

Bullying Information Sheet

PARENT GUIDE

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is the ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour with the intention to cause physical, social, and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group using their power over one or more individuals who feel they can't do anything to stop the behaviour from happening.

Bullying can happen in person and online via social media. Sometimes bullying is obvious (deliberate repeated physical harm, repeatedly saying mean things or threatening a student in front of peers or online) and/or hidden (damaging another students property when no one is around, spreading rumours). These behaviours are considered bullying when they occur more than once or are likely to be repeated through sharing digital images online, where they can be viewed/downloaded multiple times. A single conflict, threat, or fight is taken seriously, but is not bullying.

HOW TO RESPOND TO BULLYING

Bullying behaviour is distressing for everyone involved. There may be immediate and long-term negative impacts on mental health and wellbeing. It is important to take bullying seriously and respond as soon as possible. Northam Senior High School is committed to stopping bullying behaviour and working with families to teach appropriate social behaviours and respond to bullying behaviours as soon as possible.

If your child is being bullied at school, or by student who attends our school outside of school hours, we encourage you to work with us by reporting the behaviour, working with us to resolve the bullying and to ensure that your child has a safe and supportive learning environment.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING?

Being the target of bullying behaviour may lead to:

- Feeling disconnected from school and not wanting to go to school.
- Lower academic outcomes, dropping out of school, and being absent.
- Lack of trust in friendships and loss of friends.
- Depression, anxiety, substance use, feeling lonely and socially isolated, which may increase suicidal thoughts and risk of suicide.
- Low self-esteem and lower resilience.
- Social and emotional withdrawal, avoidance of conflict.
- Difficulty forming friendships and feeling wary of peers.

Given the negative impact of bullying, it is important to take bullying seriously. So how do you respond when you suspect your child is being targeted by bullying behaviour?

BULLYING WARNING SIGNS

You might notice your child:

- Does not want to go to school or participate in school activities.
- Changes their method or route to school or is frightened of walking to school.
- Does not do as well in assignments or tests.
- Sudden changes to sleeping patterns.
- Changes to eating, over eating or loss of appetite.
- Frequent mood swings (outside of usual behaviours) could include being teary, angry outbursts, or low-mood.
- Takes money from home or asks for money more than usual.
- Has unexplained bruises, cuts and/or scratches.
- Loses or brings home damaged belongings or clothes.
- Arrives home hungry.

Young people who are being bullied online may also show some or all of the following signs of bullying:

- Hesitating to go online or use online platforms.
- Being nervous when an SMS, email or social media notification is received.
- Being visibly upset after using the computer or their mobile phone.
- Suddenly avoiding their phone and/or social media groups.
- Being overly secretive by closing the screen or hiding their mobile phone when someone else comes into their room. Closing the screen, or hiding the mobile phone when someone else enters the room.
- Spending unusually long hours online.
- Receiving suspicious phone calls, emails or packages.



TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO BULLYING





It is normal to feel shocked, worried, angry or scared when you suspect that your child is the target of bullying behaviours; or to deny that your child may be using bullying behaviours towards others. As a parent and caregiver, it is never easy to hear. Take comfort that there is support for students who are targeted by bullying behaviours and for students who perpetrate those behaviours.

Key things to remember:

- Stay calm. Avoid blaming others and try to focus on working towards solutions.
- Do not try to confront the other family or child immediately.
- Ask what is going on. Try to understand if there is something troubling your child either at home or school.
- Talk with your child and let them know firmly that bullying is not ok and that it must stop.
- Take bullying seriously and believe your child, report bullying behaviour to the school and work with the school to follow the bullying and behaviour policy.
- Keep an eye on your child, monitor them for increases in any of the warning signs.
- Encourage respectful and kind actions between family members, create a respectful home.
- If your child is using bullying behaviours, help to teach respectful behaviours and support their efforts to do better.
- If things get worse, it is a good idea to get professional advice and help (see resources provided below).
- Importantly, remember that adolescents learn through their mistakes, it is how we help them to learn from those mistakes that matters.

FIND MORE INFORMATION



- **Bullying No Way!** provides resources and support to understand, respond to, and prevent bullying behaviours. It also provides support to young people, families, and schools. Go to: www.bullyingnoway.gov.au for more information.
 - **Student Wellbeing Hub** provides resources for parents to support their child's online safety, responsible decision making, respectful relationships and more. Specific information relating to "**Helping your child deal with bullying, aggression and violence**" can be found here: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/parents/topics/helping-your-child-deal-with-bullying-aggression-and-violence/>
 - **eSafety for Young People** includes useful information to help young people stay safe online. You can find out more about online bullying, being called out for bullying behaviour, how to stand up for your friends and so much more. Go to: <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people> for more information.
 - **Beyond Blue** provides information on mental health difficulties related to anxiety, depression and suicide. There are tips for improving mental health and wellbeing and strategies to try at home, as well as information on where you or your young person can get support. Visit: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health> for information on mental health and to <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support> for information on support services.
 - **kidshelpline** provides information for young people on what to do if they are the target of bullying and what they can do to make it stop and to cope. They also provide text and national phone helplines to access help. Go to: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/teens/issues/bullying> for information or call: **1800 55 1800 for 24/7 support.**
 - **Headspace** is Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing mental health services for young people aged 12 to 25 years. Go to: <https://headspace.org.au/explore-topics/for-young-people/bullying/> for information on different types of bullying, effects of bullying, and advice for young people on what they can do if they are being bullied face-to-face or online, and on ways to support their friends.
- 
- 

References

Lodge, J. (2014). Helping your child stop bullying: A guide for parents. In Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/practice-guides/helping-your-child-stop-bullying-guide-parents>
Bullying. No Way! website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
What is bullying? (2024, January 19). www.vic.gov.au/what-bullying

