



# Anti-Bullying Guidelines – Junior School

At Cranbrook School, bullying is not an acceptable behaviour. In keeping with the School's educational mission, it is acknowledged that people make mistakes and can learn from these. Therefore these guidelines aim to integrate education and self-development with the idea of consequences for actions.

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## What is Bullying?

Bullying is any individual or group action or words that use strength or power to coerce, threaten, persecute or oppress others repeatedly.

When speaking with Junior School students, the following definition is to be used: Bullying is repeated intimidation of a person, using actions or words.

Simplifying the definition in this way makes it both comprehensible and memorable for the students.

## Types of Bullying

Bullying may be classified into three broad categories: direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, and indirect bullying. Examples of these are outlined below.

### Direct physical bullying

Hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.

### Direct verbal bullying

Name calling, insults, prejudiced remarks and verbal abuse.

### Indirect bullying

This is more difficult to identify and is often designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. This includes, but is not limited to: lying and spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance, and cyber-bullying which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

## Possible Signs of Bullying Observed at School or Home

Some signs that parents or teachers may observe when a child may be being bullied include:

- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
  - feeling ill in the mornings
  - a decline in quality of school work
  - becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
  - crying at night, having nightmares
  - asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
  - refusing to talk about what is wrong
  - having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
  - beginning to bully other children or siblings
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- becoming aggressive and unreasonable.

When one or a combination of these signs is observed, it is helpful to approach the child about this privately and in a supportive manner in order to encourage the child to share what the cause of these signs are. These may not be related to bullying or the child may not want to discuss this initially. However, it is important that the opportunity is left open for the child to discuss the situation at a later time when they are ready.

## **What Bullying is Not**

There are many negative behaviours which, although being distressing to those involved, are not classified as bullying. These instances often may require teacher intervention and management. The following situations are often confused with bullying:

### **Mutual conflict**

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students, but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict may evolve into a bullying situation at some point if it is not resolved; for example, when one person becomes targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

### **Social rejection or dislike**

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

### **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation**

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, this does not constitute being bullied. This does not, however, lessen the seriousness of the incident or the subsequent consequences.

## **Initiatives to Minimise Bullying Within the School**

There is an acknowledgement within the School that bullying should not be accepted as normal schoolyard banter or behaviour. It has been well documented that the experience of being bullied can contribute to outcomes such as low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, psychosomatic symptoms and school refusal. This can lead to negative educational and social outcomes.

There is evidence that a whole-school approach to bullying education and intervention that involves parents, students and teachers from various parts of the school is effective when implemented consistently.

Cranbrook Junior School aims to achieve this consistency in attitudes and understanding of the issue of bullying through a multi-modal approach. This consists of the education of staff, students and parents, the utilisation of preventative programs, intervention and the use of the Shared Concern approach (see Management of Bullying Issues Within the School below).

### **Education**

Parents, teachers, and students are to be alerted to this policy. Regular professional development of staff on the topic of bullying will take place. This will be organised by and/or facilitated through the School Counsellor and Executive staff.

### **Prevention**

Preventative programs are to be conducted that address current issues reflected in the literature. The Friendly Schools program is currently utilised in Kindergarten – Year 6. This evidence-based program addresses issues related to bullying at each year level.

Additionally, the School Counsellor delivers a variety of in class social-emotional programs to Kindergarten – Year 6 which address the development of good social problem solving skills, coping with negative emotions, and developing resilience.

## **Management of Bullying Issues Within the School**

The School typically utilises a non-punitive approach and will enforce consequences for non-compliance where necessary.

There are two main non-punitive approaches, namely group mediation and the model of Shared Concern. Shared Concern is about putting a stop to bullying through the use of the Shared Concern Meeting which appeals to empathy and facilitates a positive problem solving method. It minimises the likelihood of 'payback' for the victim as a result of speaking up about the bullying behaviour.

This approach has three main components: welfare, education and discipline.

- Welfare: The approach takes into account the needs of all students, supports all students, and treats all students with equal respect
- Education: It teaches responsibility, values and life skills in addition to teaching an understanding of bullying and the potential impact of bullying and informs students of school policy
- Discipline: It fosters self-discipline and self-control in addition to incorporating consequences for actions. (Findley, 2006).

The process involved is a non-confrontational one for the victim, whereby the victim meets with the teacher initially to discuss what happened. During this meeting the teacher may ask the victim to write or 'tell' a victim impact statement.

The teacher then meets with the student/s engaging in the bullying behaviour and shares with them the impact statement and asks them for their assistance to solve the problem.

The expectation is that the bullying behaviour will cease immediately. If it does not, a second meeting with the teacher is arranged where the reasons why the student was unable to cease the concerning behaviour are discussed and the student is informed that the matter will have to be referred to the Deputy Head– Student Wellbeing P-6.

The Deputy Head– Student Wellbeing P-6 may choose to apply consequences at this point.

Further sessions may be held with the victim if needed to assist him to cope with bullying behaviours and to teach him how to maintain his own personal power throughout the process.

## **What to do if Bullying is Suspected**

Report any suspected bullying behaviour to the School immediately. It is advisable to speak to the classroom teacher first. Do not contact the parents of the boy engaging in the bullying behaviour. This may lead to further confrontation and restrict the effectiveness of the School in handling the matter.

If you would just like some advice on dealing with bullying at School, you may wish to contact your son's Classroom Teacher or the Deputy Head– Student Wellbeing P-6.

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