as part of the curriculum
- setting clear classroom boundaries
- giving kids strategies to help resolve conflicts
- encouraging appropriate strategies to help resolve conflicts
- explicit teaching of strategies to help resolve conflicts
- developing a climate of care and concern
- encouraging staff to participate in professional development
- distributing recent research/ findings etc.

Respond to all reports of bullying by:

- listening to all sides
- taking all reports seriously
- being consistent
- following up incidents
- involving parents where necessary
- discussing the issue with all children, expecting that children will accept responsibility for their behaviour
- supporting all children

Implement a student code of conduct, welfare and discipline policy and an anti bullying policy in a consistent and fair manner.

For example, by:

- listening to all sides
- following up incidents
- supporting all children
- maintaining a consistent approach
- dealing with bullying incidents in line with our welfare and discipline policy e.g. rights/responsibilities and logical consequences
- developing a climate of care and concern where children are encouraged to act responsibly and discuss instances of bullying (either as a victim or onlooker)
- creating an environment where children are protective of themselves and others
- following the behaviour management model

WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO

- ◆ Talk about bullying openly
- ◆ Tell somebody - pursue the matter until some action is taken and you feel that the problem has been resolved.
- ◆ Develop assertive strategies to confront the bully
- ◆ Be strong in rejecting the behaviour of others, don't act like a victim
- ◆ Tell somebody you trust
- ◆ Ask somebody you trust for help
- ◆ Show, demonstrate and model tolerance and acceptance
- ◆ Make careful choices about who you interact and play with
- ◆ Report bullying incidents e.g. tell a teacher, parent and/or use the bully box
- ◆ **DON'T OBEY A BULLY**

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- ◆ Become aware of bullying as an issue
- ◆ Be aware of and support school policy
- ◆ Take bullying seriously
- ◆ Support your child whether they are a victim or bully/perpetrator. Talk through the situation and agree upon what action will be taken. If your child is the bully, separate the behavior from the person. Let them know that you will support them to work through the situation. If your child is the victim ask how you may best help them and assure them that they have done the right thing in reporting the bullying incident.
- ◆ Get the full story, listen to all sides-talk to teacher/s involved
- ◆ Listen to the children's opinions, feelings and concerns. Ask your child for suggestions/solutions. Add any other suggestions when necessary.
- ◆ **NEVER** approach other parents as you could inflame the situation, contact the school
- ◆ Look for ways that all parties can work together on the problem
- ◆ Contact the school (even when children request that you don't- put a timeline on it)

(See appendix 4 for possible signs of bullying)

WHO TO CONTACT AT OUR SCHOOL.

- ◆ Classroom teacher/s or teachers involved
- ◆ Welfare co-ordinator
- ◆ Principal

You should continue to discuss issues with any of the people listed above until the issues have been dealt with and action has been taken.

References/ Resources:

Internet

www.education.unisa.edu.au/bullying/parents

www.nobully.org.nz

www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/bullying/

Books

Bully Busters by Evelyn Field.

When dealing with incidents of bullying we use the Behaviour Management model outlined below.

**BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT MODEL
(As in Welfare and Discipline policy)**

TYPE OF CONFLICTS

POSSIBLE WAYS OF DOING THIS

LOW LEVEL CONFLICTS

Define and recognise problem

- ask children involved what are they doing?
- ask those involved reasons for their behaviour
- reinforce the accepted, desirable behaviours

Work out possible solutions (depending on problem, the circumstances and the people involved)

OFFER THE CHILD CLEAR CHOICES FOR IMPROVING THEIR BEHAVIOUR

- offer a simple warning
- reinforce the accepted desirable behaviours

All people will be involved in further discussion

NEGOTIATE LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES eg.

- In their own time, children write out an explanation of behaviour and why it may have upset others and possible options for future behaviour
- isolate child/`cooling off` time
- loss of privilege
- follow up/inform classroom teachers

MORE SERIOUS CONFLICTS

Enlist help from other people

- consult other people eg staff member
 - teacher
 - principal
- contact parents
 - phone
 - informal meeting
 - formal meeting

Further action taken by teachers/Principal

- negotiate contracts
- enlist help from outside agencies, eg. Guidance Officers, H&CS, etc.

LAST RESORT

Suspension

- as set down by DOE guidelines

As ways of supporting victims and bullies see appendix 1 and 2 for 'Shared concern' and 'No Blame' methods, as possible ways of dealing with conflicts.

METHOD OF SHARED CONCERN**Appendix 1**

This method involves individual interviews with each member of the bullying group before the victim is seen. **The victim therefore cannot be blamed for informing.** The issue of bullying is discussed and solutions are found in a non-blaming manner.

1 Hold individual sessions with bullies

Conduct individual meetings with each student involved (7-10min each)

See all students in one lesson so they don't get a chance to change their story

Speak to the student in an uninterrupted place

Start with the ring leader, then interview the other students involved

Say: I hear you have been nasty to X, tell me about it

So it sounds like X is having a bad time at school

I was wondering what you could do to help X?

Excellent, try that for (a set period) and I will talk to you on (state the day) to see how you are going.

STEP 2 Meeting with the victim

Start with an open-ended question

Say: How are things going?

Explore ways the victim can improve the situation. Agree on a plan of action and arrange a future meeting.

Be supportive, but remember the victim has to take some responsibility.

STEP 3 Individual meetings to check on progress and motivate further

Conduct follow up sessions with each individual (3 min each)

Check the progress giving a strong message that you are committed to resolving the issue

If bullying still occurs, continue with individual sessions

STEP 4 Group meeting

Congratulate students on their efforts. Ask them to indicate their good will and acceptance of the victim. In cases where victims have been provocative, make an agreement as to how the victim and bullies will behave in the future.

References: Smith and Sharp (1994) from Stop Bullying! Options Project Funded by Vic Health.
Rigby(1996) Bullying in Schools & What to do about it, ACER, Melbourne.
Beat Bullying West Ed: Education and Training.

No Blame interview method

Appendix 2

The No blame interview method is a way developing bullies' empathy for victim's feelings. The bullies are not blamed or punished but asked to make suggestions in helping the victim. The success of this method can depend largely on the skill of the interviewer. It is likely to work better with younger students but has worked with senior students.

Step 1 Interview the victim

This interview is to gain an overall picture of what happened and to seek permission from the child to tell the bullies how he or she feels. The child may be asked to describe his feelings in writing or a drawing.

Step 2 Arrange a group meeting

This group needs to include the bullies, any witnesses and respected peers.

Step 3 Tell the group how the victim feels

Describe how the victim feels about the bullying and show the writing or drawings provided by the victim.

You may want to ask students to repeat how the victim is feeling in his or her own words.

Step 4 Point out the group's responsibility

Say that it is up to the whole group to help the victim by improving the situation

Step 5 Ask for suggestions

Ask students how the victim could be made happier. Students are not expected to make promises in helping out.

Step 6 It's up to the group

Explain that it is now up to the group to take action. Make an appointment with the group in a week's time to check how the situation is progressing.

Step 7 Hold individual meetings with each participant

Interview each member of the group to monitor the intervention program and make any necessary changes.

Beat Bullying- West Ed. Education and training.

Appendix 3.

Some findings on school bullying

- Most studies in Australia show 1 in 5 students are bullied in schools each week. (Rigby, 1996; Berne, 1996)
- The most common forms of violence in schools are based on gender and bullying. (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia.)
- The most common form of verbal bullying is teasing about appearance. (Dickson, 1992)
- Name calling, teasing, verbal abuse, labelling, exclusion from activities and physical violence are examples of racism most often mentioned. (Community Relations in Education Project: Racism and Education in Victoria)
- No child wants to be bullied. (Griffiths)

Gender

- Most bullying occurs within gender groups. However boys bully girls, including sexual harassment, more often than girls bully boys. (Rigby, 1998)
- Boys are perpetrators and victims more often than girls. (Department of Education, Queensland.)
- Boys are most at risk between the ages of 10 and 13 years of age. (Rigby and Slee, 1990)
- 40% of boys and 30% of girls would not tell if they were bullied by a stronger person. (Rigby, 1996)

Some consequences

- 80% of students feel school is not a safe place for vulnerable students. (Rigby, 1996)
- Bullied children are 3 times more likely to show signs of depression in later life. (Gunter, 1998)
- While most students stop bullying before they leave school, a minority of bullies later come before the courts. (Olweus, 1993)
- Bullies' aggressive behaviour often gets them into trouble later in life. 35% - 40% of bullies have 3 criminal convictions by 24 years of age. (Olweus, 1993)

Appendix 4.

Listed below are possible signs by which we can detect if a child is being bullied:

- Unexplained bruises and cuts
- Torn clothes and belongings
- Vague pains, headaches, stomach aches
- Fear of walking to, and unwillingness to go to school
- Deterioration in school work
- Coming home hungry (because lunch money is taken)
- 'Loss' of possessions and pocket money
- Few friends, rarely invited to parties
- Behaviour changes (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, temper upsets, unhappy, tearful, eating problems, suicide attempts)

- Anxious, bed wetting, biting nails and sleeping poorly
- Giving improbable explanations for the above

Appendix 5.

CYBER BULLYING

What is Cyber Bullying?

Cyber –bullying is bullying that is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group or instant messaging. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as short messaging service (SMS).

Examples of cyber bullying include:

- Teasing, spreading rumours online
- Defamation
- Sending unwanted messages or images
- Participating in, or contributing to existing online bullying
- Forwarding bullying messages created by others

Multimedia technologies have created new domains in which young people learn and interact. Technology such as mobile phones, SMS, in –phone cameras, emails and chat rooms can be an effective way to learn and a great way to communicate.

Unfortunately some people use this technology to bully others by sending threatening or unwanted messages or spreading nasty rumours.

Evidence:

A survey conducted by the Australian Government Organisation “Netalert” revealed that:

- 16% of children said they had been bullied online, while 14% were bullied through their mobile phone, with boys and girls experiencing similar levels;
- younger children were more likely to be bullied online, with older children more likely through their mobile phone;
- 56% thought it was easy to get bullied online, especially among girls and younger children.

In a Brisbane study of student online behaviour (Campbell & Gardener, 2005), 11% identified themselves as cyber-bullies.

Cyber Bullying – A Criminal Offence

There are numerous state and commonwealth laws that cover cyber crime. If students use technology in an inappropriate fashion they could be committing a crime. At its most serious, cyber bullying is illegal and can be investigated by the police.

Signs:

- Common signs that a child is being subject to cyber bullying might include:
- Changing patterns of how they use the computer – perhaps being reluctant to go online, or seeming unhappy once they’ve been there;
- Receiving a sudden increase in the number of SMS messages;
- Having trouble sleeping, having nightmares

- Becoming withdrawn, appearing depressed, having mood swings, crying without reason;
- Feeling unwell, with no specific symptoms;
- Becoming anti-social, having less to do with their friends;
- Falling behind in homework, being reluctant to go to school, even skipping school
- Of course, children can exhibit signs such as these for any number of reasons, however increasingly, parents do need to be aware that cyber bullying could be a contributing factor.

Each family should formulate a clear strategy with their children about how to deal with bullies, both on and offline.

School Response

- All forms of bullying, whether physical, verbal or cyber are not tolerated at any level
- At school all students can have access to the internet through Netspace, using a DEECD approved filter. All care has been taken to limit student access to inappropriate sites. Parents must give written approval for their child to access the internet, including use of email.
- Internet access and use is based on the concept of rights, responsibilities and logical consequences. Students must follow the guidelines set out in the school's 'Acceptable Use Policy'. Failure to do so will mean restrictions are placed on their individual access.
- At the beginning of term one classes will address the issues of cyberbullying and protocols of the use of this technology prior to parents giving permission to access the internet. The school has a Mobile Phone Acceptable Use policy that outlines expected behaviour in relation to use and sanctions for inappropriate use.
- The school will instruct students in the appropriate protocols of using the internet, including how to be 'cybersafe', as well as the conditions for the acceptable use of mobile phones.
- Children will be encouraged to report any instances of cyber bullying
- The school will follow up any instance of reported cyber bullying on the part of any student
- The school will include links to appropriate cyber smart resources on the school website
- The school will include information related to cyber safety for parents as part of the annual distribution to all families of our Anti Bullying Pamphlet.

Parent Role

Parents should inform the school if a student is being cyber bullied or if the student is aware that another student is being cyber bullied.

This appendix should be read in conjunction with the ICT policy and the Anti Bullying Policy

Resources:

The websites below provide teachers, parents and caregivers materials, resources and lessons that address cyber bullying.

www.cybersmartkids.com.au/index.htm

www.netalert.gov.au/home.html

www.bullyingnoway.com.au

www.kidshelpline.com.au