

BULLYING PREVENTION

AUSTIN COVE BAPTIST COLLEGE Policy Management

Adopted by:

Principal Primary
Principal Secondary

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BULLYING PREVENTION

AUSTIN COVE BAPTIST COLLEGE Policy

Purpose

Austin Cove Baptist College believes that all students, regardless of age, have the right to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially free from any form of abuse or harassment. Student welfare is a prime consideration of the College and therefore bullying of any kind is not tolerated under any circumstances.

Approach

Austin Cove Baptist College's approach to bullying falls into 3 categories:

1. Prevention
2. Early intervention
3. Intensive intervention

Austin Cove Baptist College aims to address the problem of bullying and to provide sound support structures for victims of bullying. All staff of the College have a duty of care to students and to ensure a safe and non-threatening environment for all students.

Definition

A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, **repeatedly and over time** to negative actions on the part of one or more students. Bullying is characterised by an imbalance of power. One-off occurrences of punching, fighting, theft and name-calling are not bullying. These one-off incidents are dealt with through the normal Behaviour Management procedures.

Teasing:

Some children seem to enjoy teasing others. What children often do not know is when to stop. Something that appears to be good natured and fun can turn into feeling uncomfortable for the receiver. It is at this point that the receiver needs to be able to ask for the teasing to stop. If it continues, this would be considered bullying.

Conflict:

Conflict has a different dimension from bullying as it involves a disagreement where one or both party's needs are not being met but does not involve an abuse of power. If handled well, conflict is considered to be an opportunity for personal growth. For this reason conflict can be resolved through a process of reconciliation which allows both parties to feel as though their needs have been addressed.

Types of bullying

- i. **Physical** e.g. hitting, punching, kicking the victim, taking or damaging the victim's property.
- ii. **Verbal** e.g. name calling, constant teasing, insults, racist comments, sexist comments.
- iii. **Emotional** e.g. excluding peers from groups, spreading rumours, stalking, interference with, or damage to personal property.
- iv. **Cyberbullying** involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, mobile phone, instant messaging, social network sites, and defamatory personal web-sites, to support the repeated, harmful and negative behaviour by an individual or group towards another individual or group.

Advice to students and parents

1. What to do if you are bullied?
 - i. If it is minor and it doesn't bother you, ignore it.
 - ii. If the bullying continues, tell the bully that you do not like what is happening and you want it to stop. Use an assertive, confident sounding voice.
 - iii. If the bullying continues past this point, tell your Teacher. He or she will investigate the problem, have a talk to the bully and inform the Deputy Principal for Student Services. Also inform your parent who may also bring it to the attention of the College.
 - iv. Any bullying behaviour that continues after this conference should be reported immediately to the Deputy Principal Student Services.
2. What to do if you see bullying happening.
 - i. If you feel able, ask the bully to stop.
 - ii. Provide support for the victim by staying with them and encouraging them to leave the area.
 - iii. Encourage the victim to report the bullying to a Teacher / Deputy Principal / Principal
 - iv. Keep an eye out for any more bullying incidents that may occur.
3. What can parents do?

As parents you are the most influential models for your child.

Take an active interest in what your child does at school and in their social life.

- i. Foster a tolerant home life by:
 - Encouraging your child to bring friends home
 - Accept and tolerate difference within others
 - Set firm but fair boundaries

- Demonstrate care and consideration for others
- ii. Discuss Bullying:
 - Talk about the schools' expectations
 - Advise that retaliation does not solve the problem
 - Report incidents of bullying to the Deputy Principal Student Services / Principal
 - Explain what to do if your child witnesses any bullying taking place

Bullying Myths

Myth 1: Bullying has and always will be a normal part of growing up

Fact 1: Research has shown that peer abuse can be as traumatic as other types of abuse perpetrated against children and that it can cause or exacerbate serious mental health problems. There is nothing whatsoever that is normal or desirable about bullying. The majority of students surveyed have said that they dislike bullying in schools and want programs to stop bullying.

Myth 2: It is easy for teachers to pick who the bullies are in the school

Fact 1: There is a general expectation that bullying is physical and visible. Bullying, however, can be subtle and involve a range of behaviours that make the victim extremely uncomfortable. Many students who bully are socially adept and are able to conceal their aggressive motives and behaviour from others. Furthermore, colluders in the bully's peer group may actually carry out a great deal of the bullying on behalf of the ringleader.

Myth 3: Victims will take bullying with them wherever they go

Fact 3: Although the behaviour of some victims may appear to justify the negative reactions they receive from peers, victimisation for the most part is situational and unrelated to the dispositional characteristics of the victim.

Myth 4: Intervention by teachers in bullying usually results in matters becoming worse for the victim.

Fact 4: Bullying is a form of behaviour that needs correction, not necessarily punishment. There are well established techniques for teachers to respond to bullying situations which do not involve repercussions for the victim. Despite this, bullying is highly unreported by victimised students. Only 5-10% of victims report they are willing to seek help from teachers.

Myth 5: Schools have to 'get tough on bullies'

Fact 5: Schools that have established a 'get tough' approach to bullies have found that the bullying can become more subtle and underhand. Everyone, staff, students, parents and community members need to take responsibility for establishing positive peer relations.

Myth 6: It will be impossible to get students to disclose bullying because of the ‘don’t do’ culture

Fact 6: Schools are able to engender confidence in students by responding effectively to bullying incidents.

Students can learn that asking for help is different to dobbing and that all students have the right to feel safe and valued at the school. Students can also become supportive bystanders for bullied students and seek adult help on that student’s behalf.

Myth 7: Bullying problems can be solved through awareness raising and the curriculum

Fact 7: It has been found that one - off lessons on bullying have a short term effect only. Research shows that an ongoing and active whole school approach dealing with preventative, early intervention and intervention strategies to deal with bullying in schools is essential for lasting results.

Common Characteristics of Bullies

- Often attention seeking.
- They bully because they think they are popular and have the support of others.
- They do not accept responsibility for their behaviour.
- They have a need to feel in common with their peers.
- They will continue to bully if the victim and observing peer group do not complain.
- They show no remorse for hurting another student.
- They have higher than average aggressive behaviour patterns.
- Often have parents who bully them and support their child’s aggressive behaviour.

Common Characteristics of a Victim

Most students are approached by a bully at school. It is often the student’s response that will determine if they will be bullied again. Students who are highly vulnerable often become victims. Such students:

1. Often have poor social skills and lack confidence.
2. Believe that bullying is their fault and if this is the case they are unlikely to seek help.
3. Are desperate to fit in.

In desperate cases, children who are repeatedly victimised see suicide as the only escape. For the majority of victims, emotional scars last a lifetime.

Prevention strategy

The aim of bully prevention strategy:

- Prepare students to manage and resolve conflict in non-aggressive and non-violent ways to further reduce the incidence of bullying in the school.

- Create an opportunity for students and staff to develop the skills necessary to handle these situations with the minimum of distress.
- Assist the College community to manage frustration and conflict in non-violent ways.

1. The strategy is maintained through the Behaviour Management Policy

- The policy is presented and discussed with students and parents/guardians in their entry interview.
- The policy is reinforced within year groups on a regular basis in classes, in Assemblies and through special guest speakers and presentations.
- The Behaviour Management Policy is clearly reinforced with the students as they engage with it. This is also reinforced to parents of students who engage in bullying behaviours.
- Parents are contacted with concerns regarding a student's behaviour, whether victim or bully.
- Reported incidents of bullying are followed up quickly and carefully.
- Incidents of bullying are dealt with immediately or as soon as practicable.
- Victims of bullying are protected, cared for and followed up by one or more of the following: their classroom teacher, College Chaplain, Head of Year, Deputy Principal Student Services, Principal.
- Bullies are monitored in case of a recurrence of the behaviour.

2. The College Environment

- The College aims to be welcoming from the Front Office to the day-to-day classes. The College aims to build trust between staff and students, mutual respect and a violence-free atmosphere.
- Positive behaviours are modelled by all members of the College community.
- Positive behaviours are acknowledged and rewarded e.g. merit certificates, CPR certificates
- The College maintains a Behaviour Management system that is fair, firm and non-violent.
- A sense of belonging and empowerment for all members of the school community is encouraged.

3. The College Curriculum

Through Health Education, the Applied Christian Education Program, Form classes, the College Ethos, individual counselling and visiting speakers, the curriculum allows for opportunities to:

- Understand the nature of bullying
- Understand personal safety
- Develop interpersonal communication and problem solving skills e.g. negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution and assertiveness
- Develop self-confidence and self-esteem

- Acquire the ability to understand, respect and care for others

Response to Bullying

- On the report of an incidence of bullying the Deputy Principal Student Services will interview the victim in a safe setting away from bully and other students.
- The safety of the victim and his/her welfare is a prime consideration at this stage. Where a student is distressed a staff member will remain with the student.
- Any witnesses are interviewed.
- The bully is interviewed and allowed to speak freely to give their view.
- Where bullying is evident this will be discussed with the bully and disciplinary action will take place dependant on the severity of the incident (refer to *Behaviour Management Policy*). The bully's parents will be contacted.
- The bully is also warned regarding any revenge/having friends take revenge/further bullying of the victim.
- The victim is provided with feedback including the warning for the bully regarding the implications should anything further arise. Ongoing support structures are offered e.g. from staff, Chaplains, Head of Year. The victim's parents are contacted.
- A record will be kept of all reported incidents on the relevant student's file including details of harm to the victim, personal factors of the students involved, care/action taken on behalf of the College and/or other agencies e.g. police.
- Any repeated occurrences/similar instances will also be documented.
- Support for victim (and witnesses where applicable) is recorded.
- Intervention programs and counselling for the bully will take place and is also documented.

Related Policies:

Behaviour Management