

BULLYING

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) is committed to providing a welcoming, safe and respectful learning space for every student. We support each student in their learning development and maintain a respectful and safe space for them to learn and grow in a Catholic faith environment. We do this to support and promote student wellbeing and help young people develop and achieve their full potential.

In the interests of all community members, we respond to student behaviours in a way that keeps the school, staff and students safe. When a concern about bullying is raised we work closely with the students involved and their parents or carers to ensure that we act fairly and that we focus on helping students to grow and learn.

THESE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS PROVIDE SOME INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS WHEN BULLYING IS THE TOPIC OF CONVERSATION.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over someone who feels unable to stop it from happening. **Bullying** can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices, and it can be obvious or hidden. Bullying behaviour is usually repeated over a period of time and is selective and intentional.

Bullying behaviour is not:

- children not getting along well
- a breakdown in friendships
- disagreements between two or more people
- a single occasion of nastiness
- two unrelated incidents months or years apart.

Children will sometimes say or do something hurtful. While it is important for the school to address the behaviour, it is incorrect to label all poor behaviour as bullying.

What should I do if I think my child is being bullied?

Children sometimes find it hard to talk about bullying. They can feel embarrassed or ashamed and perhaps believe the things that the bullies tell them. Children may be shy to tell adults about bullying, as they fear that they will take the matter out of their hands.

Signs that your child is being bullied may be:

- **Acting out:** displaying unusual aggression at home, talking about hating school, refusing to attend school
- **Acting in:** subtle changes such as being moody, withdrawing from activities, being quieter than usual, and inability to sleep or restless sleeping
- **Physical signs:** physical injuries, torn clothing, altered school routes, avoiding certain people or places, unacceptable behaviour.

What can I do to support my child who may have experienced bullying?

Talk to your child about their right to feel safe, how to recognise if they feel unsafe and what to do if they experience or witness bullying.

- 1 Listen to their story:** Children are often shy to tell adults about bullying because they feel embarrassed or ashamed that it's happening. It's really important to stay calm and make sure your child gets the chance to talk. Let your child know that you take the bullying seriously and that it's important to stop it from happening. Be careful not to become too emotional or angry as your child will absorb those feelings.
- 2 Get the facts:** bullying behaviour usually follows patterns. An accurate picture will help determine your next step. Write down dates, times, places, words and actions.
- 3 Recognise and validate their feelings (anger, fear, sadness):** Bullying always surfaces strong feelings so make sure you give your child time to understand and express their thoughts and feelings with you.
- 4 Contact the school:** Decide who is the best person to share your concerns with (it is not always the principal, and more likely a classroom teacher or coordinator). The school has a process they will follow to respond to your report.
- 5 Talk about active coping skills:** Practice scenarios at home where your child learns how to ignore or develop confident skills for coping with bullying. Help your child identify teachers and friends who can help them if they're worried about being bullied.
- 6 Help build your child's support network and self-confidence:** Positive friendship groups are great protection for children when they are bullied so do all you can to encourage and build their friendship groups inside and outside the school.
- 7 Build their self-confidence:** Provide your child with encouragement. Let your child know they will get through this. Be available when they want to talk about it.

What should I do if I think my child has bullied someone?

It can be upsetting to be told that your child has bullied others. Children who use bullying behaviours need support to learn better ways of relating to others. Stay calm and call your child's school to learn more about the situation. Together you can learn and address the behaviour:

- discuss with your child why they might be behaving this way
- discuss the behaviours with the school
- explain why bullying is unacceptable
- make clear rules and consequences for your child's behaviour.

TIPS

- 1** Listen calmly and respond respectfully
- 2** Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings: "That must have made you feel upset", "I can see how upset you are"
- 3** Ask your child to recount what happened and keep it factual
- 4** Work in partnership with the school.

For more information, please contact your Principal or the CEDP Community Liaison Unit on (02) 9840 5796.

The CEDP Anti-Bullying Procedures can be found here:
www.parra.catholic.edu.au/about/our-strategy-and-policies/policy-central

Translation services can be arranged via the Community Liaison Unit.