

Newsletter Item 1

Aim: To introduce your school's goals and actions for creating a friendly/supportive school

Goals for our supportive school culture

Schools are increasingly recognising the need to address bullying, resilience and social skills. Our school will be taking further steps this year to create a friendly and supportive culture. The resources we will use are based on evidence from 12 years of empirical research from the Child Health Promotion Research Centre. The resource materials aim to help schools to encourage positive social behaviour and reduce bullying behaviour. Actions we take will include *[schools insert the actions they are planning to take for example: a review of our school bullying policy, introduction of activities to prevent or reduce bullying, strategies to help students cope with bullying and the development of social skills and resiliency factors.]*

Our goals are to: *[these can be modified by the school to suit the actions they are taking]*

- Provide all students with opportunities to develop and practise getting along with other children through classroom learning activities
- Create a positive social environment within our school which actively discourages bullying including cyber bullying
- Modify the school grounds and adult supervision ratios to discourage bullying
- Continue to encourage staff, students and parents to treat all school community members with respect, care and compassion
- Implement a clear and consistent approach to managing reported bullying incidents
- Provide parents with resources and strategies to help them communicate more effectively with their children about bullying

Newsletter Item 2

Aim: To encourage families to help to create a supportive school culture

Families' role in creating a supportive school culture

Research demonstrates that efforts to change the attitudes and behaviour of students are more likely to be successful if families are actively involved and share a sense of ownership over the process.

What can you do to help reduce bullying in our school?

- Talk regularly with your children about bullying
- Encourage your children to ask for help if they are being bullied at school
- If your children are fighting at home, help them discuss their problem and come to a mutual solution
- Encourage your children to be assertive by helping them to practise speaking in a firm but friendly way, making eye contact, looking calm, smiling and feeling good about themselves

Newsletter Item 3

Aim: To provide families with a definition of bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is when one or more of the following things happen **repeatedly** to someone who finds it **hard to stop** it from happening.

Bullying is when a person or a group of people **offline or online** (mobile phone or Internet):

- Make fun of / tease someone in a mean and hurtful way
- Tell lies or spread nasty rumours about someone to try to make others not like him/her
- Leave someone out on purpose or not allow him/her to join in
- Hit, kick or push someone around
- Deliberately damage, destroy or steal someone's things
- Threaten or make someone feel afraid of getting hurt



It is **NOT** bullying when:

- Teasing is done in a friendly, playful way.
- Two people who are as strong as each other argue or fight.



Newsletter Item 4

Aim: To provide families with a definition of cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying using a mobile phone and/or the Internet, for example, when a person:

- Sends nasty or threatening emails or messages on the Internet or via mobile phone
- Sends mean or nasty comments or pictures about others to websites e.g. MySpace; Facebook; MSN or to other students' mobile phones
- Deliberately ignores or leaves out others over the Internet
- Pretends to be someone else online to hurt them or make them look foolish



Cyberbullying can happen through text messages/pictures/video-clips/emails etc being **sent to you**, but also when these things are **sent to others about you**.



Newsletter Item 5

Aim: To provide families with strategies they can use to help their children if they are being bullied

What can I do if I think my children are being bullied at school?

- Try to talk with your children about what is going on.
- Listen to their concerns and believe them.
- Be aware of your own response and react in a calm and helpful manner.
- Talk with your children's teachers and calmly discuss the situation and some possible strategies.
- Encourage your children to ask for help at school if they are being bullied e.g. talk about who they could talk to at school, and how to ask for help.

What can I do to help my children if they are being cyber bullied?

To prevent and respond to cyber-bullying, a useful acronym to remember is I-CURRB.

- **I** - Investigate what your child is doing online.
- **C** - Communicate regularly with your children to understand what they enjoy doing online.
- **U** - Use family safety software to keep track of what your children are able to access online.
- **R** - Research your school and Internet Service Provider's (ISP) policies on cyberbullying. Online applications, such as Instant Messenger (IM), will also have their own policies.
- **R** - Report cyberbullying to your child's school and/or ISP. If you have serious concerns for your child's safety, contact your local police.
- **B** - Block communications from students who cyberbully others. Most IM applications, chat rooms and email account providers allow you to block messages from identified people.

From: <http://www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/cyberbullying.asp>

Newsletter Item 6

Aim: To provide families with tips to communicate more effectively with their children about bullying

Communicating effectively with your children

It is important to discuss bullying with your children on a regular basis. Regular communication with a person they trust and respect will help them form their own opinions and beliefs about bullying. Your children will also feel more comfortable telling you if they are being bullied.

Consider trying some of these ideas to improve the way you talk with your children about tricky issues.

Sit shoulder-to-shoulder or walk with your child as you talk

- Talking face-to-face can be quite confrontational, particularly for boys. Sitting or walking side by side will encourage both you and your child to talk freely.

Use open-ended questions

- It is easy to ask your child if they had a good day or if they would like toast for breakfast; however these questions only require a yes or no answer.
- Try asking questions such as “What did you do today?” or “What would you like for breakfast?” These types of questions encourage discussion between you and your child.

Talk with your children about what to do rather than what not to do

- It is common for us to focus on negative behaviour, such as “don’t step in that puddle” or “stop swinging on your chair”.
- Try telling your children what you would like them to do rather than what you don’t want them to do.
- You can do this by using positive statements such as “please step over the puddle” or “please put the chair legs on the floor”.

Newsletter Item 7

Aim: To provide strategies for families to teach their children how to respond if they are being bullied at school

Talking with your children about being bullied

Many children who are bullied do not tell a trusted adult, as they think they are dobbing.

'Dobbing' is when a person deliberately tries to get attention or to get someone else into trouble.

'Asking for help' is when someone feels the situation is out of his/her control and he/she is unable to deal with it alone. If anyone sees someone else in this situation they should also ask for help.

What are students being taught at school to help them deal with bullying situations?

All students at our school are being taught that:

When I have a problem I can:

- Try to stand up for myself in a positive way
- Try to talk with the person I am having a problem with
- Walk away and ignore the person completely
- Get help from a teacher or another person I trust
- Ignore the situation and keep playing or working
- Talk to a friend to get some ideas to help me make a decision or
- Try coming to an agreement with the other person

You can reinforce these messages by discussing them with your children at home.

Newsletter Item 8

Aim: To provide practical strategies families can use to discourage their children from bullying others

Talking with your children if they are bullying others

All children are capable of bullying and it is important for you to respond in a calm and helpful manner if your child is displaying bullying behaviours. These strategies also apply if you believe your child may be bullying others online.

Encouraging your children not to bully others

You can:

- Talk with your children about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, e.g. “we should not send nasty messages to people to make them feel bad”.
- Work together with your family to establish simple rules and expectations about how your family treat each other.
- Work with your family to establish clear guidelines about internet use at home.
- Encourage and provide opportunities for your children to openly discuss bullying issues, including cyberbullying with the family.
- Discuss friendship and help your children to make friends by encouraging them to play with other children at school, at home or in the neighbourhood.
- Discuss with your children how to be a friend online.
- Invite other children to your home for visits and teach your children how to make their guests feel welcome.
- Encourage your children to share and be aware of the feelings of others.

Newsletter Item 9

Aim: To provide families with information about bystander roles and responsibilities

Talk with your children about bystanders

Bullying involves more than the students who are bullied and those who bully others. Bullying often continues because people who are involved do not talk about it and seek help. This includes people who observe bullying – the bystanders. A bystander is someone who sees the bullying or knows that it is happening to someone else.

Bullying Situation Chart



Bystanders might be afraid that they will be bullied next, and this may influence their decision about what they will do if they see bullying happening. There are different types of bystanders and in this model, they are described as:

Contributors – This group offer support to the person bullying, either by helping the person to bully the other person or by encouraging the person bullying. This group might gather to watch the incident (sometimes from concern for the person being bullied, sometimes to see what will happen, and sometimes for enjoyment).

Supporters – This group dislikes the bullying, is concerned for the person being bullied and actively tries to help the person being bullied.

What can bystanders do?

If students see another student being bullied they should:

- Ask a teacher or support person for help
- Let the person doing the bullying know that what they are doing is bullying
- Refuse to join in with the bullying and walk away
- Support the student who is being bullied
- Support their friends and protect them from bullying (children who are alone are more likely to be the target of bullying, so encourage your children to be aware of children who are left out or on their own in the schoolyard).

Newsletter Item 10

Aim: To provide strategies for families to effectively support their children if they are being bullied at school

Helping your children respond to bullying

It is natural for families to feel upset and want to protect their children if they are being bullied. However, children can be distressed when families react with anger. These same strategies apply if your child is being cyber bullied.

Helpful family responses include:

- Encouraging your children to discuss the situation
- Being aware of your own responses and reacting in a calm, helpful and supportive manner
- Believing your children – it is important that your children feels confident talking to you about problems
- Telling your children that bullying is wrong and reminding them that they have the right to feel safe and happy
- Making sure your children know how to get help and support at school
- Helping your children to make friends (having at least one good friend has been shown to reduce the likelihood and impact of bullying)
- Talking to your children's teacher
- Asking your children what they would like you to do

Newsletter Item 11

Aim: To provide families with a rationale for the school's response to bullying incidents

Understanding the school's responses to bullying

Bullying situations can be complicated and trying to identify exactly what is happening and why can take time. Punishment alone is unlikely to be effective and may be seen to be using 'bullying to stop bullying'.

The school priority is to stop the bullying and to try to reduce the chance of it happening again.

The key to stopping bullying is getting children to talk about what is happening and decide what to do to make the situation better for everyone. This approach is called the Method of Shared Concern and will be explained in the next edition of this newsletter.

Our whole-school bullying policy provides a statement about how students, teachers, staff and families describe how the school will respond to bullying situations. This policy is available from the school and all families are encouraged to read it.

It is very important for children to have an understanding of behaviours that are expected of them and that these expectations are consistent at school and at home.

For more information about how our school manages bullying incidents, please check the school portal; ask your children's teachers or the school administration for a copy of the bullying policy. *[Adapt this list as necessary for your school]*

Newsletter Item 12

Aim: To provide families with an understanding of the Method of Shared Concern in managing bullying incidents and how it works

The Shared Concern method

The key to stopping bullying is getting those involved to talk about what is happening and decide how to overcome the problem. The Friendly Schools Plus Program recommends that schools use the Method of Shared Concern to encourage children to talk about bullying incidents. Families can also use this strategy at home.

The Method of Shared Concern aims to change the behaviour of students who are bullying and to improve the situation for the student being bullied. This method helps students develop empathy and concern for others and gives them strategies to help them get along better with others in the school and at home.

How does the method work?

1. Individual meetings are held with each of the students involved in the bullying incident: the student or students bullying, the person being bullied and any bystanders who may have seen what was happening.
2. Each student is asked about the bullying behaviour and to suggest ways he or she personally could help to improve the situation for the person being victimised.
3. The student being bullied is also given the opportunity to discuss what happened and is encouraged to think of ways to improve the situation.
4. There are follow-up meetings, discussions and planning that give students the opportunity to change and to put these new behaviours into practice in a supportive environment.

Newsletter Item 13

Aim: To provide families with practical strategies to support the school to reduce bullying

How can families help create a supportive school culture?

We can help children to feel safer and happier at school by demonstrating that families and schools work together as partners. The support of families is very important in creating a friendly and supportive school environment.

How can families help create our supportive school culture?

- Get to know our school's behavioural policies that address bullying/cyberbullying and discuss these with your children.
- Maintain regular contact with your children's teacher.
- Try to attend school functions, for example assemblies and/or volunteer at school to demonstrate your support for your children and the school.
- Read the school newsletter and discuss items of interest with your children.
- Model a positive attitude toward school and encourage your children to see the positive aspects of school life.
- If there is a problem with your children at school, try to work together with the school to overcome the problem. This shows a committed partnership between families and the school to work towards positive solutions.

Newsletter Item 14

Aim: To discuss the importance of discipline in resolving bullying behaviours, and to provide strategies for families to adopt at home

Understanding discipline

Discipline should encourage children to take responsibility for their own online and offline behaviour.

What happens at school?

Our school has policies that address the behavioural expectations of students. These plans are designed to encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions and develop self-discipline. These policies inform families, teachers and students of what is expected, and outlines rewards for positive and consequences for poor behaviour.

What can families do?

By working in conjunction with the school, families can provide their children with consistent expectations and boundaries both at school and at home.

- Set consistent, firm limits and rules. Children like to know where they stand. This includes limits and rules around internet use.
- When family rules are set, ask your children to tell you the rules in their own words.
- Be consistent with consequences and rewards.
- Acknowledge positive behaviour.
- Model desired behaviours to your children.
- Supervise your children so you know where they are and what they are doing. This also applies when they are online.
- Become familiar with your school's behavioural policies so your children can see that you are actively involved.

Show lots of love and affection. You are the most important person in your child's life and your time and attention is the most powerful reward you can give them.

Newsletter Item 15

Aim: To provide families with strategies to help their children develop and maintain friendships to reduce the likelihood of being bullied at school

Friendship and social support

A child with more than one good friend is less likely to be bullied than a child who is often alone or who has only one friend. Children who bully others are careful to avoid those children who have assertive and supportive friends.

How can families help their children to make friends?

- Make sure that your children play with other children at school, at home and in your neighbourhood.
- At home, encourage your children to talk and maintain contact with their extended family – uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents and to talk with adult family friends.
- Invite other children to your home for visits, and show your children how to make their guests feel welcome.
- Help your children to make new friends by encouraging them to develop other interests and hobbies, such as sport, Scouts, dance, drama or music.
- Take your children on holidays to places where there are other children of a similar age.

Newsletter Item 16

Aim: To provide families with strategies to help them support their children if they are cyberbullied

Working with the school

Many young people report they do not tell an adult when they are experiencing cyberbullying because they are afraid of how adults will respond. Young people report their parents often over-react and try to take control of the situation. Young people need adults to help them to deal with the problem for themselves by acting as a facilitator, listening non-judgmentally and providing support and advice when asked. Ask your child which (if any) strategies she/he has already tried, if they were helpful, what other people have tried and their usefulness, and what they would try next time.

It is important to also let the school know about the bullying situation. However, before approaching the school, ask your child how s/he would like to talk about this issue with the school and discuss what outcome he/she wants as a result of involving the school. Consider:

- Phoning the school and asking who is best placed to help your child
- Making a time to talk with this person at school
- Explaining what you know about the situation
- Describing strategies your child has tried to date
- Asking for a plan of action that can be implemented at the school and at home
- Consider setting a date and time for a follow-up meeting
- Discussing with your child what happened and what the agreed strategies are.

Newsletter Item 17

Aim: To provide families with an understanding of actions they and their children can take to save and report evidence of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying leaves a trail

Many young people are unaware that everything they say and do online leaves a 'digital footprint' and although they may have deleted a message, picture or website, this can never fully be deleted.

If your child has been cyberbullied, here are a few tips for how you can save and report the evidence:

Mobile phones: download and print the message or take a photo of the message on the screen with your camera. For nuisance calls or messages you can contact your mobile phone service provider and for threatening calls or messages, contact the Police.

Online content: If content is posted on a website you need to contact the website directly. Most social networking sites (e.g.: Facebook, Twitter, MSN) have pages where you can report 'inappropriate' behaviour. Alternatively you can find more information of the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) website at: <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Parents.aspx>

Newsletter Item 18

Aim: To provide families with strategies to help them to keep their children safer when online

How can I help my child stay safe online?

Young people usually don't discuss with adults social problems they experience online, for fear they will have their access to the internet or mobile phone taken away from them. Therefore, it is recommended that each family establish a 'Family Agreement' for use of the Internet and mobile phones.

When negotiating a family agreement, the most important consideration is that it works for your family. Having an effective family agreement is about building a positive relationship with your child. It ensures that technology can be enjoyed in a safe and mutually acceptable manner. Young people understand that they are responsible for their behaviour online. As such, the agreement should include consequences for unsafe or unacceptable use of technology (example agreements are available on the ACMA website): <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au>.

Discuss with your child what they think are reasonable consequences if the agreement is broken. The most effective agreements are those where mutual decisions are made in negotiation with your child. Whilst it is important to discuss all technologies with your children, the final agreement needs to be clear, simple, concise and manageable, and should be reviewed regularly.