

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy & Procedures



Ascham School

Definition

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Psychological bullying** which is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **Indirect bullying** which is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **Cyber bullying** which is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

Not Bullying

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- **Mutual Conflict Situations** which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation.
- **One-Off Acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

Signs of Bullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- crying at night and having nightmares
- refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?"

- having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of school work
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- beginning to bully siblings
- acting unreasonably.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the School through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a class teacher or School counsellor), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

Bullying Prevention

Bullying is not tolerated at Ascham School.

It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a 'whole-of-School community' approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians;
- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within the School on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/guardians to recognise bullying and respond appropriately;
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident;
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture; and
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

Bullying Prevention Strategy

Ascham School recognises that the implementation of whole School prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no bullying' culture within the School:

- a structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year;
- education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies;
- regular provision of information to parents/guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a School community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the School;
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/guardians;

- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/guardians;
- reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below);
- regular risk assessments of bullying within the School are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff;
- records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate;
- statements supporting bullying prevention are included in students' School diaries;
- education of staff, students and parents/guardians on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear;
- anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within the School; and
- promotion of student awareness and a 'no-bullying' environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

Identifying Bullying in Home

How can bullying be identified and how can parents help?

It is important to remember that bullying will be most effectively dealt with, and with the least damage to both the child being bullied and the child who is bullying, when parents and the School work together to find a solution — parents should not intervene directly but should work with the School to address bullying. The School sees its partnership with parents as essential in promoting the well-being, happiness and productivity of all the students in its care.

The following brief guidelines may help you help your children such that they do not become bullies or victims:

- Encourage your daughter to talk to you about bullying regularly. Let her know how much you disapprove of bullying and explain why. Model and encourage respect for others, emphasise seeing things from another's point of view and instill an awareness of the rights of others not to be mistreated;
- Stress how important it is that bullying is everyone's problem. No-one can be neutral about it. Encourage your daughter to support a student who is being bullied and to report it. If she will not talk to the School, you should do so;
- Be alert to any signs of distress, anxiety, unwillingness to attend school, regular episodes of missing or damaged equipment or clothes and inform the School of your concerns. A change in behaviour (for example becoming angry about nothing, being overly moody, talking about herself in a derogatory fashion) can also be warning signs and should be discussed with the School.
- Communicate regularly and openly with the School. Your daughter's Form Teacher and Year Coordinator are the primary points of contact and it is important to develop two-way lines of communication. In Fiona and Hillingdon your daughter's Class Teacher and the Head of Junior School are the primary points of contact and it is important to develop two-way lines of communication;

- Take an active interest in all areas of your daughter's school life, encourage her to talk to you and to talk to teachers she trusts and likes;
- Develop resilient social skills in your daughter such as encouraging her to speak openly and confidently, how to negotiate and to express her own opinion without fear. Help her learn the difference between friendly banter/joking and bullying, and help her distinguish between those friends who care about her feelings and those 'friends' who do not; and
- Your daughter will copy what you do and it is important that you offer her a positive role model of being resilient, compassionate and respectful of others' rights.

Reporting Bullying

One of the many issues surrounding bullying is reluctance on the part of victims to report incidents. Equally, authority figures (teachers, parents, other staff) and witnesses can overlook incidents, or accept them as part of the 'rough and tumble' of school life.

It is important to Ascham School that it creates an atmosphere of support and care for the individual. Ascham School will take steps to ensure that all staff and students know and understand what bullying behaviour is, and that they should report any incident to someone they trust – who must, in turn, report it to the school.

Students and their parents must be alert to signs of distress or agitation and to suspected incidents of bullying and report them to the School.

Reporting Bullying

Students and their parents/guardians are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of the School's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:

- bullying is not tolerated within the School;
- their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- the School has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the School verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher;
- informing the School counsellor;
- informing a student's Year Coordinator; and
- informing the Deputy Head of School or the Head of School.

Reporting Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each situation needs to be dealt with on its facts.

The School will:

- take bullying incidents seriously;
- provide assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected to the extent possible;
- appropriately investigate the situation including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders, as it considers necessary;
- seek to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- maintain records of reported bullying incidents; and
- escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents, as necessary.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- The “Method of Shared Concern” Approach (Pikas)
- The “No Blame” Approach (Maines & Robinson)

These approaches may be used to intervene in group or relational bullying situations. They are only appropriate during the initial stages. They are not appropriate for persistent or severe bullying incidents.

- notification of/consultation with parents/guardians
- offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims
- implementing effective follow up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the Head of School’s discretion, including suspension and expulsion depending on the circumstances.

This is not an exhaustive list of possible actions. Actions taken by the School may depend on the circumstances. The School will determine the most appropriate action to take in response to an allegation of bullying.

Youth Liaison Officers

Youth Liaison Officers are NSW Police Force members who are responsible for administering the Young Offenders Act 1997 (NSW). They are responsible for delivering cautions, referring children to youth justice conferences and implementing strategies to reduce crime by juveniles in the community.

Posters

Anti-bullying posters may be posted in strategic locations in the School to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/guardian education and information
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported
- the creation of a ‘no-bullying’ culture within the School community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

Bullying Prevention and Intervention – Further Information

Anti-bullying strategies for students

Your rights and responsibilities:

It is a student's right to feel safe at school. It is the **right** of all students to have a safe, supportive and caring environment in which to pursue their education. It is a student's **responsibility** to make sure that this right is possible. Students can do this by:

- not engaging in any bullying behaviour in any form
- reporting any bullying they see, and if possible, stepping in to stop it
- telling someone who is bullying to stop, and supporting the victim
- talking to someone in authority as soon as possible.

If you are being bullied:

- The first thing to remember is: **It is not your fault**. Bullies want to hurt or belittle their victims because the bully wants to feel powerful, not because you have done something or said something;
- You should try to tell the bully to stop. This can be difficult but it is important to try. Equally, you should try to walk away ignoring any taunts or name-calling. Do not respond aggressively or with taunts of your own;
- **You must tell someone**. Do not think that no-one cares or that no-one wants to know about it. If you cannot tell someone on your own, find a friend to go with you. By telling someone, you immediately help to make the bully less powerful; and
- There are many people in school that you can talk to including the Head of School, the Deputy Head, the Head of Junior School, your Year Coordinator, your Form Teacher, your Class Teacher, your Boarding Coordinator, one of your teachers, the School Counsellors, the School Nurse, your House sister, any member of Year 12, one of the sports captains, one of the Committee girls, your House Chairman/Vice Chairman.

If you see someone being bullied:

- Support the victim and tell the bully to stop. It is important to do this as it shows you care. You care for the victim and you care that the bully should not behave in that manner;
- Take the victim away from the situation. Find another group of friends to be with and let the victim know you support her; and
- Tell someone. The victim may not want to talk to a member of staff but it is vital that the school knows about the bullying incident. It is only by telling someone that bullying behaviour will be stopped. Support the victim and offer to go with her to talk to someone. If she won't, you must tell someone yourself.

What is bullying and what should you do?

Bullying can take many forms. It can happen in public or it can be hidden.

- One form of bullying is aggressive and public. Behaviour such as violence towards a student, or publicly damaging or stealing their belongings is easily seen and easily identified. If you see this, you should follow the steps outlined above, making sure you support the victim and that you tell someone;

- Another form of bullying is less openly aggressive and is partly public, partly hidden. This includes behaviour such as the repeated ridicule or put-down of a student within a group or class, or the malicious removal or damage of a student's belongings, witnessed by a small group. This is often described by the bully as 'friendly teasing' or as something done 'in fun'. This is not the case. It is bullying. If you belong to the group you may find it difficult to stand up to your friends; however, it is important that you do not join in. You should follow the steps outlined above, making sure you support the victim and that you tell someone. Remember, if your friends can treat one girl like this, they can do the same to you; and
- A third form of bullying is hidden but equally harmful and hurtful. This is behaviour where a student is deliberately excluded or isolated from a group, where, for example, malicious and unfounded rumours and gossip are spread. This form of 'anonymous' bullying is the most difficult to identify; however, as a student you can do something about it. The most important thing you can do is not join in this form of behaviour. You should not repeat rumours or gossip you hear. You should not exclude someone from your group or your activities because someone else says you should. It can be very difficult to stand up to your friends but it is important to remember that everyone should be treated with respect and courtesy, no matter who they are. The steps outlined above should be followed, making sure you support the victim and that you tell someone. Remember, if your friends can treat one girl like this, they can do the same to you.

One thing is certain, as a student, you cannot be neutral about bullying. If you see any form of bullying occur and do nothing, you are condoning it.

Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

- Cyberbullying is the use of technology by one person as a means to scare, belittle or exclude another. A cyberbullying incident can be direct or indirect. Direct cyberbullying can be a malicious or hurtful text-message or email sent to a specific victim. Indirect cyberbullying can be a message, URL, or photograph spread widely by text or email, damaging an individual's reputation or inciting gossip.
- Cyberbullying is not time or place specific. It can happen 24 hours a day, at home, at school, on holiday. The victim can feel they are never safe from the bully.
- Cyberbullying is often anonymous. As cyberbullying is often conducted from the safety of a student's home, it is possible that the cyberbully may be in a different class, year group or even a different school. Cyber bullies can hide behind technology with great ease.
- Cyberbullying can employ a wide variety of means including instant messaging, message boards, text, email, chat rooms, personal and social networking sites. Any student with access to a mobile phone and computer/internet can be involved in cyberbullying.

How is the school addressing cyberbullying?

- The School sees no difference between bullying in person and bullying by electronic or technological means;
- The School's Information Technology Department monitors school computer accounts and any girl found to be abusing the school network will have her access suspended and the incident will be investigated;
- The School does not allow girls to have mobile phones during the school day. All phones must be handed in to Form Teachers at morning roll call, and returned at afternoon roll call. In Fiona, all phones must be handed in to the Administrative Assistant at the office at the beginning of the day and may be collected from her at the end of school at 3.10 pm. In Hillingdon girls are not allowed mobile phones at all; and

- The School will generally seek to investigate any reported incidents of cyberbullying, noting that any cyberbullying incidents that take place outside school hours or off school property can be difficult to investigate and prove.

What can parents do to combat cyberbullying?

- Talk to your daughter about cyberbullying and make sure she is aware of what it is. Being open and direct is very important in helping her to stay safe;
- Computers with internet access should be located publicly in the home. If you can see what your daughter is looking at, which sites she is accessing, how often she is instant messaging, you are in a stronger position to be aware of her online habits;
- Encourage a sensible and mature approach to the internet. Do not let her respond to jibes or taunts. Ensure she knows you are always there to help and support her;
- If your daughter receives messages or emails that are malicious or bullying in intent, make sure she does not delete them. Keeping the text/email is the first step in tracking down the bully. Encourage her to block senders and to change email addresses if needed. If she uses instant messaging or goes to chat rooms, encourage her to use a different name/nickname;
- If you think your daughter is being cyberbullied, signs to look out for include: refusing to answer her mobile phone, or conversely, constant and nervous checking for messages; distress after using the computer; a seemingly unwarranted need to change her mobile number; secretive online habits such as changing screens whenever you walk by; and
- Become as IT literate as possible. Internet and mobile phone technology can appear to be mystifying and rather frightening. Only by acquiring the knowledge to understand it and use it well, are you able to help your daughter become a sensible IT user.

What can students do if they are being cyberbullied?

- First of all, tell someone. It is very important that you do not suffer in silence;
- Do not delete the text message or email – you must show it to your parents or to a teacher – and it is only by keeping the evidence that the bully may be tracked down;
- Block any senders who are malicious or unkind. If you receive hurtful email, change email addresses and only give your new address to people you trust; and
- Never give out your mobile phone number or email address to someone you don't know or to someone you don't trust. Never give out your real name or your email address while in a chat room.

Anti-bullying resources

The more the School community know about bullying and how to deal with it, the more effective we will be in counteracting it. Bullying is not the sole preserve of schools but is throughout our communities and can continue when we are adults. If we are able to demonstrate to the girls in our school that we will not tolerate it and if we aim to equip them with the skills to deal with while they are at school, we will have helped them deal with it in the future also. To this end the following are some useful resources, which may help increase our knowledge and understanding of this difficult subject.

General

- The National Coalition Against Bullying: www.ncab.org.au
- Andrew Fuller inyahead@satlink.com.au and www.andrewfuller.com.au
- Antibullying network site www.antibullying.net/. This network was established by the Scottish Executive for teachers, parents and young people to share ideas about how bullying should be tackled.
- Bullying. No Way. www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- Bullying: What can we do? www.kids.nsw.gov.au/files/seminar_bullying.pdf
- Bullying. Everybody's Business. A Kids Help Line Initiative www.kidshelp.com.au/info7/contents.htm
- Bounce Back programme – Toni Noble
- www.beyondblue.org.au

Cyberbullying

- www.netalert.net.au/02531-Advice-Centre.asp
- www.ncab.org.au
- Net Alert Helpline: 1800 880 176