



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Procedures for Preventing and Responding to Incidents of Bullying (including Cyberbullying)

1.0 Rationale

All schools in Queensland are committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

Runcorn State High School strives to create positive, predictable environments for all students at all times of the day. This belief is shown by:

- ❖ The school community rejects bullying of students in any form.
- ❖ All bullying of students is dealt with seriously.
- ❖ Students are actively encouraged to support each other and report when possible all instances of bullying.
- ❖ Both students who bully and students who are bullied, are offered appropriate intervention and support. This may include family involvement, counselling and mediation.
- ❖ The school will discipline students according to the Responsible Behaviour Plan, which may include suspending or excluding any student whose behaviour is considered unacceptable.
- ❖ Examples of acceptable student behaviour are recognised and promoted.
- ❖ The school will educate students about the effects of bullying, awareness of bullying behaviour and strategies to assist the victim.
- ❖ Research indicates that both those being bullied and those who bully are at risk for behavioural, emotional and academic problems.

2.0 Objectives

The aims of this Policy are:

- ❖ To raise awareness of the existence and nature of bullying;
- ❖ To eliminate negative social behaviour;
- ❖ To counter the view that bullying is an inevitable part of school life;
- ❖ To create a supportive school climate and to break down the secrecy surrounding bullying;
- ❖ To provide staff, students and parents with options to use when responding to instances of bullying of students.

3.0 School community beliefs about bullying

At Runcorn State High School bullying in all its forms is not accepted and all members of Runcorn State High School accept their responsibility to promote positive relationships and to prevent bullying.

It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at Runcorn State High School.

3.1 What is bullying?

In 2009, the Queensland Government engaged bullying expert Dr Ken Rigby to undertake a consultancy for the Department of Education and Training to provide current information about research and initiatives in the area of bullying in order to inform the future work in Queensland schools. Dr Rigby (Rigby, 2010) defines bullying in the following way:

“Bullying is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:

- ❖ *dominating or hurting someone*
- ❖ *unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power*
- ❖ *a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation.”*

Bullying can take many forms. The *National Centre Against Bullying* identifies five kinds of bullying:

1. Physical bullying

This is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing.

Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

2. Verbal bullying

Repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.

3. Covert bullying

Such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.

4. Psychological bullying

For example, threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

5. Cyber bullying

Using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

The issue of cyber bullying has received a great deal of interest recently and has been the focus of a number of research and review processes, such as the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study* (Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L., 2009) and the *Review of the National Safe Schools Framework* (McGrath, 2005).

In a report commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (Bernard & Milne, 2008) the main forms of cyber bullying are identified as:

- ❖ **Flaming:** online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- ❖ **Harassment:** repeatedly sending nasty, mean or insulting messages
- ❖ **Denigration:** Posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- ❖ **Outing:** sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- ❖ **Exclusion:** Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- ❖ **Cyber stalking:** repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Within the *Safe to Learn* (DCSF, 2007) resource it is identified that students can be bullied for a variety of reasons. Specific types of bullying may relate to:

- ❖ race, religion or culture
- ❖ appearance or health conditions
- ❖ sexual orientation
- ❖ home and family circumstances
- ❖ learning needs or disabilities
- ❖ gender or sexual bullying.

Just as bullying can take many different forms, it can also occur between students, staff and parents/carers. While these instances of bullying are serious and need to be addressed, the focus of this toolkit is on actions to address bullying among students.

3.2 What behaviours are not bullying

While it is important to understand and define what bullying is, it is also important to be clear to the school community, what behaviours are NOT bullying. Dr Rigby (2010) identifies that for some people the term 'bullying' is a highly emotive term and its use may lead to an over-reaction.

The *National Centre Against Bullying* acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do not constitute bullying:

- ❖ mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- ❖ not liking someone or a single acts of social rejection
- ❖ one-off acts of meanness or spite
- ❖ isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

While these behaviours would not be considered bullying (because they do not involve deliberate and repeated harm and a power imbalance) they need to be addressed in the same way as other inappropriate student behaviours.

3.3 Some common misconceptions

"I was just mucking around, can't he take a joke?"

This is the most common response from the bully. In fact, bullying is not a "joke". It is not funny to ridicule or hurt someone, to make them feel uncomfortable, or to push them around.

“I don’t want to cause trouble.”

This misconception comes from the victim, who thinks that he is the cause of the problem. All students have a right to feel safe at school. You are only standing up for yourself when you report being bullied.

“It is just a natural part of growing up.”

This misconception comes from adults, but the truth is there is absolutely nothing „natural“ about being victimised. Students have a „right“ to feel safe at school and during their travel to and from school.

“No-one can do anything about it.”

Most cases of bullying are sorted out very simply, especially if the bullying is reported sooner rather than later. The College is committed to resolving these sorts of problems, but students must communicate with the College staff if we are to have any chance of helping.

“Dobbing is a bad thing to do.”

Bullying is the bad thing, telling the truth is a good thing. By telling the truth you are standing up for your rights as a human being. It takes character and intelligence to stand up for your rights, which is something that bullies are afraid of. Bullies try to intimidate people into maintaining a „code of silence“ because they can then continue to hurt people for as long as they wish. Bullying continues when people fail to report what is happening.

3.4 What do we know about students who bully?

The research shows that students who bully are not necessarily the physically dominant student with self esteem issues. McNamara (1997) identifies students who bully as often:

- ❖ popular
- ❖ having good leadership skills
- ❖ not malicious in their intent
- ❖ thoughtless in their actions.

In the *Action Against Bullying* Education Series, Dr Michael Carr-Gregg identified other characteristics of bullies, for example they often have:

- ❖ high energy
- ❖ good verbal skills and an ability to talk themselves out of trouble
- ❖ a high estimation of their own ability
- ❖ an ability to manipulate individuals or groups
- ❖ an enjoyment of conflict and aggression
- ❖ a delight in getting their own way
- ❖ the appearance of being popular but often disliked.

3.5 What roles can students play in bullying behaviour?

Not all students play a clear role as either the student who is bullying or the student who is being bullied. Students may take on different roles in different circumstances (for example a student who is being bullied in one context, may do the bullying in another or a student who acts as a bystander may intervene and act as a protector if the ring-leader is not around). The *Safe to Learn* (DCFS, 2007) publication identifies the different roles as:

- ❖ **Ring Leader:** students who through their social power can direct bullying activity.
- ❖ **Associates:** students who actively join in the bullying (sometimes because they are afraid of the ring-leader).
- ❖ **Reinforcers:** students who give positive feedback to the student doing the bullying, for example through comments, by smiling or laughing.
- ❖ **Outsiders/Bystanders:** students remain silent or watch and therefore appear to condone the bullying behaviour or who want to keep themselves safe by not drawing attention to themselves out of fear of the bully.
- ❖ **Defenders:** students who try to intervene to stop the bullying or comfort students who experience bullying.

4.0 How Runcorn State High School Discourages Bullying

Bullying is totally against the vision and purpose of Runcorn State High School. The School is committed to providing an educational environment in which students feel valued and secure. To achieve this end, the School will seek to create a school-wide culture that:

- Allows students to flourish free from discrimination, harassment or any form of bullying.
- Does not tolerate, condone or trivialise bullying behaviours.
- Is aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
- Provides support to the victims of bullying.
- Deals firmly with bullies so that they either stop their bullying or leave the School.

The methods used by the School to discourage bullying will vary from time-to-time, with new initiatives being introduced when thought appropriate. The measures that have been used to discourage bullying at Runcorn State High School include, but are not limited to:

- Employing a suitable range of sanctions to deal with and discourage bullies. These sanctions include suspension and expulsion.
- Putting up signage about the School to promote a bully-free environment.
- Printing anti-bullying policies in student diaries and on the School's website.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in assemblies, Year level meetings and pastoral care.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in the staff handbook, in School policy documents and in occasional articles in the school's newsletter.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in classes.
- Conducting exit interviews.

- Ensuring effective pastoral support for students through the appointment of Year-level Co-ordinators, Youth Support Co-ordinators, Student Welfare Officers, Chaplain and School Nurse.
- Incorporating instruction about the School's anti-bullying stance in the curriculum
- Incorporating anti-bullying guidelines in the Responsible Behaviour Plan.
- Employing student support staff who have specialist skills in helping both victims of bullying and identified bullies.
- Having a prefectorial team who support the School's anti-bullying policy and who students feel free to inform about any bullying.
- Training staff to detect bullying behaviours.
- Encouraging staff to adopt classroom management techniques that discourage opportunities for bullying behaviours.
- Encouraging staff to take their supervision duties seriously so that there is a pervasive sense of staff presence when on duty.
- Reviewing the School's anti-bullying policy from time-to-time, in order to ensure that it remains effective and relevant.

The effectiveness of these strategies rests with ALL members of the School's community.

Runcorn State High School reserves the right to alter the means and ways by which it discourages bullying. If any should like to suggest an improvement in the way bullying might be discouraged at Runcorn State High School, they are invited to send their suggestions to the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

5.0 Prevention

If you are being bullied, it is important that you talk to an adult who is in a position to help you.

There can be a reluctance to report bullying because of a fear of being labelled a 'dobber' and going against an unwritten code of student behaviour. This concern is understandable but must not prevent you from reporting bullying behaviour. Most students dislike bullying and would support your attempts to stop it.

Some students may not want to report bullying because they feel it might only make matters worse. Again, this fear is understandable, but most teachers are trained in ways to help victims of bullying in a manner that protects the victim.

5.1 What Can You Do If You Are Being Bullied? (The Victim)

- ❖ If you think you are being bullied you are encouraged to report your concerns immediately. Bullying will continue if those responsible think they can escape detection and avoid consequences.
- ❖ Approach your Year Coordinator, Pastoral Care teacher, classroom teacher, Deputy Principal, parent, support staff, Counsellor or any adult or senior student with whom you feel comfortable.
- ❖ Any report of bullying made to the school will be followed up sensitively and actions taken will be documented.

- ❖ Try not to show that you are upset, try to look and sound confident. Try to be assertive - tell the bully that his or her actions/comments are unwelcome.
- ❖ If the bullying continues it must be reported again. It is important that bullies get the message that their behaviour will not be tolerated.
- ❖ Consider talking to your Pastoral Care teacher, Year Coordinator, Guidance Officer or Chaplain for help in developing skills that can be useful in bullying situations.

5.2 How Can You Help Someone Who Is Being Bullied? (The Bystander)

Consider doing the following:

- ❖ If you know of or observe instances of bullying, report it to a member of the staff, who will refer the matter to the Year Coordinator and/or Deputy Principal.
- ❖ Tell the bully that you and your friends strongly disapprove of his or her actions (a clear statement such as “You need to stop doing that, it’s not okay.”).
- ❖ The person being bullied may be too scared or upset to tell anyone. Remember that nobody deserves to be bullied.
- ❖ Offer support to students who are bullied. Let them know they can do something about it.

5.3 What Can I Do If I Find Myself Involved In Bullying? (The Bully)

Consider the following:

- ❖ At times, all of us have behaved in a manner of which we are not proud. In these instances, the important thing is to recognise when our behaviour is inappropriate or upsetting to another, and being prepared to address the issues.
- ❖ This recognition does not absolve you from wrongdoing, but you will be supported in your efforts to bring about change.
- ❖ Speak to an adult you feel comfortable with, perhaps a parent or a member of staff. They will attempt to assist you in managing the situation.
- ❖ You should not be embarrassed to seek assistance for behaviour that you sense is both damaging for you and for others.

6.0 Responses to bullying

Reports of bullying will be investigated and acted upon. Responses to bullying might include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

At Runcorn State High School we support targets and perpetrators by:

- ❖ Providing counselling support
- ❖ Conducting bullying interviews (eg method of shared concern)
- ❖ Increased supervision of at risk areas
- ❖ Referral to social skill programs for targets and perpetrators (eg Chaplain, Youth Support Coordinator)

Following the completion of an investigation into bullying of a student, the school will implement such measures as are appropriate, which could include one or more, of the following:

- ❖ Monitoring of the students involved
- ❖ Conflict resolution/mediation with students and/or families involved
- ❖ Counselling
- ❖ Restitution
- ❖ An agreement regarding standards of future behaviour
- ❖ Detentions (lunchtime/afternoon)
- ❖ Signed student contracts (Behaviour Improvement Condition)
- ❖ Completion of anti-bullying or behaviour improvement programs
- ❖ The involvement of outside agencies
- ❖ Suspension or recommendation for exclusion where bullying is so severe no other form of consequence would be deemed adequate

7.0 Reporting and monitoring bullying

At Runcorn State High School reports of bullying are taken seriously. Students and parents/carers may report bullying in the following ways:

- ❖ **As a student** - you should notify your Year Coordinator, Pastoral Care teacher, classroom teacher, Deputy Principal, parent, support staff, Guidance Officer or any adult or senior student with whom you feel comfortable.
- ❖ **As a parent** - discuss the situation with your child's Year Coordinator or Deputy Principal as soon as possible.
- ❖ **As a teacher** - after ensuring the safety of the victim, discuss the incident with the student's Year Coordinator or Deputy Principal as soon as possible.

Runcorn State High School has an electronic bully box also. Any bullying can be reported confidentially via email to the.principal@runcornshs.eq.edu.au

All reports of bullying of students will be investigated by the appropriate staff member and documented. More serious or persistent incidents of bullying will involve the Year Coordinator, Head of Department, Deputy Principal and the Principal. The nature and extent of the investigation will vary with the seriousness of the bullying. As far as is reasonably possible the investigation and its outcomes will be kept confidential although parents of students involved will be informed.

Reports of bullying will be collated and monitored to inform the school community about the extent of bullying and to identify particular areas of concern for future action.

7.1 Advice for Parents

- ❖ Watch for signs that your child might be bullied. Some of the following might indicate bullying: wanting to miss school, a pattern of sickness (headaches, stomach aches), tension or unhappiness, becoming withdrawn, bruising, damaged clothing or property, disappearance of property.
- ❖ If your child is being bullied, inform the Year Coordinator or Deputy Principal immediately. Do not encourage your child to hit back or respond verbally.
- ❖ Support your child in developing their talents and participating in sports or other activities that will build confidence.
- ❖ If bullying involves severe physical abuse, you may consider police action.

8.0 Some related resources

School Wide Positive Behaviour Support

www.learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=24668

Alannah and Madeline Foundation

<http://www.amf.org.au/AboutUs/>

BOUNCE BACK!

<http://www.bounceback.com.au/>

FRIENDS for Life

www.friendsinfo.net/index.html

Friendly Schools and Families Program

<http://www.friendlyschools.com.au/about.php>

Kids Helpline

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au/>

KidsMatter

<http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au>

MindMatters

<http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/default.asp>

ReachOut

<http://au.reachout.com>

National Centre Against Bullying

<http://www.ncab.org.au/about/>

National Safe Schools Framework

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/national_safe_schools_framework.htm

You Can Do It!

www.youcandoit.com.au