

# Bullying Policy

**Note:** This Policy should be read in conjunction with our Behaviour Management Policy.

## Rationale

Our school values are: *Care, Respect, Try, and be Responsible.*

**Our school does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form.** Our staff are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment which promotes personal growth and development.

We believe each person is a unique individual bringing special qualities to our school, and so all members of our Gingin District High School community are committed to treating each other with care and respect and accepting individual differences.

Bullying is a learnt behaviour which is unacceptable and can be successfully changed. Schools take an educative approach to managing and preventing bullying. Our school's processes and activities promote the development of the values and behaviours that create and maintain inclusive, safe and supportive education environments.

## Definition

Our school accepts and uses the nationally agreed definition of "Bullying" defined through the *Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group*:

"Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Some conflicts between children are a normal part of growing up and are to be expected. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.

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.

**Online bullying** (sometimes referred to as cyberbullying) is bullying carried out through the internet or mobile devices."

## **Cyberbullying**

The definition of Cyber-Bullying is taken from the *Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group*:

“Online bullying (also referred to as cyberbullying) can be conducted in many ways, using different media including:

- the sending of abusive texts or emails;
- taking and sharing unflattering or private images, including naked or sexual images;
- posting unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites;
- excluding individuals from online chats or other communication;
- assuming the identity of the victim online and representing them in a negative manner or manner that may damage their relationship with others;
- repeatedly, and for no strategic reason, attacking players in online gaming.

While online bullying is similar to real life bullying it also differs in the following ways:

- it can be difficult to escape and invasive—it can occur 24/7 and a person can be targeted while at home;
- it can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly disseminated to a large audience, for example, rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once;
- it can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the victim, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.”

Mostly, cyber-bullying occurs outside school. The school cannot be responsible for student behaviour outside of school, but will deal with issues that impact within the school (e.g. conflict that arises from cyberbullying, or well-being issues for students).

Please refer to our mobile phone policy which articulates consequences for misuse of phones or other devices in school.

## **How do we prevent bullying from occurring?**

Gingin District High School adopts the following strategies to ensure the school has a whole-school approach to achieving a positive and harmonious environment:

### **Whole-School Prevention Strategies**

- We have established a shared set of expectations: that all students demonstrate Care, Respect, Try, and be Responsible;
- We explicitly teach expected behaviours, such as “Keep your hands and feet to yourself”;
- We reward behaviour that is consistent with our expectations;
- We provide curriculum lessons at all grade levels to strengthen resilience and assertiveness, for example Protective Behaviours, Rock and Water, SDERA etc;
- We actively work to ensure positive, trusting relationships within the whole school community;
- Provide student leadership roles in both high school and primary school, for example sports captains, Student Council, etc;
- We have established a skilled and resourceful Student Services team who work to address student issues;
- We promote a school culture that seeks to be proactive and restore relationships affected by persistent or unresolved conflict through a process of Restorative Practice;

- We provide access for students to the School Chaplain;
- We promote positive staff role modelling.

### **Preventive whole-school classroom strategies:**

- Teachers in classrooms develop supportive and inclusive classroom environments;
- Teachers implement effective classroom behaviour management approaches that teach and encourage positive behaviours, and address negative behaviours;
- Teachers recognise and reinforce positive communication, empathy, tolerance and social problem solving;
- Teachers promote the use of cooperative learning strategies and explicitly teach the interpersonal skills required to implement these;
- Teachers implement whole-school curriculum programs to develop resilience, problem solving and conflict resolution;

### **Playground strategies:**

- Duty teachers wear high visibility vests and approach playground supervision actively;
- Teachers recognise and reinforce positive playground and pro-social behaviour;
- Teachers act immediately when they see the first signs of conflict or harassment;
- Teachers use Duty Communication Files to communicate and respond to playground problem behaviours;
- Provision of a 'Buddy Bench' in Junior Primary;
- Library access on some days;
- Access to sports equipment and sports areas for all students;
- Access to the computer lab on some days.

### **What happens when a Bullying Incident occurs?**

At Gingin District High School, when a student reports being bullied, the student is interviewed to find out what has happened. Details of incidents may be recorded in a *Bullying Intervention Record*. The Teacher, Year Coordinator or Deputy then determines the most appropriate level of intervention (see below).

Sometimes the problem involves a number of incidents or other individuals. In these cases the school will investigate further and mediate between those involved. The school uses a process of **Restorative Practice**; we try to develop empathy and resilience while providing students with better ways to deal with the problem.

Parents can support the school by encouraging children to work in a positive way with their class and school peers, and by encouraging their children to report incidents of bullying to a teacher or administrator.

#### ***What is Restorative Practice?***

Restorative practice is a strategy that seeks to repair relationships that have been damaged, including those damaged through bullying. It does this by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the offender and forgiveness by the victim.

The aim of restorative practices is to develop community and to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships. This statement identifies both proactive (building relationships and developing community) and reactive (repairing

harm and restoring relationships) approaches. Organizations and services that only use the reactive without building the social capital beforehand are less successful than those that also employ the proactive

Possible questions include:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- Who was harmed?
- How might they have been affected?
- What have you thought about since?
- How can you make it right?

### **Level 1 Incidents**

Level 1 incidents are minor incidents where there has been little or no physical harm, and other harm can be rectified easily.

Usually the incident can be managed at the time it occurred. This may be done in the classroom by the class teacher or in the playground by the Duty Teacher

In these circumstances, a staff member will listen to the nature of the issue from both parties and will attempt to determine the true nature of the issue. Once the true nature of the incident is established, the issue will be resolved, where possible, using a Restorative Practice approach or other strategies available to the teacher at the time.

If this occurs in the playground, the Primary class teacher or a Secondary Year Coordinator will be informed.

### **Level 2 Incidents – referred to a Year Coordinator or Leadership Team**

Level 2 incidents involve a higher level of harm and are repeated or targeted.

Initially, a *Bullying Intervention Record* will be created for the person who is the target of the bullying behaviour and this is kept with the school administration for future reference. Students may be interviewed to determine the factual information about what happened. If support is required to address any harm that may have occurred, that support will be provided through a member of the Student Services team, for example the Chaplain or a Year Coordinator.

Intervention approaches can include the following practices: mediation meetings; the *Method of Shared Concern*; a *Group Support Approach*; community conferences; cooperation circles; or other strategies that have an evidence base.

In situations which have resulted in significant harm or where violence has occurred, behaviour management sanctions may be applied. Sanctions are not automatic and depend on the circumstances of each case. Sanctions may include playground time out, detention, withdrawal of privileges, counselling or other consequences that are appropriate in the circumstances.

Individual behaviour management plans, risk management plans or escalation profiles may be developed where necessary.

Parents will be informed in all cases where an incident of this type occurs.

### **Level 3 Incidents**

Level 3 incidents are those where the bullying is more severe and require a more formal referral. Incidents of this type occur where there is significant physical, psychological or emotional harm to a student. Parents of all students involved in this type of incident will be informed.

The incidents will be referred to the Principal, Associate Principal, or a Deputy Principal. Interviews with all parties will be held, and in most cases witnesses to any incidents will also be interviewed. The interventions described at Level 2 will also be used at this level.

Individual support will be provided at the level required, including the possible use of external referrals if necessary (e.g. Child Adolescent Mental Health Services).

High level sanctions will be applied such as class withdrawal, loss of school privileges, or a period of suspension, based on the individual circumstances of the case.

#### ***Level 4 Incidents***

Where the bullying reaches the level of a 'Critical Incident', as defined by the Department of Education Critical Incident Policy, the incident will be referred to other agencies for resolution. These incidents involve significant assaults or criminal offences. In these circumstances, a Critical Incident notification will be made to the Department of Education and Police will be notified. In these situations, the action taken will be based on ensuring that students are protected from further harm. This can include a significant suspension time and any other possible sanctions that the school may have available under the Education Act.

### **Communication and Confidentiality**

Sometimes, for confidentiality reasons, parents and students may not always see these programs and/or activities being implemented. The school is bound under the Education Act to keep information about students confidential, except to their parents. While this is sometimes frustrating for parents, it protects all students in the school.