What schools can do about bullying

When a child or young person is identified as a target of bullying, educators should act quickly and follow their school's policies and procedures.

Whole-school strategies

Whole-school strategies can help prevent and address bullying

Whole school approaches that are consistent, inclusive and embedded in everyday interactions can help address and prevent bullying. These include things like sending clear, anti-bullying messages, building social and emotional skills, fostering resilience, and promoting healthy relationships. These approaches work best when supported by a positive, respectful and inclusive school culture where students feel valued and included.

Key factors linked to lower levels of bullying and improved student wellbeing

- Safety and wellbeing are clear school priorities that are actively modelled and communicated regularly and clearly throughout the learning community.
- Schools have specific anti-bullying strategies in place (for example, safe and friendly student committees).
- Evidence-based whole-school behaviour management systems are applied consistently in the classroom.
- School staff understand their duty of care to ensure the safety of their students and have sufficient training to feel confident in helping to prevent and respond to bullying.
- Most students feel connected to their school.
- Students are supported to build social and emotional skills and resilience through positive relationships and learning opportunities.
- There are clear expectations and consistent responses to bullying and aggression.
- Students perceive that their school has clear support, safety and responses in place to address bullying.
- Students perceive that educators in the school actively care about and promote student wellbeing.
- The culture of the school is positive, caring, respectful and supportive. This includes positive relationships between peers, and positive student relationships with educators.

Role modelling

The relationships and social behaviour of adults in the learning community can have a significant influence on students who are continuing to develop relationship skills. When you model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours, students are more likely to act in these ways.

Safety and supervision

Active classroom and playground supervision is crucial for catching incidents at early stages, responding to inappropriate or disrespectful language or behaviour, and for sending clear messages to students about expectations. The school's physical environment is also important in terms of the places where students feel safe.

Bullying in secondary schools often occurs in the corridor or in the class and during competitive activities. Anti-bullying initiatives need to take this into account when developing strategies.

Cyberbullying

Students may be involved in online bullying behaviours via the internet i.e., social media. This can make it harder for educators to know it's happening.

It's important to have policies and procedures in place to manage cyberbullying and build the skills of the whole school community. Learn more about cyberbullying at the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

Review your policies and procedures

Reviewing your current policies and practices will help you determine what's working and what's not. What you learn will help develop and improve your school's policies and procedures on bullying.

Be You Professional Learning

The Mentally Healthy Communities domain includes modules that look at promoting a positive school culture that will encourage inclusion, respectful relationships and valuing diversity.

Working with families

Families play a significant role in influencing their children and young person, and modelling positive behaviours.

Schools and families can work together to teach social and emotional skills that promote healthy relationships. Educators can play a role in helping families understand the risks associated with bullying and what they can do to help prevent it.

By working in partnership with families, schools can help to build knowledge and understanding about the importance of family involvement within the school community, sharing strategies to promote good relationships and communicating school approaches to addressing bullying.

How can schools work productively with families to tackle issues of bullying?

Be You's Family Partnerships domain helps educators understand how to work effectively, sensitively and confidentially with families to foster the mental health of children and young people. The Inquire module explores topics like communicating and sharing concerns with families.

When students are supported to develop respectful peer and adult relationships, respect and embrace diversity, and understand their own feelings and needs as well as those of others, the risk of conflict and relationship problems escalating into bullying behaviour can be reduced.

Effectively addressing bullying and supporting children and young people's wellbeing often requires sustained, long-term commitment. While immediate actions are important, meaningful change often comes through whole-school strategies.

External links

Bullying. No Way!

Bibliography

Visit What schools can do about bullying for a list of references for this Fact Sheet.