Anti-bullying and Cyber Safety Plan

Dubbo School of Distance Education
Bullying:
Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy (2011)

The NSW Department of Education and Communities rejects all forms of bullying. No student, employee, parent, caregiver or community member should experience bullying within the learning or working environments of the Department.

Bullying

Bullying is 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. Cyber bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long term effects on those involved including bystanders.

Conflict or fights between equals or single incidents are not defined as bullying.

Bullying behaviour can be:
- **verbal** eg name calling, teasing, abuse, putdowns, sarcasm, insults, threats
- **physical** eg hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting
- **social** eg ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating, making inappropriate gestures
- **psychological** eg spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions, malicious SMS and email messages, inappropriate use of camera phones.

The term “bullying” has a specific meaning. The school’s Anti-bullying Plan sets out the processes for preventing and responding to student bullying. The school has a range of policies and practices, including welfare and discipline policies that apply to student behaviour generally.

Schools exist in a society where incidents of bullying behaviour may occur. Preventing and responding to bullying behaviour in learning and working environments is a shared responsibility of all departmental staff, students, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community.

**School staff** have a responsibility to:
- respect and support students
- model and promote appropriate behaviour
- have knowledge of school and departmental policies relating to bullying behaviour
- respond in a timely manner to incidents of bullying according to the school’s Anti-bullying Plan.

In addition, teachers have a responsibility to:
- provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact on individuals and the broader community.

**Students** have a responsibility to:
- behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity
- behave as responsible digital citizens
- follow the school Anti-bullying Plan
- behave as responsible bystanders
- report incidents of bullying according to their school Anti-bullying Plan.

**Parents and caregivers** have a responsibility to:
- support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible online behaviour
- be aware of the school Anti-bullying Plan and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour
- support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consiste with the school Anti-bullying Plan
- report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

**All members of the school community** have a responsibility to:
- model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community
- support the school’s Anti-bullying Plan through words and actions
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.
DSODE Anti-Bullying and Cyber Safety Plan

Protection

DSODE has formed an open team of staff members to research and construct the school’s draft anti-bullying and cyber safety plan. This draft will be evaluated and reviewed through parent, staff and student networks including SRC meetings, parent forums, groups of students attending residential camps, further staff discussion and publication in the school’s newsletter.

The team has developed, in consultation with student, staff and parent representatives and, with reference to NSWDEC resources, a definition of bullying behaviours (see previous page) and a statement of purpose for the development of this plan, a definition of cyber bullying to be shared across the community and a focus on maintaining a positive climate of respectful relationships.

Statement of purpose

DSODE aims to create an anti-bullying and cyber safety action plan that promotes a safe learning environment for students and encourages positive relationships by:

- providing a safe and caring environment
- identifying bullying behaviours in our school context
- eliminating bullying behaviours
- enhancing positive relationships
- promoting resilience/coping strategies
- ensuring positive bystander behaviour
- responding to incidences of bullying

Definition of cyber bullying

Cyber-bullying is an intentional, repeated behaviour by an individual or group using technology to cause distress or place undue pressure on others.

Today’s technology allows children to communicate instantly with others in both positive and negative ways. Cyber-bullying includes all communications that seek to threaten, humiliate, intimidate, control or put another person or persons down.

Cyber-bullying can be carried out through an internet service such as:

- email
- chat room
- discussion group or forum
- instant messaging
- social networking websites such as Bebo, Facebook, MySpace or YouTube.

Cyber-bullying can also include bullying through mobile phones by:

- text and picture messaging
- video clips
- phone calls.

Cyber-bullies can flame (repeatedly leave negative messages), harass, exclude or cyber-stalk victims using these technologies.

Building positive relationships

DSODE recognises the importance of all members of the school community developing a common understanding of what constitutes bullying and sharing the responsibility for effectively preventing and responding to incidences of bullying.

DSODE celebrates the respectful and positive relationships that students consistently display at camps and that DSODE students support each other.
Prevention

All teachers have a responsibility to promote the safe use of technology, and to follow the Anti-Bullying flowchart if a cyber-bullying incident occurs.

Activities in which bullying behaviours between students could occur include:

- Camps
- DSODE learning centre (2012)
- Outreach centres
- Cyber-bullying (email, texts, social networking, blogs)
- Area workshops
- VC or TC lessons
- Students visiting DSODE

To prevent bullying and encourage safe use of technology DSODE has identified the following strategies to maintain, enhance and/or implement.

- Recognising and celebrating the respectful and positive relationships that DSODE students consistently display at camps and area workshops
- Development and communication of clear behavior expectations for students attending camps and workshops
- Educating all members of the school community about positive bystander behavior
- Developing lessons where positive interactions (student/student, teacher/student) are fostered and celebrated
- Valuing and celebrating individual differences in people
- Developing students’ understanding of the value of individual differences by providing team building activities at camps and workshops
- Team building activities at residential camps led by SRC
- Development and implementation of student personalised learning plans

- Continuation of the provision of programs and activities designed to build self-esteem such as: Glam it Up, transition workshops, field service visits, I/K workshops, etc.
- Provision of information to students on how to report incidences of bullying via the SRC
- Delivery of information sessions by the School Police Liaison Officer regarding consequences of unsafe technology use to DSODE students, parents and staff
- Embedding anti-bullying messages in curriculum activities and communication facilities
- Regular student participation in residential workshops regarding tips on how to create a secure online profile and use social networking websites such as Facebook securely and responsibly
- Providing information and links to resources on the DSODE website, in the school newsletter for students and parents and on staff daily notices regarding the safe use and at-home monitoring of social networking websites and other technologies
- SRC development of anti-bullying messages or slogans for publication in curriculum activities, the school newsletter and website
- Display of anti-bullying posters and resources around the school
- Providing professional development for all staff regarding supervision of students in online forums
- Developing a set of protocols for respectful on-line behavior/interaction
- Encouraging understanding and empathy from staff regarding cyber safety issues that students may face during staff information sessions throughout the year
- Full staff participation in Connect.Ed online safety guide for Educators
- Identification of behaviour management strategies for use during phone lessons

The Anti-Bullying Plan – NSW Department of Education and Communities
Early Intervention

DSODE enrolls students from various categories including students with high needs. Some students, who are enrolled, are dealing with the repercussions of past bullying experiences. During the enrolment process DSODE gathers information about each individual student from the student, their parents/carers and previous school in order to assess the student’s welfare needs and identify strategies and resources that will help the student address negative past experiences and feel well supported in DSODE.

Students are encouraged to report incidents that may constitute, or lead to, an experience of bullying so that early intervention can occur.

In 2012 the school community will be informed about the benefits of positive bystander behavior and what constitutes positive bystander behavior.

Response

Members of the DSODE Anti-bullying and cyber safety planning teams will implement the following strategies to empower the whole school community to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, harassment and victimisation and behave as responsible bystanders.

- Publishing the following materials on the school’s website:
  - the school’s anti-bullying and cyber safety plan
  - links to appropriate support and information sites e.g. bullying NO-WAY, cyber-bullying, Cybersmart Help Button etc. (term 1 2012)
  - link to enable reporting of a bullying incident (term 1 2012)
  - Links to NSW DEC policies Child Protection and Complaints Handling Policy
- Gathering further information from parents, staff and students to develop a shared understanding of bullying behaviours and appropriate responses to bullying behaviours (survey 2012)
- Consulting and working with the MindMatters and SRC teams to engage students in anti-bullying activities (term 4 2011 and 2012)
- Consulting with parents and students on all aspects of the 2012 – 2014 anti-bulling and cyber safety plan via the SRC, parent forums, newsletter feedback and school website
- Increasing staff awareness of aspects of health and well-being (Mindmatters team, 2012)
- Development of a matrix to match potential incidents of bullying with combinations of interventions
- Ensuring a ‘no blame’ environment in which to educate students about the impact of bullying and thus develop positive and supportive behaviors
- Educating the school community about the importance of positive bystander behaviors
- Supporting students who have enrolled in distance education because they have been affected by or involved in bullying behavior towards others
- Following NSWDEC policies relating to the reporting of incidents involving assaults, threats, intimidation and harassment to the police
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the anti-bullying and cyber safety plan in a three year cycle in consultation with the SRC and DSODE Welfare Team
- Development of procedures to track information about bullying incidents and the management of these within the bounds of privacy legislation and provision of such information to parents on request
- Developing procedures for reporting incidents of bullying
- Implementing the Anti-bullying flowchart when any incidence of bullying occurs

Students, parents, carers and teachers are requested to report incidents of bullying by phoning, emailing or writing a letter to a trusted member of staff such as a teacher, welfare advisor or member of executive.

Within 24 hours the staff member will consult with the student, parent or carer to assess the appropriate level of support and how this support is best provided. Depending on the urgency, the staff member will then consult within one to five
days with the Assistant Principal Primary or the Head Teacher Welfare to determine an appropriate course of action.

Due to the distance education mode of delivery incidents of face-to-face bullying are rare and if they do occur they are referred to the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal will investigate the incident and determine the most appropriate course of action in consultation with the Welfare Advisors, Principal and others as appropriate.

Incidents of cyber-bullying between DSODE students have also been rare and this has been reflected in the low rate of reporting of cyber-bullying incidents. However the low rate of reporting may be because of a lack of knowledge about how to report such incidents and this will be addressed.

On the very few occasions when bullying has occurred in the past, DSODE referred all students involved to the school counselor for support. Parents and carers were contacted and expectations regarding restitution on behalf of the student responsible for the bullying action were negotiated. Students who were affected by bullying behaviours were counseled. All such incidents have been resolved effectively.

Additional Information
Kids Helpline
Ph: 1800 55 1800

Principal’s comment
I wish to thank the SRC coordinators, members of the anti-bullying, Cyber safety and Mind Matters teams who constructed this plan and members of the primary and secondary parent forums who contributed and reviewed the plan.

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The Anti-Bullying Plan – NSW Department of Education and Communities