



TOWNSVILLE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

BULLYING PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT POLICY

RATIONALE

Townsville Grammar School is committed to providing a safe and supportive school environment based on the core values of mutual respect, and acceptance of difference. At Townsville Grammar School everyone has a right to be respected and a responsibility to respect each other.

As a community, we do not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. We aim to develop and maintain a setting in which everyone feels valued and respected and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The most frequently cited definition of bullying is the “repeated oppression, psychological or physical harassment, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons” (Rigby 1996). There are three critical points in this definition:

Power: People who bully may acquire power through various means: physical size and strength; status within a peer group; and recruitment within the peer group so as to exclude others.

Frequency: Bullying is not a random act; it is characterised by its repetitive nature. As it is repetitive, people who are bullied not only have to survive the humiliation of the attack itself but live in constant fear of its recurrence.

Intent to harm: Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be fully conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical and emotional harm, however, is usually a deliberate act. It puts the person who is bullied in a position of oppression by the person who bullies.

Bullying is “recipient defined”, ie. “it was only a joke” or “she doesn’t mind” is an unacceptable excuse. In many cases of bullying, there are elements of harassment and discrimination on the grounds of ‘difference’. The intention of the bully is irrelevant, the important factor is the harm done to the other person.

Bullying can be:

Physical: Pushing, shoving, punching, fighting, damaging or destroying other people’s property, jostling, pinching, touching or any unwelcome physical intimidation, such as gestures or staring.

Verbal: Offensive or abusive comments, sarcasm, crude jokes and comments, ridiculing appearance, actions or beliefs, obscene or threatening phone calls and emails, teasing or putting other people down.

Social: Exclusion, spreading rumours, gossip, racial or sexual comments, graffiti and notes intended to isolate, manipulate or harm others.

Emotional: Victimisation, instilling fear in others, extortion (forcing others to hand over money, food or other possessions), forcing others to do their work.

Cyber: Using mobile phones or the internet or other technologies to send insulting, threatening or unpleasant voice, text or picture messages, whether directly to a person or to spread malicious rumours about another (this is a criminal offence and most malicious messages can be traced), taking pictures of people without their knowledge or consent and setting up and promoting websites which are offensive to another person in any way are examples of cyber bullying.

Exclusion: This is where people are intentionally and knowingly left out of activities. This may be a game, a conversation, a party or other group event. It also includes being ‘frozen out’ and rumour mongering.

Harassment: Is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated or offended. Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying. The terms are often used interchangeably.

Intellectual harassment: Occurs when someone is given a “hard time” because they are doing well or having difficulties with their school work.

Bullying can also be:

Victimisation: Stand-over tactics, picking on others, threats to “get” people, where groups try to dominate others.

Discriminatory: Includes bullying, harassment or unfair exclusion on grounds of race, nationality, sex/gender, disability, physical appearance, relationships and friendships.

Sexual Harassment: This is where physical acts or comments of a sexual nature intimidate a person. This includes touching someone inappropriately, making sexual comments, display of sexually explicit material, sexual gestures and rumour-mongering. It also includes comments about a person’s sexual orientation.

Gesture Bullying: This is where a bully uses non-verbal signals to silence or intimidate victims. This includes the looks that some bullies give to other people.

Extortion: This is where people are intimidated into handing over possessions, food and/or money to another person. It also includes intimidating people into cheating or doing school-work for others.

Interfering with another person’s property: Moving, hiding, damaging or stealing some else’s property is a form of harassment.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO BULLYING

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of our whole-school bullying policy are to:

- Raise awareness among staff, students and parents about bullying;
- Actively counter bullying at the School;
- Provide strategies to resolve conflict and respect differences;
- Create a school environment where all students, staff and parents feel safe and welcome;
- Create a climate where it is okay to talk about bullying and ask for help; and
- Promote positive mental health.

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Rights

Every person has the right to feel safe. Any person who bullies another is denying them that right. This means we have to think about others (not just ourselves) in the classroom and in the playground. The right to feel safe means we have a responsibility to consider how we speak and act toward others. Bullying takes away a person’s sense of security. The right to safety means that bullying of any kind is unacceptable.

At Townsville Grammar School it is everyone’s responsibility to take the necessary steps to stop bullying behaviour. The School will not tolerate any action that undermines a person’s right to feel safe, respected and to learn.

Responsibilities

Staff, students and parents have the following responsibilities:

Senior Management Team will:

- Support, promote, enact, maintain and review the bullying policy and procedures.

All staff will:

- Be familiar with the School’s bullying policy and procedures.

Teachers will:

- Proactively support the School’s Pastoral Care framework – Positive Education;
- Be models of caring and tolerant behaviour;
- Listen to reports of bullying;
- Act upon these by following the School’s Bullying Response Procedure;
- Inform the Year Level Coordinator or Head of School;
- Protect the person being bullied from further harm;
- Act to stop the behaviour recurring; and
- Record identified bullying incidents.

Students who are bullied need to communicate with:

- A teacher, a staff member, their parents or student of trust and give full details of the event by completing an impact statement in consultation with a staff member where required; and/or
- Report their concern via the School's online 'Bullying Reporting' system

Student witnesses to bullying should:

- Intervene if they are able;
- Seek teacher assistance;
- Document the incident or ask a staff member to record the incident; and/or
- Report their concern via the School's online 'Bullying Reporting' system

Parents should:

- Listen sympathetically to reports of bullying and keep an open mind;
- Speak to relevant School personnel (**not the alleged student/s concerned**);
- Work with the School in seeking a permanent solution; and
- Encourage their child to report the incident via the School's online 'Bullying Reporting' system

Parent witnesses should:

- Be limited to verbal intervention;
- Seek teacher assistance; and
- Document the incident if requested by School staff.

NB: There are always 'two sides to every story'

Keeping in mind the above rights and responsibilities for students, staff and parents, not all cases of bullying are black and white and resolvable.

"It doesn't matter how finely you slice a piece of bread there will always be two sides".

SCHOOL PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING**Teachers' Responsibilities:**

- Proactively support the School's Pastoral Care Positive Education framework.
- In the first weeks of each school year, the non-acceptance of bullying is to be discussed in class.
- Teachers to make students aware of their responsibilities with regard to the bullying policy.
- Teach relevant strategies (PP – 12).
- Attend to reported instances of bullying behaviour.
- Treat information regarding bullying confidentially.

School Responses to Bullying

- **Our School Community does not tolerate bullying behaviour. It is always unacceptable. Responses to bullying behaviour should always reflect this position to all concerned.**
- **Reports, allegations or observations of bullying behaviour received or made by any staff member must be passed to a member of the Pastoral Care Team of the sub-school involved who will then investigate the report or allegation by implementing either *Restorative Practice* or *Method of Shared Concern* approach.**
- **Our first priority in any response to incidents of bullying behaviour is always the wellbeing and on-going protection of those who have or may have been affected by the behaviour.**
- **Our secondary priority is the encouragement of the learning and change deemed necessary for the person responsible for the behaviour.**
- Since bullying is defined in terms of the harm done to another person, reports or allegations of bullying behaviour will be investigated by a member of staff or member of the Pastoral Care Team who will keep records of the report/allegation, the subsequent investigation, and any response made on behalf of the School if the report/allegation is substantiated or not.
- In response to reported bullying, the usual principles of natural justice and fair process are to apply to all parties. These principles apply to all actions taken after the initial report, including the investigation and any response.

- As much as is possible within the constraints of the particular situation, and with the appropriate priority consideration given to the well-being of the person harmed, a restorative response is to be preferred in cases of substantiated bullying behaviour.
- In such restorative responses, once the well-being and safety of those harmed is assured, the main focus of any response is the education of the bully to self-regulated right behaviour and the encouragement and support, as much as is possible, to repair the harm done.
- In cases of substantiated bullying behaviour, families will be notified of the situation and the response initiated.
 1. A restorative interview will be conducted with the bully aimed at increasing his/her ability to empathise with those he/she has harmed and encouraging some attempt at reparation.
 2. The bully and his/her parents could be required to attend an interview to review his/her behaviour.
 3. Sanctions such as detention or suspension could be assigned, in cases where responses of a more restorative nature are inappropriate or unavailable, or in conjunction with other more restorative responses where this is judged necessary.
- In severe cases, or in cases which indicate a continuing pattern of unacceptable behaviour, the Principal may need to suspend the bully's enrolment at the School until such time that certain assurances can be given and accepted. For the common good of the School Community, the Principal may also be unable to allow a student's enrolment to continue at the School.
- In certain cases, the Principal may be required to notify the police or other relevant authority.

SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO REDUCE AND PREVENT BULLYING

Our strategy has two aspects: prevention and management. Prevention strategies assist students to become resilient. The management strategy we apply is the 'Shared Concern and Restorative' approach. Although these approaches are not based on sanctions or punishments, the School has a range of such measures available, up to and including suspension or exclusion which may be used in response to bullying.

Prevention Programmes

Whole School Approach:

- Update the School's Bullying Prevention and Management Policy on a regular basis.
- All staff made aware of bullying issues, student attitudes, the need to take action and of their role in implementing the policy.
- Professional Consultation be sought and made available to individuals as referred by the Head of School or Principal, for example, School Psychologist, Child Protection Agency, Police.
- The bullying policy clearly articulated to staff, students and parents.
- All staff to provide careful supervision.
- Promote the use of the School's online Bullying Reporting system.
- Teachers, PP - 7, to run a universal programme in the classroom as an awareness and preventative model incorporating social skills training and self-protective behaviours.
- Implementation of Year 7 and 9 Buddy Programme and Prefect Liaison Programme.
- Relevant strategies such as peer support programmes to assist in making the School safer by reporting incidents and assisting students who may be targets of bullying.
- Intensive small group work for students who bully (conflict resolution, anger management) and students who are bullied (assertiveness training and self-protective behaviours).

Schoolyard strategies:

- Provision of adequate and active staff supervision.
- Provision of play equipment, resources and lunch activities to engage a range of student interests.

- Teachers to be punctual to class and to playground duty so opportunities for bullying, while waiting for class to commence, are limited.

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