

Murrumba State Secondary College Stand Together Policy

Rationale

All schools and colleges in Queensland are committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur (Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, 2010). Up to one in four Australian students have experienced some level of bullying, and bullying can result in a person feeling miserable and powerless (Bullying No Way, 2013). Bullying can have a negative impact on students' academic performance, self-esteem, coping skills, and can increase anxiety and unhappiness. People who bully others are also at risk of seeing bullying as a normal and acceptable way to behave and need support to learn more appropriate ways of behaving and of resolving conflict (Bullying No Way, 2013).

College Community beliefs about 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 Murrumba State Secondary College. Feedback from parents, students and staff indicate that it is important to have a common language and policy to address bullying at College. Research (Pepler and Craig, cited by Noble, T.) has shown that peers are present at around 85% of bullying episodes, and this has been reflected in feedback from students, staff and parents. This way, Murrumba State Secondary College aims to raise capacity in all students to deal effectively with bullying and assist those affected by it. A strong anti-bullying culture at College is vital to encourage all witnesses and bystanders to bullying to have the confidence to act positively to discourage bullying.

Responding appropriately to bullying also aligns with the Murrumba State Secondary College Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students which sets out that students have the responsibility to make the college safe by not threatening, bullying, harassing or hurting anyone in any way and the right to be safe.

Definition of Bullying

At Murrumba State Secondary College, bullying is defined as the repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

(Bullying. No Way!, 2013).

According to The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Building Respectful and Safe Schools* (2010). Bullying may be:

Physical, including hitting, kicking, tripping or damaging property.

Verbal, including name calling, or swearing at, insulting, teasing or intimidating people.

Covert, including lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, playing nasty jokes to humiliate or embarrass, encouraging others to socially exclude someone or deliberately damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying, which is the use of technology to harass others. Examples include harassment via mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

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

However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.

(Bullying. No Way!, 2013).

Prevention Strategies

Murrumba State Secondary College has a positive school culture with the vision: 'Learning for Life' at its core. Our College values: Respect, Pride, Resilience, Community and Quality Learning are the beacons that guide our community and instil the essence of what makes us unique. This positive college culture aligns with national anti-bullying initiative, Bullying No Way (2013), advice that explicit teaching and modelling of values and wellbeing through social and emotional learning optimises student wellbeing and lowers levels of bullying. Murrumba State Secondary College models this through:

- Supporting students in Connect classes and House groups, fostering a sense of belonging and developing relationships
- A well-developed extra-curricular program that builds and strong College culture and supports a range of student interests
- Connecting wellbeing to learning at College through a strong pastoral care program and access to support staff such as the Guidance Officer, College Nurse and Chaplain
- An established Student Services Committee that supports the learning and wellbeing of all students and staff
- Student Management Coaches provide students and staff with a comprehensive support network within the college and clearly articulated student management flowcharts to ensure processes are clear
- A Student Representative Council and Student Leadership model ensuring that students are involved in college decision making and have opportunities to raise issues and present ideas.
- Creating a sense of recognition and belonging among all groups and celebrating the diversity of cultures within the College (eg Harmony Day, Anzac Day, Remembrance Day)
- Murrumba Pride peer leadership program whereby Year 9 and 10 students help Year 7 and 8 students with social and emotional learning skills.

- College camps for Years 7 and 9 where students learn social and emotional development, relationship improvement strategies and experience personal growth and development

Targeted Educational Program

Murrumba State Secondary College has separate parent and student bullying toolkits available to support students and parents when facing bullying issues. These toolkits are on the College website.

Murrumba Pride peer leaders are available to help students experiencing bullying. These students can be identified by the peer support badges they wear. Peer leaders can be approached by students at break times if necessary. They will be able to discuss strategies for students to use to combat bullying, based on the student bullying toolkit and associated strategies that the students and staff have agreed upon.

The Murrumba Pride peer support program includes a unit on bullying. This is a directed teaching unit giving background information on bullying, the impacts of bullying and strategies to combat bullying for all students, including bystanders to bullying. The program is delivered by peer supporters to Year 7 and 8 students.

Every week, connect teachers will present to students a Stand Together at Murrumba fact which will be the focus for the week. This serves as a quick reminder and re-enforcement of expectations at Murrumba SSC. Peer Leaders also give regular short talks at house assemblies to raise awareness of the resources and strategies in the student bullying toolkit.

Support and Reporting of Bullying Incidences

At Murrumba State Secondary College, reports of bullying are taken seriously. Students and parents/carers may report bullying in the following ways:

- Directly to the school administration office by phoning the school.
- To class teachers.
- To school support staff such as the Guidance Officer, College Nurse or Chaplain.

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.

Responding to Bullying Incidences

Murrumba State Secondary College will treat all allegations of bullying seriously and impartially. Should administration staff find that bullying has not ceased after intervention from students or staff, consequences may apply to students who bully other students. These consequences will depend on the seriousness and/or the number of times bullying has been repeated and are as outlined in the Murrumba State Secondary College Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students which is available on the College website.

The Murrumba State Secondary College stands together against bullying. This policy has been based upon advice and resources from Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against

bullying by the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (the Alliance). The Alliance provides best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education, Training and Employment.

Student and Parent toolkits are available on the Murrumba State Secondary College website. These documents will continue to expand and provide the College community with useful evidence-based ideas on how to tackle the complex issue of bullying.

Related Policy Documents and Information

Student Protection

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/community/Pages/Student-Protection.aspx>

Supporting Students' Mental Health and Wellbeing

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/learning/Pages/Supporting-Students'-Mental-Health-and-Wellbeing.aspx>

Appropriate Use of Mobile Telephones and other Electronic Equipment by Students

<http://ppr.det.qld.gov.au/education/learning/Pages/Appropriate-Use-of-Mobile-Telephones-and-other-Electronic-Equipment-by-Students.aspx>

Working Together Against Bullying

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/ksaav/index.html>

References

Australian Education Authorities *Bullying. No Way!* Accessed 15 March, 2013
<http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Noble, T., ACU National *Relationship and Student Bystander Behaviour Presentation Handout*

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Building Respectful and Safe Schools* (2010).

Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, (2010). *A Toolkit for Effective School Based Action against Bullying*. Queensland Government, Brisbane.

Student Toolkit

What should you do if you are being bullied?

If you are being bullied, you may be feeling hurt or upset because of things another person or group is doing over and over again. Bullying is not when one person calls another person a name once, or hits a person once. It is when that behaviour happens a number of times.

Bullying can happen anywhere; at school, in the community and online.

If you are being bullied, try the following:

- Stay calm
- Ignore the bully
- Tell the bully to stop
- Move away from the situation and avoid situations that have resulted in bullying
- Try 'fogging' – staying calm while acknowledging what the other person is saying might be true to him or her
- Talk to a Peer Leader who can run through the above strategies with you or help you ask a staff member for help
- Come to the Guidance Officer, College Nurse or Chaplain and ask for their help
- Talk to your friends and parents/carers and ask for their help
- In cases of cyberbullying, keep records of the bullying and show them to school staff, who will be able to discuss options to make this stop.
- Use the cybersafety help button installed on all Education Queensland Computers.
- Refer to the websites and other points of contact below.
- Keep talking to people and getting help until the situation improves.

If you see someone else being bullied, you have an opportunity to try to make the situation better for them. Try:

- Letting the person doing the bullying and others know you don't like seeing people being bullied
- Refusing to join in with the bullying and walk away
- Move towards the person being bullied to show your support
- Ask the person being bullied to join you or your group

- Try to safely distract the bully
- Assist the person being bullied to ask for help

Websites and further avenues of support

College Guidance Officer – available by appointment to students and parents.

Kids' Helpline
1 800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au

Cybersafety help
www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx

Australian Federal Police
www.afp.gov.au

Reach Out
www.reachout.com.au

Beyondblue
www.beyondblue.org.au

Bullying. No way!
www.bullyingnoway.com.au

The Australian Psychological Society
www.psychology.org.au

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation
www.amf.org.au

Parent Toolkit

Is my child being bullied?

It is not always easy to tell if your child is being bullied, as they may not want to talk about this.

You may notice a change in behaviour; a normally bubbly child may withdraw or show a reluctance to attend and engage in school. Other signs may include a loss of confidence, fearfulness or anxiety, changes in eating or sleeping habits, vague health problems, unhappiness, tearfulness or mood swings, a lack of friends and missing belongings or torn clothing. (Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence, 2010).

What should I do if my child tells me they are being bullied?

Help your child to identify the bullying behaviour and ask them:

- What has been happening?
- Who has been involved?
- Where have the incidents occurred?
- Has anyone else seen the bullying behaviour?

Discuss with your child some immediate strategies. Make a plan to deal with the bullying. It may be beneficial to your child's sense of autonomy and resilience to deal with the bully themselves, rather than have an adult immediately intervene. You may like to try strategies that involve minimal adult intervention to begin with, such as strengthening your child encouraging them to try:

- Ignoring the student who is bullying them.
- Walking away and finding other students to socialise with.
- Use 'fogging' staying calm while acknowledging what the other person is saying might be true to him or her. Eg:

Student A: You have a great big nose

Student B: True, it is large

Student A: It looks like a beak

Student B: True, it does stand out

Student A: You are the ugliest person in the school

Student B: That's your opinion

Student A: You are wearing pov shoes

Student B: You are not wrong

(<http://www.kenrigby.net/07c-Fogging>)

- Firmly but calmly tell the student to stop.
- Review the student toolkit with your child and discuss the strategies mentioned there

- Review some of the internet resources provided below to assist you and your child learn more about bullying and prevention.
- Encourage your child to seek help from College staff or peer leaders as described in the student toolkit.
- If your child wants to stay home from school, explain that it won't help – and it may make things worse.
- Keep records of any evidence of bullying. This is particularly important for cyber bullying messages. A 'Stop Harassing Me' postcard is available for students to act as written evidence that technology has been used to threaten, menace or harass. This acts as a step between verbal warnings and police action and can be very effective in stopping cyber bullying.
- Encourage your child to use the Cybersafety help button that is installed on all Education Queensland computers.
- If bullying persists, or you decide your child cannot cope with the situation, encourage them to make a report to staff with as much detail as possible about the incidences to allow the College to investigate and take appropriate action. Parents are also welcome to contact the College on their child's behalf.
- Reassure your child that you will support them through the bullying and that the College will work with you and your child until the bullying stops.

Websites and further avenues of support

College Guidance Officer – available by appointment to students and parents.

Kids' Helpline
1 800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au

Cybersafety help
www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx

Australian Federal Police
www.afp.gov.au

Reach Out
www.reachout.com.au

Beyondblue
www.beyondblue.org.au

Bullying. No way!
www.bullyingnoway.com.au

The Australian Psychological Society
www.psychology.org.au

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation
www.amf.org.au