What can schools do about bullying?

In a situation in which a child or young person is identified as a target of bullying, educators should act quickly and follow your learning community's policies and procedures relating to bullying.

Whole-school strategies

Whole-school strategies can help prevent bullying

Whole-school strategies that send anti-bullying messages, teach social and emotional learning skills, focus on teaching students the skills of resilience, and promote healthy and positive relationships across the whole school community, will go a long way to preventing bullying and assisting individuals to deal with it more effectively.

Lower levels of bullying and higher levels of student wellbeing are more likely when the following circumstances are in place:

- Safety and wellbeing are clear school priorities which are 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 preventing and responding to bullying.
- Most students feel connected to their school.
- Students have sound levels of social and emotional skills and also resilience.
- There is a no-tolerance approach to against bullying and aggression.
- Students perceive that their school has clear support and disciplinary structures in place to address bullying.
- Students perceive that educators in the school actively care about and promote student wellbeing and student welfare, and that the environment of their school is positive, welcoming, cooperative and fair.

- Educators promote cooperation.
- 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 yard 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 is more likely to occur in the corridor or in the class and during competitive or aggressive activities. Anti-bullying initiatives need to take this into account when developing strategies.

Bullying outside of the school: cyberbullying

Students may be involved in bullying behaviours outside the school that become obvious from their behaviours at school. If outside incidents, such as cyberbullying, have an impact at the school, they need to be dealt with using the school's policy.

Ask "What effect is this bullying behaviour having on the students concerned and what do we need to do in response?" This might mean including families or others involved. Read more about cyberbullying at the Office of the eSafety Commissioner website.

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, which, in turn,

may lead to awareness of the inappropriateness of bullying.

Working with families

Families have a significant role in influencing their children 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.

The kind of family circumstances that make it less likely that children will be bullied are those that are characterised by significant parental involvement with their children and good communication between the child and their family. 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 tackling 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.

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External links

Bullying. No Way!