



Anti-Bullying Advice and Information for Parents and Students

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It also affects those other children who watch, and less aggressive pupils who can be drawn in by group pressure. Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out.

What is Bullying?

- Bullying is the deliberate intention to harm someone who does not have the power to stop it.
- Bullying, harassment or any form of discrimination, is immoral and can be unlawful because it interferes with the right of a person to feel safe and valued as a member of a community.
- Bullying takes many forms. It can be:
 - Face-to-face such as fighting, pushing, taunting, insulting, embarrassing, intimidating and invading personal space, AND behind-the-back such as writing threatening or offensive messages, sending distressing emails and writing anonymous notes that are hurtful.
 - Done individually such as a person mocking or teasing someone, AND it can be done as a group by such means as social exclusion or hate group recruitment.
 - Physical, AND Psychological.
 - Sexual harassment which involves behaviours such as unwanted sexual touching, inappropriate joking, exposure, making sexual advances or demeaning someone due to their sexual orientation, AND Racial harassment which involves behaviours such as social exclusion, teasing, taunting and threats based on another person's race.
 - The causing of hurt by traditional methods such as punching, kicking and spreading hurtful rumours, AND the causing of hurt by contemporary means such as cyber bullying, sexting, engaging in identity theft or by trashing someone on social networking sites.

How does bullying differ from teasing/falling out between friends or other types of aggressive behaviour?

For behaviour to be classified as bullying, it needs to involve repeated actions that are designed to cause hurt. Not having friends or not being popular isn't necessarily a sign that a person is being bullied. It may simply mean a person lacks inter-personal skills. There is a difference between bullying behaviour and what can be described as normal interpersonal conflict.

Bullying need not always be done by the older or stronger. "Bullying up" is bullying done by the smaller, the younger and the weaker, who either use anonymous means to bully, such as cyber bullying, or overt means to bully, knowing that any retaliation would make the provoked person look like they are the bully.

The symptoms associated with bullying include, but are not limited to;

- not wanting to go to school, anger, tears, depression, low self-esteem and a raft of psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches.
- bedwetting and sleeplessness can also be symptoms of bullying, particularly in the young.
- withdrawal and reluctance to 'join in' can be a warning sign, as can truancy, misbehaviour and aggressive behaviour. Cuts, bruising, torn clothing,
- requests for extra food or money as well as a decline in academic performance can also be clues that a student may be suffering from bullying.

Any form of bullying is taken seriously at St John's Primary School

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is causing hurt via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices.

Cyber bullying is a growing problem in society. Modern technologies empower the individual, even the most unlikely of individuals, with an immense capacity to cause harm. It is also an attractive means of bullying for it can, under certain conditions, be carried out with relative anonymity. Cyber bullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge 'audience'.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the awfulness of their behaviour.

Examples of Cyber bullying:

- Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures via MSN, mobile phone or the Internet and by social networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook.
- Using modern technologies to engage in the social exclusion of someone and in hate group recruitment.
- Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages or pictures about someone on the Net.
- Stealing someone's identity in order to harm them in some way.
- Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising pictures of themselves.
- Covertly filming, recording or taking a picture of someone and posting the images on the Net to cause hurt.
- 'Outing' and disseminating confidential information about someone.
- 'Flaming' and multi-messaging to clog up a person's electronic system and to cause them distress.
- Using aliases and pseudonyms in chat rooms and on social networking sites in order to harass and upset.
- Engaging in cyber-stalking and the invading of privacy.
- Referring to your school in a negative or disparaging way on the Net.

Cyber anonymity

Students need to remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed even with a press of the 'delete' button. The image may emerge at any stage in their future life and lead to serious consequences. Using pseudonyms, passwords and avatars does not protect the identity of a cyber bully. Technologies exist to identify those who misuse modern technologies to harm others.

Please inform us if you believe your child is a victim of cyber bullying.

Advice for students:

1. Never tell anyone, even your friends, your passwords, private details or access codes.
2. When speaking to someone you do not know on the Net, be aware they may not be who they say they are.
3. Be aware that there are predators who use the internet to lure young people into inappropriate relationships. Others use tricks, such as pretending to be a bank, to get the victim to share their confidential financial details. This usually results in identity fraud and the stealing of money.
4. Never tell people you do not know well what your address is, or how they can meet up with you.
5. Always be careful what you say or what you show a person in confidence on the Net for it is never guaranteed to remain confidential. The information may be sent on to others.
6. Know that the most frequent use of the Net is for illegal activities such as scams, pornography and gambling.

Finally, if you find yourself the victim of cyber bullying, keep the evidence and report the bullying to an appropriate adult. It is generally best not to respond to the cyber bully, or give them any satisfaction they have caused you hurt.

If you do respond to the bully, do not do so while hot with anger. This can result in mutual cyber bullying which means both parties become guilty of bullying.

A "digital footprint" may be accessed many years after material is posted online and used by others, eg. prospective employers and the media.

How does St John's discourage bullying?

Our School believes that its pupils have the right to a supportive, caring and safe environment in which they can learn effectively, improve their life chances and help them maximise their potential, without the fear of being bullied.

We aim to prevent and deal with any bullying and promote an ethos where bullying is regarded as unacceptable by:

- raising awareness through the promotion of values in assemblies and circle time
- prevention through PSHCE, and other curriculum areas
- an annual Anti-Bullying Week and review of School Policy
- friendship and social intervention groups
- playground buddy systems
- a firm but fair discipline structure where children are involved in setting rules
- quick, firm, fair and consistent response to incidents, treating bullying as a serious offence
- staff training and development

- support to all community members who may be involved
- developing and supporting home, school and community partnerships
- pupil and parent questionnaires

The effectiveness of these strategies rests with ALL members of the School's community.

What should you do if you are being bullied? – advice for students

If you are being bullied, it is important that you talk to an adult who is in a position to help you. This may be a parent, guardian or adult relative, or a Teacher, Teaching Assistant, Lunchtime supervisor, or any other member of staff.

There can be a reluctance to report bullying because of a fear of being labelled a 'tell-tale' or seeming to look weak. This concern is understandable but must not prevent you from reporting bullying behaviour.

Most students dislike bullying and would support your attempts to stop it. Some students may not want to report bullying because they feel it might only make matters worse. Again, this fear is understandable, but teachers are trained in ways to help victims of bullying in a manner that protects the victim.

It can take courage to challenge the bully, to expose them for who they are and to play a part in improving our community by ridding it of bullying behaviour. St John's encourages its students to show this courage and not tolerate bullying as a bystander or as a victim.

If needed, further help can be obtained from:

- NSPCC : 0808 800 5000
- www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- www.kidshelp.com.au

If you are being bullied, you are encouraged to do the RITE thing:

R = RECOGNISE you have the right to feel safe and to learn in an environment free of bullying.

I = INFORM the bullies that you want them to stop. Do this in a polite but firm way.

T = TELL a responsible adult about the bullying.

E = EVALUATE the situation. If it does not improve, seek further help.

If bullied:

- try not to get angry or show that you are angry. If your anger is obvious, the bully has the satisfaction of knowing that they have controlled your emotions.
- Use non-offensive humour. Bullying can be reduced by a good laugh. The capacity to laugh at yourself can create a bonding with a group that you had previously seen as unfriendly.
- Review your own behaviours and body language. If you look like a victim you can become a victim. Squared shoulders and a smile can do much to deter a bully.
- Avoid trouble spots. There are always places that are high-risk areas for bullying. Avoid them.
- Develop your 'emotional understanding' of others. This includes the ability to read body language, to sense mood, to be intuitive and empathetic. Such skills not only make you less of a target, they can enable you to see where a situation may be heading. Early detection of possible bullying can provide options for avoiding it.
- Surround yourself with good friends. Those with strong friendships are usually less of a target for bullies.
- Try not to retaliate for this can often inflame the situation.
- Remind yourself that it is the bully who has the problem, not you. Try to think through what issues the bully might have that causes them to behave this way. Understanding a bully is a great way to begin to solve the problem.
- Keep situations in perspective – don't over exaggerate a situation.
- Model kindness, thoughtfulness and respect.

IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED TELL SOMEONE

How to help your child if you think they are being bullied – advice for parents

Introduction

The most important thing a parent can do to help a child who is being bullied is to provide love and reassurance and to support them in their quest to solve the problem. A report of bullying by a child should always be taken seriously.

Parents can take comfort that the bully-free world they want for their child is also wanted by the School. Therefore, parents are invited to contact the School should they believe that their child is being bullied. The School appreciates being able to partner with parents in solving bullying problems.

Finding out

Sometimes, a child can be reluctant to tell their parents that they are being bullied. Creating a culture of openness within the home can help, providing regular opportunities for children to talk, without the distraction of the television.

Sometimes, it can be useful to use an intermediary such as an older sibling, grandparent or close friend in order to find out why your child feels they are being bullied.

What can parents do to reduce the chances of their child being bullied?

There are a number of things parents can do to reduce the chances of their child being bullied. These include:

- **Developing their 'emotional understanding' of others.** Children who have been brought up without many brothers and sisters, or who spend a lot of time playing alone in front of the TV or computer screen, may need extra training in how to deal with the bumps and bruises of living in a community with others.

They need to learn the social skills of sharing and of adapting behaviours that are appropriate to an occasion. This is particularly true as we embrace a range of different cultures into our society. Children learn to understand and respect other cultures as part of the school curriculum.

- **Teaching them how to react if they are being bullied.** The main message is that: **THEY MUST TELL SOMEONE**
- **Instituting good management systems in the home that monitor the presence, or otherwise, of cyber bullying.** This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Making sure they know about the various forms of cyber bullying and how to identify them.
 - Reminding them not to share personal details, passwords, security or access information with anyone, even their closest friends.
 - Advising them that if they suffer from cyber bullying, to save the information and report it to an appropriate adult.
 - Becoming more computer literate and knowing about such things as privacy settings and net filters.
 - Reminding them of the deceit and scams that are prevalent on the Net.
 - Encouraging computer use in an open family area, so that there is effective monitoring of online activity.
 - Know your child's password and occasionally monitor any social networking sites if they use them. They should be aware you will do so.
- **Partnering with the School.** When some parents hear that their child has been bullied they can get very angry. This is entirely understandable. However, this anger can become destructive if it spills over and alienates those agencies that can help, such as the School. St John's takes bullying very seriously and takes every step to deal with any incidents.
- **Avoiding over-protective parenting.** Most parents are wonderful at parenting. However, a few parents can be over-protective of their child and deal with issues on their behalf too often, rather than allowing their child to develop strategies to deal with situations themselves. Children can pick up on this behaviour and can become adept at feeding their parents yet more tales of horror to gain extra sympathy and attention!
- **Avoiding premature judgement.** Sometimes parents will react angrily to facts reported by their child, but on investigation by the School, these 'facts' are sometimes not accurate, although may well be the child's personal perspective of the situation. It is wise to test facts before making judgements.

- **Being patient.** The School is committed to investigating a bullying allegation in a manner that protects the rights of all involved, including the bully. This is not the School failing to take immediate action to punish someone, it is the School exercising procedural fairness. It is also important to let the School look into the matter rather than challenging the bully directly, or the parents of the bully.
- **Being supportive.** Dealing with a child who is a bully can be particularly difficult for a parent. Some will support the school, others will not and will sometimes exhibit those same behaviours that have landed their child in trouble as a bully. On the other side of the equation are parents that are outraged because their child has been bullied. This can lead to the School being sandwiched between two sets of angry parents. Support and understanding is sought from parents of alleged bullies and alleged victims when the School is investigating an accusation of bullying.

Resources about bullying can be found at:

www.bullyingnoway.com.au

www.cybersmart.gov.au

www.anti-bullyalliance.org.uk

www.beatbullying.org

www.cybermentors.org.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.cafamily.org.uk

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.transformingconflict.org

www.antibullying.net/documents/peersupportscheme.pdf

The school also has several books which can be shared with children to help them understand bullying – please ask if you would like to borrow them.

Finally

St John's is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its pupils. In order to achieve this end, the School will review its anti-bullying policies and procedures regularly.