

Whole school approach to bullying

Every student has the right to come to school secure in the knowledge that their safety will be protected. Because children and adolescents have a variety of coping styles, bullying affects them in different ways. It is our aim to increase students' capacity to cope with being bullied by helping them to develop resilience, making them aware that they must seek assistance if they are being victimized and assisting them to begin developing the strategies required to do this.

Similarly, we need to help those who resort to bullying to understand the effects it has upon others and to develop more positive methods of social interaction.

Parents have a right to expect that their children will be educated in a secure environment in which care, courtesy and respect for the rights of others are encouraged. We would also encourage parents to support the school in its efforts to maintain a positive teaching and learning environment.

Teachers have a right to expect that they will be able to teach in an orderly and cooperative environment.

Definitions

Bullying is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. It can be in the form of:

Physical Bullying

Such as hitting, kicking, throwing objects, taking or damaging property;

Verbal Bullying

being non-physical and including insults and name-calling as well as taunting and teasing, frequently regarding a person's physical appearance, clothing, and sporting or academic ability;

Non-Verbal / Emotional Bullying

Being non-physical behaviour such as threatening and/or obscene gestures, the sharing of knowing or sneering glances, offensive notes, emails, text, phone calls or graffiti; excluding peers from groups, spreading rumours, stalking, interference with or damage to personal property.

Humiliating, offensive, intimidatory or distressing actions or comments related to a person's disability are considered bullying. Similar comments or actions made to a student about their associate (parent, family member) who has a disability is also considered bullying and will not be tolerated.

Bullying can be planned and organised or it may be unintentional.

School policies

The Launceston Preparatory School Discipline Policy states: "One of the aims of our Paideia approach is to develop each child as a responsible citizen. We therefore expect a code of conduct that ensures the safety and happiness of all. Children should respect the rights and property of others. Thoughtfulness and respect should form the basis of all their words and deeds."

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and their victims. It also affects those who may witness violence and intimidation of the victim. It can damage the atmosphere of the class and even the climate of the school. Bullying is the misuse of power, position and privilege. It is done to intimidate, coerce, frighten and to control.

The Launceston Preparatory School Health Policy states: "For children to fulfill their potential and be happy, productive citizens, their health is important. This aspect of their development is significant, along with children's progress in social and academic skills." This encompasses mental and emotional health as well as physical well-being.

Prevention and intervention strategies / programs

- Staff promote positive student behaviour through weekly recognition in assembly.
- When necessary, staff organise lunch-time play areas to promote flexible student groups and activities.
- We promote the school bullying policy, health policy, discipline policy and school rules to set an appropriate code of behaviour for all students, through relevant home group reminders, assemblies and school newsletters. We will continue to provide professional development as required for staff in this area.
- Parents are encouraged to support this policy through discussion of its meaning and implications for their children.
- We actively work through classroom and playground activities to break down the barrier of silence. Bullies can only operate by promoting the idea that telling someone about their bullying is 'dobbing,'. Informing others about a bully is NOT dobbing. It is everyone's responsibility to report bullying, regardless of the circumstances. To say nothing sends a silent message to the bully that they can keep bullying.
- Staff are always vigilant and aware in the classroom and when on duty in the yard. They report issues and students of concern to weekly staff meetings to ensure a whole school approach to problems of bullying.
- The Socratic method constantly stresses the morals and values of a "civilized citizen." A Socratic strand runs through all our teaching, across every curriculum area focusing on building communication, problem solving skills, resilience and self esteem of each individual. Socratic seminars are used to deal with specific instances of bullying.
- Our use of multi-age groupings promotes individual achievement thus enhancing the self-esteem of each child. This fosters resilience to the negative words and actions of others.
- It is part of our school policy to maintain small class sizes which in turn reduces the opportunities for bullying.
- Students work in different groups throughout the day to encourage friendships and the acceptance of others. This practice also enables students to have a break from each other. Nor do students stay in one room with one teacher throughout their day. This further assists the children to get along with a wider variety of people. Different environments stimulate learning and physically moving between rooms provides a release for many students.
- Our children are explicitly taught 'civics and citizenship' and are immersed in community activities, visiting homes for the elderly, assisting the Red Cross in their charity work, sponsoring a child in Zambia, and other community service experiences. This encourages children to become aware of and consider the needs of others.
- Peer tutoring also promotes self-esteem and an understanding of the needs and abilities of others.

Procedures for responding to reported or observed incidents of bullying

Notwithstanding the efforts which The Launceston Preparatory School takes to prevent bullying and to teach anti-bullying behaviour, some inappropriate student behaviour will remain. In such instances, it will be necessary to consider the use of measures to ensure compliance with appropriate standards of behaviour.

A bully can expect responses or sanctions depending on the severity of the incident. The Launceston Preparatory School Behaviour Policy sets out the following choices of action:

- intervention by a member of staff - the child's behaviour will be discussed with him/her individually
- student and/or parent meeting with relevant teachers or the Co-Principals -this may be followed by Socratic seminars related to the specific issue
- group or individual session with school adopt-a-cop
- privileges may be withdrawn from those children continuing to demonstrate unacceptable behaviours
- involvement of external professionals, counselling, referral to anger management, etc.
- if the child persists in causing disruption, danger to himself/herself or others, parents may be requested to temporarily withdraw their child from the school. Return of the child will occur upon consultation between staff and parents involved.

Each incident involving parent consultation will be documented in detail and kept on the student's file.

Information for students

If you are being bullied, you could:

- tell the person/s that you don't like it and that you want them to stop it and leave you alone
- talk it over with friends, parents, teacher - someone you trust who will help you. Letting people know how you feel is not 'dobbing'.
- if confronted, stay calm and walk away from the person or area
- look for support from those nearby
- talk about bullying openly
- make an effort to be with people who don't bully
- make an effort to avoid high risk places
- speak to the Co-Principals or teachers
- stay calm and try not to react as this can make you a more interesting target

If you observe bullying behaviour you should:

- refuse to participate in the behaviour
- support the person being bullied and encourage them to tell someone
- speak to a teacher on their behalf if necessary
- tell the bully to stop, let them know their actions are unacceptable
- NEVER obey a bully
- not support a 'code of silence' and should report the incident

If you are being bullied you have a right to:

- be taken seriously
- be helped to feel safe; this may be assisted by the presence of a support person when discussing the unwanted behaviour

- have your privacy and confidentiality observed
- have the policies and procedures in circumstances of bullying explained to you
- be kept informed of the investigation's process
- be included in any resolutions arising out of an investigation of the complaint

If you have been accused of being a bully you will:

- be informed of the complaint made against you
- have the policies and procedures in circumstances of bullying explained to you
- be invited to make a response
- be supported and advised by people of your choice
- have your privacy protected and confidentiality observed
- be treated fairly

Information for parents

If you know or suspect your child is being bullied:

- encourage your child to talk it through as far as he or she wants to so you can get the basic facts straight; listen to the child
- keep an open mind, remembering you are only hearing one part of the story
- ask questions gently and involve the child in making decisions about what to do
- contact the school once you have established a clear picture of the situation and how you and your child would prefer to handle it
- discuss with school staff the strategies you and your child have already developed and record ideas and new strategies the school may have for you
- make a follow-up date to review progress.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

A policy is only effective if it is put into practice. To ensure this happens the policy will be discussed with all staff and students, drawing their attention to its meaning and implications. The policy will also be discussed at Parents' Club meetings where possible and included in the Prospectus.

To ensure continued monitoring and evaluation of the policy the following actions will be taken:

- include the policy as part of the teacher induction process
- continue to promote the policy to the whole school family – through meetings, newsletter, assembly and teaching
- provide professional development sessions for staff as required
- continue to provide an opportunity to review the bullying policy and student behaviour in staff meetings.