

Countering Bullying

What is Bullying?

It is mean and unkind to bully someone. Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, repeatedly uses power to pick on, scare or hurt someone else over days, or weeks, or longer. A student who is bullying will often say, write, text or do things to hurt a person's feelings. Sometimes they try to stop them from joining in or being liked by other people.

Countering Bullying and Harassment in ACT Public Schools CBH200704

<http://www.det.act.gov.au/policies/policies.htm>

3.2 **Bullying:**

A product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take different forms – verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or hidden.

3.3 **Harassment:**

Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

3.4 **Violence:**

Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

3.5 **Conflict:**

A disagreement where the needs of one or both parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not have perceived equal power. If handled well, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

Bullying can take many forms:

- **Exclusion** - leaving someone out on purpose
- **Lies or Rumours** - spreading lies or nasty stories about someone to make other students not like them
- **Verbal Abuse or Teasing** - making fun of someone in a mean or hurtful way
- **Physical Abuse** - kicking, pushing or hurting someone, damaging others' property
- **Threatening** - verbal threats to make someone frightened
- **Cyber bullying** - sending threatening or abusive messages via email, SMS or via the internet

What Bullying is Not

It is NOT bullying if students just have an argument or if someone says or does a nasty thing to someone else just once. Three situations that are often confused with bullying but still require teacher intervention and management are:

Mutual conflict

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for “retaliation” in a one-sided way.

Social rejection or dislike

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

Single-episode acts

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

There are two key elements to the school's anti-bullying strategy:

1) Prevention & Early Intervention

- The school curriculum includes a focus on understanding the concepts of integrity, compassion and respect, as well as the opportunity for students to develop skills that enhance resilience – in particular, communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, problem solving and seeking help.
- Teachers plan and implement targeted social skills programs to build resilience and develop conflict resolution, assertiveness and problem solving skills. Current programs include Bounce Back, Circle Time, Kids Matter and Mind Matters.
- At the beginning of each year, and repeated as needed, each classroom teacher is to clarify with students their responsibilities with regard to preventing and reporting bullying, and the processes the school uses when bullying is reported.
- “Bully audits” are conducted at least twice annually. The outcomes of the survey are utilised to inform the school of the present situation as experienced by students, and to assist the school to revise and adjust its processes and procedures as needed.
- The school completes the National Safe Schools Framework School Audit Tool annually to make informed judgements about the extent to which we have created and maintained a safe and supportive learning environment.
- Staff and students adhere to and actively promote the stance of “No Put Downs.”
- Parents kept informed about all elements to the school’s approach and regularly reminded and encouraged to contact the school should they become aware of a problem.

2) Intervention on a Reported Incident

- We treat bullying very seriously. All incidents of bullying must be reported to the school executive and are documented on MAZE
- Each incident is fully investigated and the actions taken are also documented. These actions will include:
 - Once identified, the victim, the perpetrator, and any witnesses are interviewed.
 - The parents of all students involved are contacted and meetings as needed are arranged.
 - An action plan, which takes the intent of restoring the relationship and that equally, addresses the needs of both the victim and the perpetrator is put in place.

- The action plan is monitored and adjusted as needed.
- If the perpetrator persists in bullying, the above process will be repeated and will result in a revised action plan. Where necessary the school counsellor and/or other professionals may be asked to become involved. Students who continue to bully will be closely supervised.
- Students who have bullied may:
 - Be excluded from class for a period
 - Be subject to an individual behaviour management plan
 - Be excluded from the playground for a period
 - Have privileges withdrawn (this would be at the Principal's discretion and could include things like not attending camp, sports events, excursions, etc.)
 - Be required to cooperate by attending counselling from an appropriate agency
 - Be suspended.

Information and Strategies to Deal with Bullying

For STUDENTS

Bullying is never O.K.!

- Bullying spoils things for all of us
- Think for yourself. Don't just copy others
- If someone gets bullied it is not their fault
- Asking for help is not the same as dobbing
- Do the right thing and let a teacher know if someone else is being bullied
- You can be a friend to someone who is being bullied

People bully because:

- they are afraid of being left out
- it seems like fun or they are bored
- they enjoy the power of frightening someone
- they want to look tough or strong
- they have seen others engage in bullying
- they are jealous of others
- they want to be popular and admired
- to get what they want
- they want to seem like the leader

Tell someone if you see bullying or are being bullied

- Report the bullying to a teacher on duty or your classroom teacher or help the victim to report the bullying.
- If you don't get the help that you need to stop the bullying tell another teacher or adult. Be persistent.
- Tell a trusted adult at home and ask them to help you report the bullying.
- If the problem reoccurs then tell someone again.
- Don't be fooled by a bully's threats to 'get you' if you tell. You have a much better chance of being protected if you can say, "I've already told Mrs.... and she knows that if I'm hurt she should come looking for you."
- Avoid joining in to encourage bullying. Being part of a group which is bullying someone else is just as bad as bullying them yourself.
- Try to remain in sight of adults if you have been bullied.
- Walk tall with your head held high, don't show that you are scared, even though you may be.
- Stay near friends or other children whenever possible. Being on your own makes you more vulnerable.
- If confronted, stay calm and confidently walk away from the bullying situation.
- If you are getting bullied before or after school then vary times and routes for travelling to and from school. Travel with other people.
- Leave expensive possessions and money at home. If you don't have it with you, it can't be lost or taken away.
- If cyber-bullying is occurring tell a trusted adult.
- Don't share your private information like passwords, name and address, phone numbers with people you don't know. Be cautious about sharing photos of yourself, your friends and your family.
- Don't respond to messages when you are angry or hurt. This will often encourage them to continue or increase their harassment of you.
- Log out and stop messaging if you feel you are being harassed
- Remember you have the option to block, delete and report anyone who is harassing you online and on your mobile
- Keep a record of calls, messages, posts and emails that may be hurtful or harmful to you
- Remember to set up the privacy options on your social networking sites like Facebook in a way you are comfortable with.

Information and Strategies to Deal with Bullying

For TEACHERS

- Develop and foster positive relationships with students and families.
- Listen to the complaints and act upon them; empathy for the victim is vital.
- Avoid labelling students.
- Focus on what you want when there is no bullying – move behaviour towards tolerance and acceptance, model this behaviour.
- Encourage students to be active bystanders, to tell about bullying and to support the victim.
- In the classroom hold open discussions and explicitly teach about bullying and assertive skills.
- Provide feedback to all students involved in bullying incidents so that they are aware of the consequences that have been implemented.

For PARENTS

- Stay calm and accept that all of us have the capacity to be involved in either the giving or receiving end of bullying.
- Listen calmly, note specifically what your child is saying.
- Let the school know what is happening straight away.
- Maintain communication with the school and with your child.
- Persist if you feel nothing has changed and the bullying is still occurring.
- If the victim, let your child know that it is not their fault.
- Try not to model bullying behaviour at home.
- Cyber-bullying can be countered by blocking and ignoring the sender or contacting the mobile phone or internet service provider.
- Find out how to report bullying and harassment on each of the different social networks that you use

Some Common Reactions and Unhelpful Beliefs about Bullying

“I was just mucking around, can’t they take a joke!”

This is the most common response to bullying. To put someone down, ridicule them, make them feel uncomfortable, push them around, or take their possessions is not a joke.

“I’ll ignore it and it will go away.”

If anything, ignoring it makes it worse. You will give the impression that it is okay with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.

“My parents told me to fight back.”

The problem with retaliating to bullying is that sometimes it escalates other forms of misbehaviour.

“I don’t want to cause trouble.”

Most cases of bullying are sorted out very simply, especially if it is reported straight away. You’re not causing trouble, you’re standing up for yourself.

“It’s just a natural part of growing up.”

There is nothing natural about being victimised or of bullying others. Kids have a right to feel safe at school, as well as at home.

Further Information

The ACT Education and Training Directorate has a number of policies that can be found online and that relate bullying:

- Providing Safe Schools P-12
- Suspensions, Exclusions or Transfer of Students in ACT Public Schools
- Countering Bullying, Harassment and Violence in ACT Public Schools
- Countering Racism in ACT Public Schools
- Countering Sexual Harassment in ACT Public Schools
- Keeping Children Safe in Cyberspace
- Acceptable Use of Internet, E-mail, Computer Facilities and External Networks Policy
- Teachers Code of Professional Practice
- Child Protection and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

The complete list of publications and policies can be viewed on the ACT DET web page:

http://www.det.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z

Other Organisations

Bullying. No way!	www.bullyingnoway.com.au
Child Safety Australia	www.childsafetyaustralia.com.au
CyberSmart Kids Online	www.cybersmartkids.com.au
Kids Help Line	www.kidshelp.com.au
KidsMatter	www.kidsmatter.edu.au
MindMatters	www.mindmatters.edu.au
Reach Out!	www.reachout.com.au
Stay Smart Online	www.staysmartonline.gov.au