

Countering Bullying Policy



2021-2023

Review date: June 2023

Rationale

Swanbourne Primary School is a caring community with everyone having responsibilities towards each other. Each person has a right to feel cared for, valued and safe within the school community. Bullying of any description is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Definition

A person is bullied when exposed regularly, and over a period of time, to negative actions by one or more persons.

The term is not applied to one-off incidents of conflict or nastiness – one of the defining features of bullying is its persistence and that it involves misery-making over a period of time or a “reign of terror”.

Bullying may be exhibited as:

- Physical harm or threat of physical harm
- Name-calling, teasing or harassment
- Exclusion, deliberately leaving someone out of the activity
- Extortion, demand for money or favours
- Making hurtful personal or racist comments
- Commenting on social/family backgrounds
- Referring negatively to religious beliefs and practices

We need to be aware that not all aggression is bullying, nor all name calling. It becomes bullying when exercised through the use of power, rather than exchange between equals.

Prevention Strategies

The school aims to:

- Acknowledge that bullying and harassment exist in all communities
- Empower students through developing a process of education about bullying for the school community (eg: Protective Behaviours Program). This is to be reflected in the School Plan and will involve strategies such as class discussions, a list of consequences and methods of recording incidents
- Create an environment in which the school community understands their responsibilities and rights

Guidelines for Responding to Incidents

Victims of bullying and/or harassment will be supported to address the cause of the bully's actions.

Parents of all parties involved are to be informed openly of details pertaining to particular incidents as they arise and will have access to all relevant information.

The Counselling Approach procedure will be used when interviewing both victim and bully. In dealing with incidents as they arise, the principle of changing student behaviour is always more important than punishing behaviour.

Outside agencies such as school psychologists and the school nurse can be called to assist.

If bullying continues, measures such as suspension and exclusion will be considered and used.

Counselling Approach

Step one – interview with the victim. When the teacher finds out that bullying has happened he/she starts by talking to the victim about the incident. The teacher needs to record the series of event to ensure the correct details are given, and make a list of all those who were involved.

Step two – convene a meeting with the people involved, including witnesses or bystanders. The teacher arranges to meet with the student group who have been involved, excluding the victim. This will include those who joined in but did not initiate any bullying.

Step three – explain the problem. Tell students how the victim may be feeling ie: the consequences of their actions for the victim. Do not discuss details of the incidents as this can deteriorate into argument.

Step four – share responsibility. The teacher does not attribute blame but states that he/she knows that the group is responsible and can do something about it.

Step five – ask the group for their ideas. Each member of the group is encouraged to help solve the problem by suggesting ways in which the victim could be helped to feel happier.

Step six – changing behaviour. The teacher ends the meeting by stressing to the group their responsibility to change their behaviour. He/she arranges to meet with them again to see how things are going.

Step seven – meet the people involved again. About a week later, the teacher individually discusses with each student, including the victim, how things have been going. This allows the teacher to monitor the bullying and keeps the students involved in the process.

(Based on the seven-step plan “The No Blame Approach”, Maines & Robinson)