Nowra Anglican College

Responding to and Preventing Bullying in the Senior School

Guidelines for Teachers, Parents and Students

Bullying

Bullying is persistent aggressive behaviour that is intentional and involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying may involve:
   a. Direct behaviours (eg. hitting, kicking, taunting, teasing, stealing)
   b. Indirect behaviours (eg. rumour-spreading, social exclusion, manipulation of friendships)
   c. Cyberbullying

The most common forms of bullying involve name-calling, teasing or taunts about appearance.

Children Reporting Bullying

Many children do not report their bullying to teachers or parents. Research shows that anywhere from 50% to 75% of students who are bullied do not tell an adult about it.[1] Older children and boys seem to be particularly reluctant to report being bullied.[2] Whilst many may feel comfortable about telling their friends about it, a worrisome number of children (14-17%) do not tell anyone.[3]

Children's Attitudes to Bullying

Most children have a fairly negative view of bullying and a positive or sympathetic view to those who are bullied. Unfortunately that sympathy does not often translate into action. Many are uncertain about how best to respond to bullying or are afraid that they will make it worse. Others may feel that their actions would make no difference unless other students supported them and they doubt they would find others to help. Many likely are afraid they will become bullied too if they step in.

Bullying Prevention Programs in the Senior School

Nowra Anglican College adopts a range of bullying prevention strategies in line with current research. These include:
   a. Having a regular Care Group time where students can develop a pastoral relationship with the Care Group Leader and so tell them about their concerns,
   b. Raising awareness about bullying (at Year meetings, assemblies, newsletter, staff inservices, in Pastoral Care programs and Pastoral Days),

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[1] Boulton & Underwood (1992), Fonzi et al (1999), Harachi et al (1999), Whitney & Smith (1993)
[2] Rivers & Smith (1994), Whitney & Smith (1993)
[3] Harris et al (2002), Naylor et al (2001)

c. Reporting and tracking bullying incidents at school (through the edumate computer system),
d. Counseling and pastoral interventions for children who bully and who are bullied,
e. Peer mediation, resilience, positive relationship and conflict resolution skills to address bullying (in Care Groups and Pastoral Days),
f. Curricula focussed on bullying (in PDHPE, Christian Living and other subjects such as English),
g. Bullying prevention programs (in Care Groups),
h. Workshops on cyber bullying.

School Intervention
Nowra Anglican College takes a very serious approach to bullying. Students are encouraged to report known or suspected bullying. In some cases, students may be suspended or even expelled in order to keep others safe at school. In many cases bullying is dealt with by mediation, and monitoring the situation through our Discipline Levels and Conduct Cards.

While we have a behaviour code and Discipline Levels that forbid bullying, we also have very simple and clear rules about bullying set out in the Student Diary that state the College's expectations and help students who are bullied or who witness bullying. These suggestions in the Student Diary are as follows:

IF YOU ARE BULLIED you could:
- *Think of ways you can stay safe*
- *Do your best not to react*
- *Walk away*
- *Tell a counsellor, teacher or any adult you trust*

IF YOU ARE A BYSTANDER you could:
- *Do something to help that doesn't make you feel unsafe*
- *Speak up and tell the person bullying to stop*
- *Help the person being bullied get away from the situation*
- *Tell a counsellor, teacher, or any adult you trust*

FOR PARENTS
If you know or suspect that your child is involved in bullying, either as a person being bullied or as a person bullying others, please contact your child's Care Leader.

The College encourages an inclusive and pro-social culture with students who model positive behaviour and help send a message that bullying is not acceptable behaviour. This is developed through the Year 7 and Year 11 Peer Support Program that occurs once a fortnight in Term 1. Our Year 7-12 Long Care Group fortnightly pastoral program also includes focuses on resilience, relationships, bullying and cybersafety.

Teachers intervene consistently and appropriately in bullying situations. Staff take an active role to intervene to stop bullying and to report it. See 'Guidelines for Teachers' below.

Long term solutions are the key to preventing bullying. While role-modelling for students to discourage bullying behaviour is important, developing resiliency skills in students so they can respond appropriately if they are bullied is another. Staff undertake inservicing on pastoral skills to recognise and support bullied students.

Guidelines for Teachers Dealing with Bullying –

The following are some strategies for dealing with the majority of bullying situations.

If a teacher is faced with a situation involving student bullying, they should refer the matter to the respective Pastoral Leader or Head of Senior School.

Interview the bullied student

The Pastoral Leader or Head of Senior School should attempt to find out what happened and who was involved, focusing on how the child feels as a victim. Permission should be sought to tell the bully/bullies how he or she feels about it indicating that punishment may or may not be warranted depending on the situation. Refer to 'Dealing with Bullying – For Students' (below) when giving advice to students.

Interview the bully

The Pastoral Leader or Head of Senior School conveys the victim's feelings to the bully and, if appropriate, communicates how the bullied student feels. This process is designed to move the bully to empathise with the victim as the lack of the ability to empathise is a characteristic of the bully. The bully should be told their direct responsibility in causing the feelings in the victim. They may be told to cease contact with the bullied student, apologise and/or improve the situation for the bullied student. Consequences may also need to be applied at this point such as playground restriction, detention, a Conduct Card, and/or suspension. In certain cases the bullying incident may be referred to the police. The bully may also be required to attend counseling services either at school or from outside providers.

Follow up action

Follow up meetings often occur where the teacher discusses with each separately the methods of bullying prevention with the effects of the situation and how things have progressed.

Inform parents

During this process, parents are kept informed as far as possible.

Dealing with Bullying – For Students

There are a number of things which children can do to prevent or stop bullying:

- Walk away without looking back. Go to a safe place.

- Be assertive when responding to a bully. Stand up straight, look the bully in the eye and ask them to stop doing what they are doing. You may be surprised at their reaction – they're often not used to someone standing up to them. If it has happened before, plan ahead what you will say and practice.

  A suggested method can be[4]: make sure the bully is alone so you can speak one-to-one. Be sure though you are in a safe place.

  Stand tall, look them in the eye and say:

  - ➢ "I know you might think it's a joke,

  - ➢ but when you do/say _____ it makes me feel embarrassed/humiliated_____

  - ➢ and I want you to stop."

- Avoid situations where you may be vulnerable. Spend time with other people at break times rather than remaining by yourself.

- Always remind yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is ok to feel upset and hurt.

Report situations of bullying to your teacher and parents. It is all right to tell someone. Telling is when you want something to stop. This is different from 'dobbing' where the motivation is to get someone else into trouble. Tell the teacher and parents:

- what the problem is

- how it makes you feel

- how often it has been happening

- what you have done to stop it

- that you need their help

For Bystanders

If you know of someone else being bullied, support them in their efforts to put a stop to it. Refuse to join in with a bully in your group. Letting a bully get away with it is like saying it's ok to be a bully.

Dealing with Bullying – For Parents

Why is bullying harmful?

Some people think bullying is a normal part of growing up and that children need to learn to stick up for themselves. They may look back at their own childhood, remembering themselves as either bullies or victims, with the thought that it never caused a lot of harm. Bullying, however, can make children feel lonely, unhappy, frightened, unsafe and think that there must be something wrong with them. In serious cases, it can lead to depression and even suicide.

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[4] Adapted from R Wiseman, *Queen Bees and Wannabes*

Signs that indicate that your child is being bullied include stomach aches, nightmares, reluctance to go to school and loss of confidence. They may lose touch with friends and appear isolated.

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Talk to your child, helping them to understand that it is not their fault. Ask them what they have done to deal with the bullying and encourage them with strategies that could solve the problem.

Don't attempt to "sort out" bullies yourself.

Raise the issue with your child's Pastoral Leader at school. Beforehand, try to carefully detail what you know of the alleged incidents, including:

- what exactly happened
- who was involved
- where and when it occurred
- any provocation on the part of the victim
- any witness, and if so, who

Ensure your child knows the action you are taking and be guided by their response. Make an appointment so that time can be made available to discuss the issue with you. Be willing to discuss the issue rather than simply accusing and demanding that the school fix the problem. Calmly present it as a shared problem. Be patient and allow the school time to investigate. Listen carefully and note the steps the school intends to play, especially any part that they would like you to play in this process. Arrange a follow-up meeting to discuss what outcomes have been achieved.

If necessary the Police Youth Liaison Officer can be contacted on (02) 4421 9626. Further support services can be contacted through Head of Senior School and/or the College Counsellor. The following link gives a list of various support services in the Shoalhaven region

http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/MyCommunity/Communityservices/Youthservices/Youthcontacts.aspx.

Please contact the Head of Senior School prior to any engagement with these services.

What can I do if my child is a bully?

Talk to your child and try to find out how they have been behaving and why.

Explain to your child that bullying is wrong and try to get your child to understand what it's like for the victim. Ask them how they would feel if someone was bullying them.

Talk about what they think might help them to stop bullying and show them how to join in with other children without resorting to bullying.

Often a bully's own self-esteem is quite low so talk to them about how they feel about themselves. Ensure that they know that you love them and care for them and want the best for them. Help them to see that their sense of identity should not be tied to their bullying.

Seek professional help if you feel the situation warrants it. The following link gives a list of various support services in the Shoalhaven region

http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/MyCommunity/Communityservices/Youthservices/Youthcontacts.aspx.

Commitment

All students at the College have the right to feel safe and to be treated as unique persons. The school has the responsibility to ensure that, while at school, all students have the opportunity to form positive attitudes and appropriate values. All students need to develop tolerance and understanding of others and their needs. Students need to recognise the very real opportunity that exists to be peacemakers.

Our belief is that:

- Each member of the school community is seen to be made in the image of God and is God's creation.

- Each member of the school community has the responsibility of ensuring the safety of the other members of the community.

- All students, parents and teachers have the right to feel safe going to and from school and its associated activities, and while at school.

- Bullying is not an acceptable behaviour.

- Bullying is not tolerated, and students who engage in bullying activities will be dealt with severely.

Cyber Bullying
Cyber bullying is another form of bullying. Nowra Anglican College treats cyber bullying very seriously whether it has occurred to students at school or at home. Cyber bullying is treated in the same way as conventional bullying.

The College is committed to educating and protecting students from cyberbullying. Education strategies are put in place in Care Groups and Pastoral Days.

While cyber bullying is similar to conventional bullying in its aggressive nature and its effect of harassment, it often occurs in the family home. It is therefore important for parents to be aware of its different forms and take proactive measures to best respond if it occurs.

Types of Cyber Bullies
1. **The Vengeful Angel**

   These are children who have been victims of bullying and are now retaliating by cyber bullying. They may have been the outcasts who have been victims of traditional school bullying.
2. **The Power Hungry**

   These most typically resemble the school-yard bully who likes to exert power He/she thrives on an audience to watch or reinforce his/her actions. They may also bully online to vent anger or hostility because they feel their life is out of control for reasons not related to school (eg divorce, separation, illness of a parent).
3. **The Mean Girls**

   These are children who bully out of boredom. This type of bullying occurs more for entertainment than for any desire to hurt the victim, although knowing their bullying results in embarrassment or humiliation is part of the entertainment.
4. **The Inadvertent Cyber Bully**

   These are children who have responded to cyber bullying they have received in a similar way.[5]

How Cyber Bullying is Different to Conventional Bullying

While cyber bullying is similar to conventional bullying – aggressive, power imbalanced, and repetitive – it has some important differences. A child can wield great power in cyberspace. There is power in being anonymous, in assuming a false identity, in being able to spread rumours and lies to a wide audience and to be able to harass a victim anywhere and anytime. A single act in cyberspace can be forwarded to thousands of others over a period of time by many people. From a victim's perspective, they could feel repeatedly bullied by one act.

The cyber bully is often anonymous leaving the victim to wonder if the bully is one person or many, a girl or a boy, a friend or an enemy, older or younger, from school or elsewhere.

Conventional bullying may happen only at school, but cyber bullying can happen 24/7.

The fear of having computer privileges removed or curtailed by parents can be an even greater fear for victims of cyber bullying than the bullying itself.

Bystanders can be more likely become involved in the cyber bullying they witness. Size isn't a factor in becoming involved in cyber bullying and anonymity provides the tendency to forget the human side of the target of cyber bullying and make it easier to join in. This behaviour is called 'disinhibition'.[6] Disinhibition is the tendency for people to say and do things that they would not do if their identities were known.

Rates of Cyber Bullying

In various studies, about 6-18% of 10-17 year olds say they had been cyber bullied in the last year.

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[5] These four types of cyber bullying comes from Aftab (2006)
[6] Williams, Harkins & Latane (1981)

In one study 18% of teenagers said that they had been cyber bullied in the last two months by a student at the school (52%), or a friend (36%), or a sibling (13%), or unknown (48%). Of the students who were cyber bullied, 67% were from text messages, 25% in chat rooms (eg MSN), and 24% by email. [7]

Children Not Reporting Cyber Bullying

It is very likely that children will avoid telling their parents about a cyber bullying incident unless families have discussed cyber bullying ahead of time.[8] Children benefit most when parents are proactive and educate rather than just being reactive and responding immediately by restricting and punishing them. Parents may benefit from beginning every response to disclosures, no matter how upsetting, with, "Thankyou for telling me that. You did the right thing by letting me know."

Warning Signs of Cyber Bullying

Because children can be reluctant to tell an adult about cyber bullying, the following are some warning signs:

- Child may be upset after being online
- Child appears upset after viewing a text message, or using mobile phone
- Child withdraws from social interaction or peers
- Possible drop in academic performance

Paying attention to your child's social relationships and any changes to these relationships can help alert parents to cyber bullying instances.

Some parents choose to read all their child's email, or become a 'friend' on their social networking site (Facebook, Myspace, Xanga, Bebo) and even read all the child's mobile phone text messages, but this could be seen as a huge invasion of privacy. However, monitoring their children's communication more closely may be necessary for parents who are aware of instances of cyber bullying.

It is more helpful for parents to spend time talking with their children about the appropriate way to interact online, and about family guidelines for computer use. It is important for the parents and children to agree about when the children should notify the parents if they receive negative messages or view harmful material online. It makes sense that if the child is using a social network site like Facebook, the parent will view it occasionally and the child understands this.

What to Do if Your Child is Cyber Bullied

1. **Save the Evidence**

   Parents must teach their children to save any evidence of cyber bullying. Children should be taught to save and/or print out any threatening or harassing messages they receive and not delete them. Parents should ask that their children to show them the threatening or harassing message. If the parent or child does not know

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[7] Kowalski & Limber (2006)
[8] ibid

who sent the message, they should contact the school in order to investigate through our IT department.

If children ever receive offensive material by website, they should turn the monitor off (not the computer) and notify their parents. Parents can then take screen shots of the web pages using the **'Print Screen' button,** paste them into a Word document and print out copies. If an offensive SMS message is received on a mobile phone, do not delete it. Instead show the phone to the Pastoral Leader or Head of Senior School. It is important for the child not to respond to the offensive comments.

2. **Ignore, Block or React?**

   An SMS from a friend that reads, "You idiot!" may seem upsetting to a child but may be missing some key words such as a winking emoticon like ;) In such a situation it may be best to ask for clarification or just ignore the message. Often ignoring a single mean message will end the cyber bullying, whether the individual's identity is known or not. If the messages continue, they can be blocked using the phone or computer. If despite ignoring mean comments and blocking the sender's messages, the cyber bullying continues, parents may find it helpful to send one message saying that the authorities will be contacted if the messages persist.

3. **Request Intervention Assistance From the School**

   We need to be aware of bullying situations that involve students in order to keep students safe. Cyber bullying out of school hours, using home computers or phones between students is still a school matter. Parents should print out a copy of the evidence of cyber bullying and show it to the Head of School (Junior or Senior), whether they know the identity of the cyber bully or not. Sharing such evidence with the school can enable us to help the student and discover and/or punish the cyber bully.

   The school will often report cases of cyber bullying to the police especially if they involve:
   - Threats of harm
   - Stalking or harassment
   - Pornographic images
   - Extortion

What to do if Your Child Witnesses Cyber Bullying

Parents can help their children become 'empowered' bystanders by discussing the following strategies with their children:

1. **Speak out against cyber bullying**

   Children can let cyber bullies know that their actions are wrong and that they need to stop. This may or may not be a safe option for some bystanders. Some young people are assertive and have strong social support. Sometimes too there is strength in numbers and a group of friends can confront the cyber bully, either face to face or online, and tell them to stop.

2. **Support the student being bullied**

Talking to the victim either face to face or online and letting them know that their friends think cyber bullying is wrong can give a lot of support. It is easy for a victim to feel friendless when they are cyber bullied. In some cases friends have posted positive messages to counteract the negative ones.

3. **Tell a trusted adult**

   Many bystanders and victims avoid telling an adult about cyber bullying. Parents may find it helpful to explain to their children that they will not be punished for another person's bullying behaviour or their own reluctance to stop the cyber bullying. A parent's role should be to help improve the situation, not find fault.

What to Do if Your Child is a Cyber Bully

A child who engages in bullying behaviour is not necessarily a 'bully' everyday if his or her life. However, bullying behaviour can lead to serious consequences and possibly can require some counselling.

If the child appears truly remorseful for his or her actions, it might be appropriate for them to write an apology to the child who was bullied and other family members who were hurt.

Parents should also see this challenge as an opportunity for learning. Consider the lessons that children may learn from this event. Parents may reflect that this is a time to focus closely on issues that are important to them as a family. By teaching empathy and modelling compassion for others, parents will be less likely to see their children engage in bullying behaviour. Parents should actively discuss bullying behaviour and bystander strategies to prepare children for situations they may experience.

Preventing Cyber Bullying at Home

The following are some practical strategies parents can take to prevent cyber bullying and encourage safe use of computers and technology in the home[9]:

1. Parents should talk to their children about the dos and don'ts of each new piece of technology that enters the home. Such discussions should include maintenance, safety and forbidden uses.

2. Parents should support the age limiting polices of online sites. For example, the age limit for MySpace and Facebook is 14, yet children regularly lie about their age to register.

3. The computer should be set up in a family room or kitchen where it can be more easily viewed. Wireless homes become trickier especially with mobile phones that have this capability. Setting up family rules ahead of time (such as handing in phones once students return home) is advisable.

4. Having regular family time such as around the dinner table where ground rules and potential inappropriate use can be discussed is recommended.

5. Parents should look for opportunities everyday to educate their children and communicate values through discussions rather than lectures. Some children do not recognise their mean and harassing online behaviour is bullying. Parents need to be

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[9] Kowlaski, Limber & Agatston (2008)

able to apply their consistent messages about values to new situations and settings, such as cyberspace.

6. Parents may wish to explain to their child that communicating online is prone to misunderstanding because of the lack on non-verbal cues. It is helpful to teach children to use emoticons to help clarify messages.

7. Parents can also discuss with their children the importance of taking time to 'cool down' if they are upset or angry with a friend or classmate before sending or posting a message online. Once an angry message is sent, it may be forwarded to classmates or viewed by others and escalate a conflict. It is best to talk face to face with a peer if they are having a disagreement. It is also possible to retrieve an unopened email once it has been sent.

8. Despite the attraction of disinhibition, parents should tell their children that they are not, in fact, invisible online. Any communication posted online or sent electronically can usually be traced back. The police have a high-tech crimes unit that can assist in serous instances.

9. Parents should discuss with their children the importance of protecting their passwords to social networking sites, MSN sites, online gaming sites and the school intranet. Peers who are friendly one day, may turn on them the next. Parents, though, should know their children's passwords, screen names and account information.

10. Making use of filtering or blocking sites can protect children who are naturally curious from violent, pornographic or otherwise inappropriate sites. In cases where the parent believes their child is abusing their privileges, tracking software can be installed that records every site visited and every keystroke made. Parents should remember though that teenagers can get around this by going to a proxy site that advertises 'anonymous surfing'. A proxy site is a third-party site that shields the real IP address from view. The site works by opening a browser within the actual web page so that the user can visit blocked websites without putting the actual web address in his or her browser. By doing so the user is able to surf the web privately. Thus communicating with a teenager about why it is inappropriate to view pornography or send mean messages may be more useful than relying on a filtering program.

11. Social networking sites and even online gaming can be predatory environments for children. Parents should be able to access their child's social networking site by knowing their password and username. They should monitor just how much information their children are allowing others to see online and what type of people they are admitting to the site. Teenagers brains have not developed the capacity to properly assess risks and consider consequences. They often do not think being exposed to online predators will happen to them. It is up to parents to act as that part of the brain through setting clear expectations and consequences.

12. Parents should 'google' their children's names occasionally to see what is posted online about family members. Parents may also need to check for common misspellings of a child's name as well as their screen names. In addition, parents can use the www.google.com/alerts function to set up regular searches of their children's names online. Google will notify by email every time a child's name appears online.

13. Lastly, remember that children are the real experts on how children interact online. Allow your child to be the 'expert' and show you around the popular sites their friends are using. This is a great opportunity for parents to build a positive relationship with their children by letting them be the teacher for a change.

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