



# Wandina

PRIMARY SCHOOL

**2014**



*“Inspiring Excellence Together”*

# ● What to do if your child is being bullied?

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

### What is Bullying?

Bullying among people is aggressive behaviour that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. A child who is being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself.

Usually, bullying is repeated over time. Bullying can take many forms such as: hitting or punching (physical bullying); teasing or name-calling (verbal bullying); intimidation through gestures or social exclusion (nonverbal bullying or emotional bullying); and sending insulting messages by phone or computer email (cyber bullying).

### Effects of Bullying:

Bullying can have serious consequences.

Children and youth who are bullied are more likely than other children to:

- Be depressed, lonely, anxious
- Have low self-esteem
- Be absent from school
- Feel sick
- Think about suicide
- Students who bully have an increased likelihood of later criminal convictions and a continuation of bullying behaviour into adulthood.

### Reporting Bullying to Parents and Teachers

Children sometimes do not tell their parents that they are being bullied because they are embarrassed, ashamed, frightened of the children who are bullying them, or afraid of being seen as a “dobber”. If your child tells you about being bullied, it has taken a lot of courage to do so. Your child needs your help and the help of the school to stop the bullying.

### What to Do If Your Child Is Being Bullied

**1. First, focus on your child. Be supportive and gather information about the bullying.**

- Never tell your child to ignore the bullying. What the child may “hear” is that *you* are going to ignore it. If the child were able to simply ignore it, he or she likely would not have told you

about it. Often, trying to ignore bullying allows it to become more serious.

- Don't blame the child who is being bullied. Don't assume that your child did something to provoke the bullying. Don't say, “What did you do to aggravate the other child?”.
- Listen carefully to what your child tells you about the bullying. Ask him/her to describe who was involved and how and where each bullying episode happened.
- Learn as much as you can about the bullying tactics being used, when and where the bullying happened. Can your child name other children or adults who may have witnessed the bullying? Write down their names.
- Empathize with your child. Tell him/her that bullying is wrong, not their fault, and that you are glad he/she had the courage to tell you about it. Ask your child what he/she thinks can be done to help. Assure him/her that you will think about what needs to be done and you will let him/her know what you are going to do.
- If you disagree with how your child handled the bullying situation, don't criticize him/her.
- Do not encourage physical retaliation (“Just hit them back”) as a solution. Hitting another student is not likely to end the problem, and it could get your child suspended or escalate the situation.

- Check your emotions. A parent's protective instincts stir strong emotions. Although it is difficult, a parent is wise to step back and consider the next steps carefully.

**2. Contact your child's teacher, Deputy Principal or Principal**

- Parents are often reluctant to report bullying to

school officials, but bullying may not stop without the help of the school. Contact details are at the end of this brochure.

- Keep your emotions in check. Give factual information about your child's experience of being bullied at school or on the bus - who, what, when, where, and how.
- Emphasize that you want to work with the staff at school to find a solution to stop the bullying, for the sake of your child as well as other students.
- Do not contact the student or the parents of the student(s) who bullied your child. This is usually a parent's first response, but sometimes it makes matters worse. School officials will contact the parents of the child or children who did the bullying as part of Behaviour Management Policy.
- Expect the bullying to stop. Talk regularly with your child and with school staff to see if the bullying has stopped. If the bullying persists, inform the school authorities again.
- Be assured that bullying will be dealt with at Wandina Primary School, as a matter of priority as we are determined to prevent and STOP BULLYING.

### ***3. Help your child to become more resilient to bullying***

- Help to develop talents or positive attributes of your child. Suggest and facilitate music, athletics, and art activities. Doing so may help your child be more confident among his/her peers.
- Encourage your child to make contact with friendly students in his class. Your child's teacher may be able to suggest students with whom your child can make friends, spend time, or collaborate on work.
- Help your child meet new friends outside of the school environment such as sporting clubs etc.
- Teach your child safety strategies. Teach him/her how to **seek help from an adult** when he/she feels threatened by a bully. **Talk about whom** he/she should go to for help and **role play** what he/she should say. Assure your child that

reporting bullying is not the same as being "a dobber". It is simply "taking a STAND".

- Ask yourself: Is my child being bullied because of a learning difficulty or a lack of social skills? If your child is hyperactive, impulsive or overly talkative, the child who bullies may be reacting out of annoyance. This doesn't make the bullying right, but it may help to explain why your child is being bullied. If your child has some of these issues, seek help from the School Psychologist so that your child can learn the informal social rules of his/her peer group.
- Home is where the heart is. Make sure your child has a safe and loving home environment where he/she can take shelter, physically and emotionally. Always keep the lines of communication with your child open.

### ***4. You can also make a formal Police complaint in cases of physical assault. This is in addition to the actions the school will take against those who bully.***

#### **Consequences for those who bully.**

In the event that a student (who has been found to be bullying) does not change their behaviour then any one or more of the following consequences may be applied:

- Detention.
- Withdrawal from class and school events.
- Consultation with parents.
- Restorative Justice Conference accompanied by a formal letter to the students and parents.
- Reparation for any damage caused.
- Supervised formal apology to the victim as part of the Restorative Justice Process.
- Referral to School Psychologist, support agencies or counsellors.
- Suspension from school, resuming only with the clear undertaking by the student that they will demonstrate positive behaviour in place of unacceptable bullying behaviour.
- Exclusion.
- Police charges can also be made in the event of physical bullying.

#### **Websites**

There are two wonderful and engaging websites on bullying prevention which gives information to parents and students on how to handle this problem.

**School Contact details:**

Phone – 99234 200

Email – [Wandina.PS@education.wa.edu.au](mailto:Wandina.PS@education.wa.edu.au)

## Research into Bullying

Research undertaken across many countries, including Australia, shows that the disciplinary approach is seen by about 75 per cent of school staff as the most appropriate way of dealing with most forms of bullying.

This approach seeks to prevent bullying by imposing sanctions or punishments on the offender. It also sends a message to other students about what will happen to them if they engage in bullying. This approach requires a high level of surveillance though, which is often impossible for teachers and counsellors to maintain.

There are five other ways to deal with bullying that should be considered. Interventions need to take into account the severity of the bullying but also whether there is group involvement. In addition, there must be available skills and training of staff, and interventions need to be consistent with the school's anti-bullying policy and philosophy.

The other five intervention methods which are examined and evaluated in detail in Dr Rigby's book, *Bullying Interventions in Schools: Six Major Methods*, published by the Australian Council for Educational Research, are:

1. Strengthening the victim: this approach aims to help the victim to cope more effectively in interactions with the bully or bullies, for example by training targeted children to act more assertively.
2. Mediation: students in conflict are invited to work with a trained teacher or peer-mediator to find a mutually acceptable way of resolving a dispute that may underlie the bullying behaviour.

3. Restorative practice: this method requires offenders to reflect upon their behaviour, experience a sense of remorse and act to restore a damaged relationship with both the victim and the school community.
4. Support group method: previously called the 'no blame approach', it involves speaking with the victim and identifying the perpetrators, after which a group meeting is held which includes the bullies and several students who support the victim, but not the victim. The practitioner describes the victim's distress and then each person says how he or she will help. The situation is then carefully monitored.
5. The Method of Shared concern: is a multi-stage process in which suspected bullies are interviewed individually to gain their cooperation in improving the victim's situation. The victim is then interviewed. Subsequently a meeting is convened with the group of suspected bullies who are required to make a plan to resolve the problem. The victim is then invited to join the group to bring about an agreed solution.

This news item appeared on the [University of South Australia's news and events website](#) on the 29 October 2010.

