



Bullying

Information booklet for staff,
students and parents.

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Definitions and advice taken from:

Alannah & Madeline Foundation (National Centre Against Bullying)

Bullying No Way! (<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au>)

What is bullying?

The national definition of bullying for Australian schools is the starting point for bullying prevention. (www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

*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**.*

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.

Because bullying is a relationship problem, it normally requires relationship-based solutions. These are best solved in the social environment in which they occur: in a child or young person's life, this is most often the school.

What bullying is not

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

These actions can still cause great distress. However, they are not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them. If a student reports one of the examples above or a teacher witnesses it, then a similar range of actions, processes, consequences and ongoing work occurs with the parties involved.

Single instances of aggression can be just as confronting for all involved and are responded to as seriously as bullying. This section is to simply remind people that bullying covers a very specific set of behaviours and not every behaviour is bullying.

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying can be overt or covert bullying behaviours using digital technologies, including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites and other online platforms.

Cyberbullying can happen at any time. It can be in public or in private and sometimes only known to the target and the person bullying. Cyberbullying can include:

- Abusive or hurtful texts emails or posts, images or videos
- Deliberately excluding others online
- Nasty gossip or rumours
- Imitating others online or using their log-in

How does Samaritan discourage bullying and promote respectful relationships?

- Employing School Counsellors who have specialist skills in helping both victims of bullying and identified bullies.
- Information provided in newsletters, Facebook etc.
- Mixed caregroups in Year 7-12 (house groups)
- Regular parent contact i.e. via email, parent meetings, phone calls
- Child Protection Curriculum taught R-12
- Pastoral Care sessions 7-12
- Religious Education Curriculum taught R-12
- Reward/acknowledging positive behaviours
- Easy access to senior staff by students
- Staff Professional Development
- Respectful Behaviours Policy
- Explained to student/parent as part of enrolment process
- Student wellbeing surveys
- Encouraging staff to adopt classroom management techniques that discourage opportunities for bullying behaviours

- Implementation of evidence-based programs to support social and emotional wellbeing
- Engaging conversations that are restorative by nature
- Encouraging staff to be clear and present on yard duty i.e. wearing hi-vis, engaging with students on duty etc.
- Using Student Leaders (primary) as “go to” students on Yard Duty plus as detectors of positive behaviours
- Providing safe places at recess/breaks i.e. Library
- Putting up signage about the School to promote a bully-free environment.
- Promote a “hands off” approach to all physical contact – including football, soccer, wrestling, play fighting, holding hands, cuddling etc
- Reviewing these procedures on a regular basis

What should a student do if he/she is being bullied?

If you are being bullied, you must tell a responsible adult who has the capacity to help.

Options include: Parents, Caregivers or adult relatives and at school: Teacher, Director of Studnets, House Leader, Counsellor, Deputy, Principal, and ESO.

If the bullying occurs outside of school, you may need to inform your coach or club president etc, depending on the location.

Bullies win when you are upset, so here are some things you can practice:

- Act unimpressed: pretend not to notice if you are excluded or if the bullying is verbal, say something like, 'yeah, whatever' or 'Oh, OK'.
- Walk away.
- Pretend to agree 'yep, that's what I'm like alright' 'Yeah, I've got red hair. Tried dyeing it but decided it was better red than green'...
- Look around for other friendship groups in or out of school.
- Get involved in clubs or activities at school where you will be safe.

If you are being cyberbullied, you can:

- Block senders.
- Keep messages by sending them to someone else. Do not look at them yourself.
- Change passwords.
- Do not retaliate.
- Talk to a friend, parent or teacher about how to deal with the bullies.
- If there are threats or calls to harm yourself, report abuse to the police, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and also the ISP or website.

If needed, further help can be obtained from:

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Lifeline – 131 114

Salvo Youth Line – 9360 3000

Websites:

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au>

www.kidshelp.com.au

<https://www.antibullyingcrusader.com>

What are Bystanders?

A bystander is someone who sees or knows that bullying is happening. This can be someone who actually sees the bullying happening online or in person or someone who has heard it is happening.

Bystanders play a very important role in preventing and then dealing with bullying.

If someone you know is being bullied, they need your help. Others respect you if you stand up for someone who is being bullied.

Sometimes people do not say or do anything because they are afraid they will be bullied as well. However, if you do not do anything the bullying will probably only continue.

Do not stand by and let bullying happen at your school!

You may not be able to stop the bullying yourself, but you can help.

A bystander does not have to be friends with anyone directly involved to have an impact.

What should I do if I see or hear bullying? i.e. I am a bystander

As long as you feel safe when you see the bullying happening, you could:

- tell the person who is bullying that you will get a teacher if they don't stop
- encourage your friends to walk away or tell the person to stop
- tell the person bullying you don't think what they do is cool or funny
- help the person who is being bullied to get away and go somewhere safe

If you do not think it's safe for you to try to stop the bullying, there are other things you can do to help a friend or classmate who is being bullied.

You could:

- walk away and tell a teacher right away
- help a friend or classmate who is being bullied
- tell them that bullying is not okay and they didn't do anything wrong
- ask them if they want help to get it stopped
- try to make sure your friend is not alone where they might get bullied
- ask the person who is being bullied to join your group or game
- walk away, as people who bully like others to watch

Tell someone

It is okay to tell. It is not dobbing to get help for someone who is being hurt.

If you are worried about what other people will say to you, tell someone else privately.

Even if the bullying happens outside of school, report it to someone in authority or someone you trust such as:

- a teacher or a school counsellor, if it's at school
- a manager, if it's at work
- the police, if the bullying is causing serious harm
- to the [Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner](#) if it is serious bullying online

Your parents or other family members may be able to help you work out who else to tell.

Do something to help the person being bullied

To help the person being bullied, you could:

- take them away from the bully
- encourage them to ask for help e.g. go with them to get help
- include them in your group and introduce them to your friends
- suggest safe places for them to go
- show them how to set their privacy settings on social networking sites and mobile devices.

Avoid joining in

Do not behave in ways that make the problem worse such as:

- joining in with harassing or hurting someone

- reinforcing the bullying behaviour by encouraging, cheering and laughing, even if from a distance or when you hear about it later
- never resend or respond to messages or photos/videos that may be offensive or upsetting to someone
- don't harass, tease or spread gossip about others on social networking sites

Bystanders may also be impacted by witnessing the bullying or be being involved in the process.

Bystanders should also speak with someone about how they are feeling.

Further information and advice about being a bystander or a witness to bullying can be found here:

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/responding-to-bullying>

Options for parents including resources

You may have noticed your child is showing some of the signs of being bullied, or you might discover they have been bullied in some other way.

The big question is how to stop bullying? The first recommended step is to try to get your child to open up about what is happening in their life by showing them that you understand, and will not judge them.

Listen

Try to listen to the whole story without interrupting. Be empathetic, calm and show you understand what the child is saying. They might need to tell their story more than once.

Talk

Have a conversation about what happened. Try not to let your very understandable emotions (anger, distress etc) show. Your feelings can intensify the child's or make it worse for them and might even deter your child from talking to you another time.

Remind your child it is normal to feel hurt, it is never OK to be bullied.

Ask your child what they would like to happen. Often all they want to know is how to stop the bullying. Children may feel that if the perpetrator is punished, it will be worse for them in the long run.

Find out what is happening

Note what, when and where the bullying occurred, who was involved, how often and if anybody else witnessed it. Do not offer to confront the young person or their parents yourself. This might make things worse for your child.

Contact Samaritan College

Bullying arises from social situations - family, school, clubs, and work - and if possible, cases of bullying are best dealt with where they occur. If the bullying stems from school or is linked to school it is therefore important you alert the school to the situation, as they may not be aware of it.

Do not assume the school will know about the situation, because your child may not have told them.

The majority of children and teenagers do not disclose to teachers or parents. Be confident that once alerted the school will want to stop bullying behaviour as much as you.

Some tips to guide your discussions with the college:

- Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher or coordinator rather than simply turn up to school. Despite the importance of the situation, it may not be physically possible for the right person to be able to meet with you without appropriate notice.
- You may feel the urge to meet with the Principal in the first instance. This may still be OK but in many cases he/she may not know your child or the situation as well as other staff and it may be best to meet with the class teacher or House Leader/Director of Students, Head of Campus before seeking a meeting with the Principal.
- Take along your notes about the situation or screenshots, texts etc. It is often difficult to remember specific details.
- Check that your child knows you are coming to tell the school and that you have some agreed outcomes – sometimes what the parent wants to happen and the child, are two very different things.
- Encourage your child to tell you everything about the situation. It will be better in the long run if your child needs to admit now that they may have also engaged in some inappropriate behaviour rather than it come up during the investigation.
- Avoid exaggerating and stick to the facts. This also means checking you are not blaming someone you 'think' may be involved.
- Ask for a follow-up appointment to ensure the situation is being addressed. The school may ask you to attend a restorative conference. If so, they will explain to you what is involved.
- If your child asks to stay home from school, explain it will not help - and may make things worse.
- Look to work with the school not against them.

This link has further information about how parents can support their child if bullying occurs:

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/responding-to-bullying/how-families-can-respond>

Cyberbullying:

Topics to discuss about stopping cyberbullying behaviours

- Explain it's never a good idea to retaliate against cyberbullying
- Collect the evidence (screenshots, saving texts etc.) of the behaviour
- Get your child to change their privacy settings
- Ask your child if they know whether the same thing is happening to others. Encourage them to support their friends and report any cyberbullying to the school if the perpetrator also attends Samaritan.
- If there is any indication your child may be at risk, or if threats have been made, stopping the cyberbullying is critical, make a report to the police. Laws have been broken. Contact the internet service provider or the site owner so that material can be preserved but removed from public view.

Practical tips on how to prevent cyberbullying

- Talk about technology with your children. It is OK if they know more than you do.
- Reach an agreement about what acceptable online behaviour looks and feels like and how they will spend time online (e.g. homework, social networking, and gaming). If you and your children have regular conversations about the online world, they will be more likely to talk to you if they are harassed or experiencing cyberbullying or if something feels uncomfortable.
- For young children's use and safety it is appropriate to put filters in place, set security to 'high' and to keep a close eye on what they are doing online. In addition, make sure you set agreements about how much time they can allocate to different activities online.
- Make sure passwords are changed regularly and kept private even from friends, as friends sometimes become enemies and could use their online accounts in offensive or obnoxious ways. As children become older, supervision needs will diminish as they take responsibility for their own online behaviour.
- Many children do not want to talk about how to stop cyberbullying or other negative experiences because they fear their access to technology will be removed. Reassure them this will not happen. Cyberbullying is serious and not a case of 'it's just words'. Cyber-attacks have a lasting effect and can damage a child in a variety of ways.
- Like face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying is also usually a relationship problem that starts at school but happens out of school hours, often on privately owned devices. Even though the bullying does not take place in school hours, it can create serious problems back at school by affecting students' feelings of safety, wellbeing and even their academic progress. Dealing with it therefore falls within a school's duty of care.

Should we go to the College for all bullying issues?

No.

Some forms of bullying are actually against the law and in this case, the police should be informed. Examples may include serious threats of violence, identity theft, sexualised bullying, use of inappropriate images, hate or race crimes etc.

Serious cyberbullying can also be reported to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner. Click here:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/i-want-to-report-cyberbullying>

What if my child is the bully?

This happens. In most cases the parents are unaware their child is causing pain to another child and they certainly, in most cases, do not condone it.

Basically, if your child is the bully and the school is unaware, then please respond as if your child was being bullied i.e. make a time to meet with the school etc.

If you are informed, by the school as part of their investigation, that your child is the bully, please be prepared to come and meet with the school to discuss a positive way forward.

Information for parents if their child is the bully can be found here:

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/responding-to-bullying>

What Samaritan can do once the bullying has taken place?

Samaritan College understands that it can be distressing for a parent or carer to find out their child has been bullied. We will try to support you and your child as much as possible and include you in discussions about strategies that could be used.

Schools will consider your child's circumstances and will select the most appropriate strategies. There is not one solution that fits all cases of bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

These strategies could include:

- changes to the school environment to improve teacher supervision, such as removing visual barriers between teacher and students
- increasing supervision of students at particular times or places
- support from school counsellor

- changes to technology access at school
- timetable or class changes that may be temporary or permanent to decrease the contact the students have with each other
- class discussions of bullying including underlying issues and possible responses for students
- promoting positive bystander behaviour
- mediation – normally at the request of the child being bullied
- Disciplinary action against students who bully others. This may include after school detentions and in extreme cases, suspension and expulsion (in accordance with Catholic Education SA policy on Suspension & Expulsion).
- Referring the matter to the police

An action plan may be developed for your child and any other children involved. Strategies you could use at home may also be included in a plan.

Note that the above actions may not suit every case of bullying and in some instances, many of the above actions may not even be possible i.e. child cannot be moved to another class because there is only one class.

Working together with the school is the best way to help your child resolve bullying issues.

It is a myth that schools simply like to get both parties to mediate or sit in a circle and talk about feelings. If certain behaviours require higher level disciplinary action then that is what will occur. However, that will only result after an investigation by the college and based on what we consider will be the best way to resolve the bullying issue.

What we try to avoid

There are many beliefs about bullying and ways of dealing with behaviour that have been shown, through research, to be far less effective than whole-school positive behaviour support approaches. These are not local decisions but the strong recommendation from experts. These include avoiding:

- zero tolerance and 'get tough' suspensions and exclusions
- rigid control of student behaviour
- belief that students must receive punitive and negative consequences in all cases
- increased security measures
- unfair and inconsistent use of discipline
- punishment without support

We also need to ensure the dignity of all involved is maintained and that we follow the various Privacy laws in place. This may mean schools/staff cannot share information about other students or what has been said to police, for example.

When a child or parent reports the bullying, Samaritan will:

1. Listen carefully and calmly, and document what the student tells us. Collect additional information.
2. Discuss a plan of action with the students.
3. Inform the student what we intend to do.
4. Provide suggestions on what to do if the bullying occurs again.
5. Set a date for follow up review/s.
6. Record the incident/student contact in the school's student data management system.
7. Notify appropriate school personnel.
8. Contact the parent/guardian informing them of the incident and your course of action.
9. Make sure to follow up with students over the next several weeks and months.

References:

Samaritan College has utilised and referred to two main sources for its advice and processes for this document:

Alannah and Madeline Foundation: <https://www.amf.org.au/>

National Centre Against Bullying: <https://www.ncab.org.au/>

Australian Government's website on bullying: <https://www.antibullyingcrusader.com>