



AGAINST BULLYING/HARASSMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

There is abundant evidence now available to suggest that bullying and harassment is a serious problem across Australian school. Where bullying and harassment is sustained and severe, students typically report losses in self-esteem and feelings of anger or depression. Depressed students commonly have few friends and are more inclined to stay away from school, consequently their schoolwork suffers. There is evidence that the physical and mental health of students who are bullied frequently deteriorates.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 1995, discrimination on the basis of sex, disability, race, religion or personal appearance is unlawful. Bullying could be construed as discriminatory or harassing behaviour.

At Hurstbridge Primary School we believe that our students have the right to a safe and caring environment which promotes learning, personal growth and the development of a positive self-esteem. The School is committed to providing this and each child, teacher, parent/guardian, school helpers have the responsibility to ensure that this occurs.

The Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all school activities, in and out of the classroom, incursions, excursions, sport, camp and before and after school care programs. Non-teaching staff, parents and volunteers who supervise children, need to be aware of their responsibility to report bullying to a teacher or the principal.

Definition of Bullying

Being bullied or harassed means that someone is subjected to a behaviour which is hurtful, threatening or frightening. This behaviour is repeated over time. There is a power imbalance between the bully/ies and the victim/s.

Bullying may take many forms which include:

Physical Bullying

- Fighting, pushing, shoving, gestures or invasion of personal space.

Verbal Bullying

- Name calling, offensive language, innuendo, putting people down behind their backs or directly 'picking on people' because of their race, gender, religion, disability, physical appearance or any other real or perceived difference.

Visual Bullying

- Offensive notes or material graffiti, damaging or tampering with other peoples' possessions.

Victimisation

- Stand-over tactics, 'picking on others', threats to 'get people', or repeated unwarranted exclusion from a group.

Sexual Bullying

- Touching or brushing against one in a sexual manner, sexually oriented jokes, innuendo, drawings of or writing about someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking questions and someone's private life.

IMPLEMENTATION

- At Hurstbridge Primary School it is a child's right and responsibility to report bullying, whether this happens to them or to someone else.
- Hurstbridge School Curriculum will provide pro-social programs that will nurture and encourage caring and consideration for others. These programs will include: The Peer Support Program, The Buddy System, Life Education.
- The children's awareness of the nature of bullying will be heightened in the classroom through information discussion, and formal anti-bullying activities. Appropriate anti-bullying and social programs will be used.
- Parents' awareness of the nature of bullying and of anti-bullying strategies will be heightened via home/school communication through weekly newsletter, term newsletter and information nights.
- All staff, administrative persons, parents/guardians, volunteers and others involved with children in the school will be made aware of their responsibilities regarding this policy.
- Children will be made aware of the Children's Action Plan Against Bullying. This will be reinforced through the school's personal development plan.

The Action Plan is:

- a) Firmly but politely request that the unwanted behaviour cease
 - b) If the unwanted behaviour continues, report the action immediately to a teacher.
- There will be a confidential central register where a log of bullying incidents and action taken will be kept. This ensures consistency in approach and allows for an overview of potential problems.
 - Bullying should be looked at in the context it occurs. Bullying or harassment by a group may have more serious implications than the same acts pursued by individuals.
 - All complaints involving bullying will be handled confidentially and seriously. For consistency of approach, complaints and mediation should be managed by designated persons within the school, e.g. Principal, Assistant Principal, Pupil Welfare Officer.
 - Teachers will be aware of the need to adhere to the principles of 'Natural Justice'; i.e. that people who have allegedly bullied someone have the right to know the nature of the accusations, who has made them and is given an equal chance to respond.
 - Teachers should be aware that some situations might occur where there is either an intentional or unintentional manipulation of the facts whereby a child finds himself/herself in a cycle where they are labeled a 'baddie' and are potentially an easy 'set-up' for other children.
 - Teachers will be aware that most children who bully are not malicious but rather insensitive and irresponsible. Teachers will be aware that most children who bully respond best to counseling involving an 'Empathy for the Victim' approach rather than one which is a purely punitive. Bullying is difficult to control by using strict disciplinary means only.
 - The 'Empathy for the Victim' approach seeks to express to the bully, the feelings and concerns of the victim and to elicit from the bully, personal responsibility for the distress which has been caused.

- A role of the designated teacher who is mediating is to elicit from the bully, suggestions and concrete proposals which will help the situation.
- The implementation of the agreed proposals and the outcome of the victim should be carefully monitored until the situation is resolved.
- Teachers should be aware of the procedural steps when dealing with bullies.
 - First Offence - Counseling
 - Second Offence - Parental Involvement
 - Third Offence - Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary procedures would be implemented in-line with DEECD guidelines.
These may include, school sanctions, exclusion from playground, suspension or expulsion.

EVALUATION

- Monitoring children's social interaction through playground behaviour.
- Teacher, child, parent reports
- Periodic classroom school safety surveys
- Yearly minor evaluation of Pupil Welfare Program and Cyclic Policy Evaluation.
- Monitoring of data contained in the central registry and over-time, comparison with established school benchmarks.