



Dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence (Students)

RATIONALE

Loreto Nedlands has a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to encourage the development of positive relationships between students to reduce all forms of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. The policies and practices that a school employs should enhance the dignity of the human person and reflect the Principles of Pastoral Care as espoused in the Pastoral Care Framework (2007).

Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. Students who are bullied, subject to aggression or harassed tend to have poorer health, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, depression, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety. They are also more likely to have a dislike of and want to avoid school, higher absenteeism and lower academic competence. The effects of bullying can begin early in life and, for some, last a lifetime.

The Australian Government's National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues.

The National Safe Schools Framework is based on the following overarching vision:

All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing.

In the NSSF, a safe and supportive school is described in the following way:

In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.

The Guiding Principles of the National Safe Schools framework:

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning

- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfill the school's child protection responsibilities
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

The nine key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

DEFINITION

Bullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, an imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt).

Its nature may be:

- verbal - name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken, written, electronic or cyber which may also apply to the following points)
- physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions²

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status. (Bullying. No Way! website cited in the National Safe Schools Framework, 2003).

Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, K. 2001).

TYPES OF BULLYING

	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect</i>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting, slapping, punching • Kicking • Pushing, strangling • Spitting, biting • Pinching, scratching • Throwing things, eg stones • Unwanted touching or sexual remarks or intrusions into one's personal life. (Bounceback, p. 92, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting another person to harm someone
Non-Physical/Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean and hurtful name calling • Hurtful teasing • Demanding money or possessions • Forcing another to do homework or commit offences such as stealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading nasty rumours • Trying to get other students to not like someone
Non-verbal/Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening and/or obscene gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate exclusion from a group or activity • Removing and hiding and/or damaging others belongings

PRINCIPLES

- Loreto Nedlands is a safe and supportive environment where the 11 principles and 6 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practised.
- Loreto Nedlands owes a duty of care to students.
- Loreto Nedlands provides a supportive environment, which:
 - act to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence
 - encourages socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management
 - promotes respect for self and others
 - develops physical/emotional well-being and resiliency

- develops interpersonal skills and positive mental health.
- Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence requires quality leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained change, together with a whole-school community approach that is consistent with the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia's Pastoral Care Framework, the school's Pastoral Care practices and the school's Evangelisation Plan and which partners with parents and other agencies.
- Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student's learning and behaviour in school, Loreto Nedlands will take action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.
- All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. When bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders, (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.
- While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, Loreto Nedlands policy and procedures contains clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration should be given to other circumstances which may have bearing such as family or mental health matters.
- All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.

At Loreto Nedlands, 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.

PROCEDURES

Confidentiality

The staff of Loreto Nedlands will respect the rights of the individuals involved in the bullying incident by keeping the individuals names out of any communication with others. Individual's privacy must be respected.

Reporting, recording and data collection procedures shall be used when investigating incidents, as a basis to facilitate evaluation and justify any modification to approach, and to inform prevention and management activities.

Loreto Nedlands has adopted two procedural aspects of prevention and management.

Prevention of Bullying

Prevention strategies assist students to become resilient. The school implements programs such as Safe Schools, Loreto Blossoming Policy, Bounce Back, Mary Ward Circle, and specifically teaches social skills through designated Health lessons and the introduction of character strengths each fortnight.

Management of Bullying

The management strategy applies to the Student Behaviour Management Policy. The school has a range of measures available, including detention, suspension or exclusion which are in accordance with the Loreto Nedlands Evangelisation Policy, Pastoral Care Policy and Student Management Policy.

The Principal, Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal, where appropriate:

- Interviews the students involved in the bullying incident
- Informs the parents and involves them in the process.
- Works to assist the teacher, parents and the students involved until the issue is resolved.
- Continues to monitor the situation.
- Will refer the students to outside agencies if needed. This may involve individual consultation/s or involvement of the whole class in order to change the behaviour.

The teachers:

- Act as role models of caring and tolerant behaviour.
- Document the name/s of the bullied child, who reported the incident and the bystander/s.
- Interview the bullied child to find out what happened.
- Suggest strategies that the bullied student might use to avoid being bullied in the future.
- Individually interview bystander/s and the student/s displaying bullying behaviours using the "Shared Concern" approach (Appendix 1). Discuss strategies these student/s might use to avoid bullying in the future.
- Record what happened on the bullying incident form (Appendix 2).
- Discuss the issue with the Principal.
- Monitor the situation over the following few days.
- **Where necessary**, speak to class without using any names, circle time, small group meetings, class meeting box, etc
- **Where appropriate and using discretion**, work with parents of the bullied child to assist their child to avoid being bullied in the future. Keep them informed about progress and the measures taken.
- **Where appropriate and using discretion**, inform the parents of the child bullying and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification.
- Teach and revise strategies for bullying in the classroom, e.g. acceptance and friendliness, conflict management skills and dealing with bullying issues.

The students:

- Who are bullied need to speak to their teacher/parents and give him/her full details of the incident.
- Witnessing bullying are to intervene if they are able.
- Immediately report bullying fairly to a teacher if they cannot intervene themselves.
- Who are bystanders have a responsibility to act/speak up.
- Have a responsibility to speak up if bullying occurs.

The parents:

- Listen sympathetically to their child's reports of bullying.
- Report incidents of bullying to the classroom teacher or the principal.
- Work with the school to seek a permanent solution.
- Stay in contact with the teacher and keep the teacher informed of any relevant information to do with the incident/s reoccurrence.
- Work with their child at home after consulting with the school on the best ways to support their child.
- Need to respect the privacy of all parties concerned.

ON-GOING BULLYING

- Resistance to behaviour change and repeated offending will lead to serious consequences, such as detention, suspension or expulsion.
- The school will work with the parents of the person who is bullying to establish strategies for behaviour modification.
- The school may enforce the condition that the child be referred for professional help.

REFERENCES

Rigby, K. (2001). *Stop the Bullying*. A Handout for Schools. ACER Australia.

Curriculum Corporation. (2000). *Mind Matters*. Commonwealth of Australia.

McGrath, H. and Noble, T. (2003). *Bounce Back!* Pearson Education, Australia.

Erceg, E. and Cross, D. (2004). *Friendly Schools & Families*. Edith Cowan University, Australia.

Appendix 1

Responses to Bullying Incidents

The Pikas Method of Shared Concern

- A. Assure the student being bullied that the incident will be dealt with.
- B. When the time becomes available teachers or administrations talk individually to bullying students first (7 mins max).
- C. Students who are bullied are talked to last (7 mins max).
- D. **Okay I'll see you next week to find out how you are getting on.**
- E. Follow up meeting with students who have been bullying.
- F. Student who was bullied received support and there may be a follow up with assertiveness training.

Individual 'Chats'

Stage 1

"Some bad things are happening to x..."

- Let the students talk
- Avoid closed questions
- Don't question if they complain about the victimized child

Stage 2

"So it sounds like x is having a bad time."

- As soon as they agree move to Stage 3
- If they say "it's his / her fault" accept point of view but still point out that they are having a bad time

Stage 3

"Right. I was wondering what you could do to help improve x's situation."

- Accept suggestions
- Don't bargain or question
- Don't discuss 'how'

Stage 4

"OK. I'll see you next week to find out how you are getting on."

Stage 5

Follow up meeting with former bullies.

Skills of the Mediator

- Build confidence.
- Elicit shared concern about the situation.
- Reach a turning point.
- Stimulate constructive solutions.
- Remember the Colombo technique – um and ah and lots of silence and smiles.

Interview with student

Step 1

“I have asked you to come and speak with me because I have heard that some things have been happening to you that are making you unhappy at school.”

- Wait for the student to respond.
- Let the student explain his/her situation. Then simply acknowledge that there is a situation, which is making him or her unhappy.

Step 2

“So it sounds like you are having a bit of a tough time.”

- Wait for the student to respond.
- As soon as the student agrees and acknowledges go the Step 3.

Step 3a

“I have spoken to a few students about your situation and they have made some good suggestions to help you feel happier and safer at school.”

- If the student is concerned about this reassure him/her that you will be keeping a close eye on what is happening.
- Let the student know that there may be some changes in some of the students’ behaviour towards him or her.
- If you feel the student could help the situation by changing some of his/her behaviours go to Step3b.

Step 3b

“I was wondering what you could do to help improve the situation for yourself and help you to become happier at school.”

- Accept any suggestions with positive feedback.
- Don’t question suggestions if they are positive.
- If the suggestions are negative, ask the student whether he/she thinks this would help him/her feel happier.
- If the student can’t think of anything to do or is resistant to the idea, ask him/her to take some time to think about something he or she could do to help feel happier, then move to Step 4.

“Okay, I’ll see you next week to find out how you are getting on.”

- If the student had an idea then say you will see him/her to “discuss how your idea went when you tried it.”
- If he/she didn’t have an idea then say you will see him/her to “discuss the idea you have come up with.”

Appendix 2

Incident Report Form

Date: _____

Reported by: (Student / Parent / Staff / Community)

Where the incident took place:

Playground / Classroom / To / From School

When the incident took place:

During Class / During Morning Recess / Lunch/ Before / After School

Behaviour Displayed:	Δ Bullying	Δ Being Bullied
Physical Hitting, punching Kicking Pinching Scratching Damaging/stealing property Throwing things at someone Other	Verbal Teasing Name calling Insulting someone or their friends or family Threatening remarks Offensive language Discriminatory remarks Lies or nasty stories Cyber bullying (via phone or Computer) Other	Emotional Exclusion from friends Ignoring someone Making fun of someone Stopping someone from joining in Disrupting someone's game Other

Comments _____

Who was involved: Single Student / Family Member/Other Student

Names (if possible)

Person Reporting Incident / Family Member/Other Affected

Action taken: _____

Δ Shared concern

Δ Other

People Notified:

Classroom Teacher / Teacher on Duty
Assistant Principal / Principal / Parents

Findings: _____

Appendix 3

NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

Guiding Principles for the Provision of a Safe and Supportive School Environment

Australian schools:

1. Affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
2. Promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
3. Implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment
4. Recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
5. Develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
6. Ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
7. Recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
8. Have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
9. Focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
10. Regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
11. Take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

The six key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programs and procedures
3. Provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents
4. Managing incidents of abuse and victimisation
5. Providing support for students
6. Working closely with parents.

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