

NEWSLETTER ITEMS - HARD COPY

Newsletter item 1

Aim: To provide an introduction to the Supportive Schools Project and an overview of the goals of the project this year

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Our School's goals for the
Project this year



Schools throughout Australia and worldwide are increasingly recognising the need to address bullying, resilience, social skills and self-esteem. Our school will be implementing the Supportive Schools Project this year to help our school enhance the excellent pastoral care program we offer our students. This project is based on 6 years of rigorous scientific research with over 6000 school students and their parents and teachers. It is one of few evidence-based projects in the world designed to improve social skills and reduce bullying. The aim of the project is to help schools and parents to prevent bullying. The project will include a review of our school bullying policy, activities to prevent or reduce bullying, strategies to help students to cope with bullying and develop social skills and resiliency factors.

Some of the goals we will be working towards this year include:

- Providing all students more opportunities to develop and practice social skills through classroom learning activities;
- Creating an even more positive social environment within our school which actively discourages bullying;
- Further modifying the school grounds and our supervision during morning and lunch breaks to discourage bullying;
- Continuing to encourage all staff, students and parents to treat all school community members with respect and tolerance;
- Implementing an even clearer and more consistent approach to managing reported bullying incidents; and
- Providing parents with resources and strategies to help to communicate more effectively with their son or daughter about bullying.

Newsletter Item 2

Aim: To encourage parent participation in the Supportive Schools Project by providing strategies they can use at home to support the school's efforts.

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Parents' role in the Supportive Schools Project



Research has demonstrated that efforts to positively influence the attitudes and behaviour of students are more likely to be successful if parents are actively involved and feel a sense of shared ownership of the process.

How can parents support our Supportive School?

- Get to know your school's bullying policy and discuss it with your son or daughter.
- Maintain regular contact with your son or daughter's teachers.
- Try to attend school functions, for example, assemblies and/or help out on sports days or camps to demonstrate your support for your son or daughter and the school.
- Read the school newsletter and discuss items of interest with your son or daughter.
- Model a positive attitude towards school and encourage your son or daughter to see the positive aspects of school life.
- If there is a problem with your son or daughter at school, try to work together with the school to overcome the problem. This shows a committed partnership between parents and the school to work towards positive solutions.

"Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood." - Helen Keller



Newsletter Item 3

Aim: To provide parents with an increased understanding of why their son or daughter's school responds to bullying incidents in the way that it does.

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Understanding the school's responses to bullying incidents

Bullying incidents are often complicated situations, so finding out the facts to define a clear account of the incident(s) can take a bit of time. Meanwhile the bullying can continue and in some cases get worse. Punishment may sometimes be used, however on its own, this can often make the situation worse.

The school priority is to stop the bullying and to try to reduce the chance of it happening again.

The key to stopping bullying is getting adolescents to talk about what is happening and decide what to do to make the situation better for everyone. This approach is called the Method of Shared Concern and will be explained in the next edition of "Supportive Schools".

Your Supportive Schools Project Team has been working to review and improve the whole school policy on bullying which gives the students, teachers, staff and parents an understanding of the how the school will respond to bullying situations.

It is very important that adolescents have an understanding of the behaviour that is expected of them and that these expectations are consistent at school and at home. This policy is available from the school and all parents are encouraged to read it.

For more information on how our school manages bullying incidents, please ask the school administration for a copy of the bullying policy.

Newsletter Item 4

Aim: To discuss the importance of discipline in resolving bullying behaviours, and to provide strategies for parents to adopt at home.

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Understanding Discipline

The aim of discipline should be to guide adolescents to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

What happens at school?

Our school has a behaviour management plan designed to create a positive and safe school environment. These plans are designed to encourage adolescents to take responsibility for their own actions and develop self-discipline. The behaviour management plan informs parents, teachers and students what is expected and outlines rewards and consequences of behaviour.

What can parents do?

By working in conjunction with the school, parents can provide their son or daughter with consistent expectations and boundaries both at school and at home.

- When family rules have been set ask your son or daughter to tell you the rules in his/her words.
- Set consistent firm limits and rules. Adolescents like to know where they stand.
- Be consistent with consequences and rewards.
- Acknowledge good behaviour.
- Model desired behaviours to your son or daughter.
- Supervise your son or daughter so you know where he/she is and what he/she is doing.
- Become familiar with your school's behaviour management plan so your son or daughter sees you are actively involved.

Show lots of love and affection. You are the most important person in your son or daughter's life and your time and attention is the most powerful reward you can give him/her.

Newsletter Item 5

Aim: To provide parents with basic information about their son or daughter and social skill development

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Adolescence and Social Skills

Adolescence is a time when children begin to mature mentally and think more about their identity and where they fit in the world. It is also a time when they refine the skills for successful **relationships**. Through mixing in peer groups an adolescent learns new **social skills** and how to interact more independently with their 'crowd'. These group relationships provide the emotional support needed for adolescents to develop their personal identity and to cope with the many changes and challenges during this time.

As the role and influence of the **peer group** becomes more important, the role and influence of the parents change. Adolescents begin to turn more to their peers to discuss problems, feelings, fears and doubts. However, this reliance on peers for **social support** is combined with increasing pressures to gain social status. It is during adolescence that peer groups become established and issues of acceptance and popularity become more important.

Research indicates, for example, that toughness and aggressiveness are important status issues for boys, while appearance is a main factor that influences of social status among girls. The pressure to gain peer acceptance and status can be related to an increase in **teasing and bullying**. This can be seen in boy's as they show strength and power over other students and either through name-calling or exclusion by girls.

There are groups of students who support their peers and sometimes participate in teasing and harassing other students. It is important at this time for families, schools, and other community groups to help adolescents and young adolescents learn how to manage, and change, the pressure to hurt their classmates in order to "fit in".

Newsletter Item 6

Aim: To provide parents with strategies for helping their son or daughter develop and maintain friendships to reduce the likelihood they will be bullied at school.

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Friendship and Social Support



Social skills help young people to make and keep friends, to share and cooperate, to work effectively in a group, to be assertive and to be confident and feel good about him or herself.

Friendship is important

Friendships play an important role in how students cope at school and are an important part of your son or daughter's network of support. Students need friends to share both the fun times and the tough times. Friends can be there to celebrate and share in success, but also to provide encouragement and support needed to deal with challenges.

Peer friendships are very important to adolescents.

1. Friendships provide opportunities to develop conflict resolution skills. Friends can learn how to end a fight and still remain friends.
2. Peers provide fun and excitement through companionship and recreation.
3. Peers also give advice to one another. They talk through lots of issues and problems with their friends.
4. Peers can provide strategies they use to cope with similar problems and show how effective they are.
5. Loyalty is a valued trait in friendship. Peers are looking for loyal allies that can help them out at school or in their own neighbourhood.
6. Friendships also provide stability during times of stress or transition. It is helpful to peers to have a friend who is going through the same situations and can ease the anxieties of the times.

Adolescents are influenced more by peers and they want to try and act cool because they feel their peers are watching. Peer acceptance is often more important than adult acceptance in daily issues, such as behaving during class.

Newsletter Item 7

Aim: To provide effective communication tips to parents to enhance their ability to communicate with their son or daughter about bullying.

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Communicating effectively with your son or daughter



Over the next few weeks we will feature articles that may help you to talk with your son or daughter about bullying. It is important to discuss bullying with your son or daughter on a regular basis. Regular communication with a person they trust and care about will help your son or daughter to form their own opinions and beliefs about bullying. Your son or daughter will be more likely to feel comfortable telling you if he/she is being bullied.

Why not try some of the following ideas to enhance the way you talk with your son or daughter.

When talking with your son or daughter:



Sit shoulder to shoulder or walk with your son or daughter as you talk.

- Talking face to face can be quite confrontational, particularly to boys;
- Sitting or walking side by side will encourage both you and your son or daughter to talk freely.

Use open-ended questions.

- It is easy to ask your son or daughter if he/she had a good day or if he/she would like toast for breakfast, however these questions only require a yes or no answer;
- Try asking questions such as “What did you do today” or “What would you like for breakfast”. These types of questions encourage conversation between you and your son or daughter.

Talk with your son or daughter about what to do rather than what not to do.

- It is common for us to focus on bad behaviour, such as “don’t leave your clothes on the floor” or “don’t speak like that”;
- Using positive language allows you to tell your son or daughter what you would like him/her to do rather than what you don’t want him/her to do;
- Try rewording these negative statements to positives such as “Put your clothes in the cupboard” or “please speak to me in a polite tone of voice”.

Newsletter Item 8

Aim: To inform parents of the definition of a bullying incident and strategies for helping their son or daughter if he/she is being bullied at school.

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What is bullying?

Bullying means deliberately trying to make a person feel upset, angry, humiliated or afraid. Bullying is a behaviour used by a person or group who gain power over a less powerful person, who has difficulty stopping the situation. It is something that happens again and again to the same person.

Physical bullying

- Deliberately bumping, pulling, shoving or tripping someone
- Throwing things at someone to hurt, annoy or upset them
- Hitting, punching or slapping, pinching, biting or scratching someone
- Touching someone who doesn't want to be

Verbal bullying

- Calling people names or offensive nicknames
- Making racial comments about someone and their family
- Rude comments or jokes about someone's religion
- Teasing someone or being sarcastic in a way that is hurtful and upsetting
- Comments about the way someone may look or behave that are hurtful



Threatening

- Making someone feel afraid that they are going to be hurt
- Pressuring someone to do things they don't want to do
- Aggressive gestures or looks that make someone afraid
- Forcing students to do hurtful or embarrassing things
- Forcing someone to give you money, food or belongings



Property Abuse

- Damaging someone's belongings
- Stealing someone's money
- Taking things away from someone
- Taking or hiding someone's belongings

Emotional bullying


- Ignoring someone or keeping them out of group conversations (known as exclusion)
- Leaving someone out by encouraging others not to have anything to do with them
- Spreading lies or stories about someone to try to get others to dislike someone
- Making things up to get someone into trouble
- Stalking someone, by continually following them or giving unwanted attention e.g. staring.

Cyber bullying:

- Sending harassing, abusive or offensive emails, phone messages or SMS phone texts
- Making silent or abusive phone calls
- Spreading rumours via email or phone messages

Newsletter Item 9


Aim: To increase parents' understanding of the nature of bullying.



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Bullying Myths and Facts



Myth
Bullying is just a stage kids go through at school. We all went through it and we are fine.

Fact
Bullying is behaviour that is unacceptable and unnecessary. It can have lasting negative effects on everyone involved.

Myth
Bullying is a “kid’s problem”. Parents and teachers should just let kids sort it out themselves.

Fact
Bullying is not just a kid’s problem and can be very harmful. Young people often don’t have the skills or experience to work out how to effectively respond to bullying themselves, adults need to help and it should be stopped immediately.

Myth
You should stand up for yourself and hit back when you are bullied.

Fact
Hitting back usually makes the bullying worse and increases the risk of serious harm. Students should ask an adult for help if they are bullied.

Myth
If a student tells someone they are being bullied, it will just make it worse.

Fact
Research shows that the bullying will stop when adults and especially peers help the person being bullied.

Myth
The best way to deal with a student who bullies others is to use punishment.

Fact
Research has found that students who frequently bully others usually have serious mental, social, emotional problems themselves. These students always need to face the consequences for their actions but also need support to change their behaviours.

Newsletter Item 10

Aim: Actions if bullied.

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ink my son or daughter might be getting bul

What are some possible signs that your son or daughter may be getting bullied?

Many students may be reluctant to tell anyone they are being bullied. As a parent, there are many things only adolescents do or say which can be taken as warning signs that they may be being bullied at school.

These signs include:

- Less interest in school or not wanting to go to school;
- Lower school performance;
- Frequent complaints of headaches or stomach aches;
- Frequent damage or loss of items such as clothing, property or school work;
- Frequent injuries such as bruises or cuts and a reluctance to say why;
- Difficulty sleeping or having nightmares;
- Asking for extra lunch or pocket money;
- Generally unhappy, miserable, moody and/or irritable;
- Having no friends to share free time with; and
- Rarely invited to parties or other social activities with peers.

What should I do if my son or daughter is being bullied?

It is natural for parents to feel upset and want to protect their son or daughter if he/she is being bullied. However, an upset parent can cause their son or daughter more distress.

How should I respond?

- Tell your son or daughter you are glad he/she has talked to you about the situation;
- Be aware of your own response and react in a calm, helpful and supportive manner; and
- Remind your son or daughter that the bullying is not their fault.

What can I do to help?

- Ask your son or daughter what you could do to help make the situation better;
- Make sure your son or daughter knows how to get help and support at school;
- Talk with your son or daughter's form or home room teacher to find out what will be done;
- Once you have spoken with your son or daughter's teachers and decided on some actions, support these decisions at home;
- Help your son or daughter work out a plan of what he/she could do to help make the situation better;
- Keep a record of what happens each day;
- Arrange follow-up meetings to discuss outcomes; and

- Keep in contact with the school even if the situation seems to have improved to ensure the changes continue.

Newsletter Item 11

Aim: To provide strategies for parents to teach their son or daughter how to respond if he/she is being bullied at school.

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ing with your son or daughter about being bu



Just over 60% of adolescents who were bullied in a Western Australian school last year, reported that they told someone after they were bullied. This means almost 40% of adolescents who were bullied told no-one. Adolescents often think that talking about a bullying incident is like 'dobbing' on one another. Talking about bullying is not 'dobbing'.

'Dobbing' is when a person tries to get attention or to deliberately get someone else into trouble.

Asking for help is when someone feels the situation is out of his/her control and he/she is unable to deal with it alone. If anyone sees someone else in this situation he/she should also ask for help.

What are adolescents learning to do at school if they are bullied?

Students of all ages at our school are being taught:

1. **Be assertive** – Stand up for yourself in a positive way. Looking confident when you respond will show you mean what you are saying. Try to talk with the person you are having a problem with.
2. **Use humour** - This can be very effective in teasing verbal bullying situations but may not be appropriate for every situation.
3. **Avoid the situation** – Walk away and stay away from the people bullying you or the place where it is occurring.
4. **Ignore the bullying** – Ignore the bullying completely and carry on with what you were doing. Use positive self-talk to help boost your confidence.
e.g. I don't deserve to be treated like this. I am not the one with the problem.
5. **Ask for help** – When other strategies you have tried are not working or if you feel you can't deal with the situation yourself, you should ask for help. Asking for help is not dobbing. It is always okay to ask for help. Ask a teacher or your parents for help or talk to a friend to get some ideas to help you to decide what to do.

You can reinforce these messages by discussing them with your son or daughter at home.

Newsletter Item 12

Aim: To provide strategies for parents to teach their son or daughter how to respond if he/she is being bullied at school.

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Talking about teasing



How can I help my son or daughter deal with teasing and hurtful comments?

Teasing and other hurtful comments are the most common form of bullying. Parents can help their son or daughter deal with hurtful comments by telling him/her to try these actions:

- Pretend not to hear the comments – walk away;
- Ask yourself – is this true, and if so do I care?
- Breathe deeply and look confident;
- Respond – ask them to stop or try using humour, “Yeah that’s really funny, now you’ve had your fun you can leave me alone”;
- Change the subject, ask them a question about something else;
- Ask for help from friends; or
- Ask for help from a teacher.

You can also help to stop your son or daughter being involved in hurtful teasing by listening and responding to what they say about others. Challenge your son or daughter if you hear him/her saying unkind things about another adolescent or repeating unkind stories he/she has heard.

In a calm voice say:

- That’s a pretty bad thing to say about someone.
- How do you know this story is true?
- How would you feel if this story was told about you?
- How can you help the person who the story is about?

Newsletter Item 13

Aim: To provide practical strategies parents can use to discourage their son or daughter from bullying others.

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Talking with your son or daughter if he/she is bullying others

All adolescents are capable of bullying at some time and it is important for parents to respond in a calm and helpful manner.

Encouraging your son or daughter not to bully others

Parents can:

- Talk with your son or daughter about what is acceptable behaviour and what is not e.g. we should not tease people because they look different;
- Work together with your family to establish simple rules and expectations about how to treat each other;
- Encourage and provide opportunities for your son or daughter to openly discuss bullying issues with the family;
- Discuss friendship and help your son or daughter to make friends by facilitating or encouraging them to socialize with other adolescents, at home or in the neighbourhood;
- Encourage your son or daughter to invite friends over for visits and make his/her guests feel welcome;
- Improve your son or daughter's self esteem by encouraging him/her to have a go at new activities and thinking about his/her abilities in a realistic way.

Newsletter Item 14

Aim: To provide parents with an understanding of the role of a bystander in a bullying incident and provide strategies for parents to discuss with their son or daughter if he/she witnesses a bullying incident.

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Talking with your son or daughter about being a bystander



Bullying involves more than the students who are bullied and those who do the bullying. Most adolescents report having witnessed/seen bullying occurring. Bullying often continues because people who are involved do not talk about it and seek help. This includes people who observe bullying – the bystanders.

A bystander is someone who sees bullying occurring or knows that it is happening to someone else.


What can bystanders do?

If a student sees another student being bullied he/she could:

- Ask a teacher or support person for help;
- Let the person doing the bullying know what they are doing is bullying;
- Refuse to join in with his/her bullying and walk away;
- Support the student who is being bullied; and
- Support his/her friends and protect them from bullying by being there for them (adolescents who are alone are more likely to be the target of bullying, so encourage your son or daughter to be aware of other young people who are left out or on their own in the school yard).

Newsletter Item 15


Aim: To provide parents with an understanding of why your school is using the method of shared concern in managing bullying incidents and how it works.



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The Method of Shared Concern



The key to stopping bullying is getting those involved to talk about what is happening and decide on some ways to address the problem. The Supportive Schools Project recommends that schools use the Method of Shared Concern, No Blame or other Restorative Practices. These strategies can also be used at home by parents.

These strategies are counselling techniques that aim to change the **behaviour** of students involved in bullying incidents and **improve the situation** for the student being bullied. These methods help students to develop empathy and concern for others and give them strategies that will help them to get along better with others in the school and at home. This year more key staff at our school will participate in comprehensive training about how to use these methods.

What happens in The Method of Shared Concern?

1. Individual meetings are held with each of the students involved in the bullying incident e.g. the student or students bullying, the person being bullied and any bystanders who may have seen what was happening.
2. Each student is asked about the problem and to suggest ways he/she personally could help to improve the situation.
3. The student being bullied is also given the opportunity to discuss what happened and encouraged to think of ways to improve the situation.
4. There are continued follow-up meetings, discussions and planning that give the students the opportunity to change and improve attitudes and behaviour and to put these into practise in a supportive environment.

Newsletter Item 16

Aim: To define self-esteem.

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Self Esteem

What is Self-esteem?

Self-esteem is the way we feel about ourselves. When working out how we feel about ourselves we compare how we see ourselves, and how we believe others see us, with how we would like to be.

Research has found:

- Students with high self-esteem are as likely to have experienced bullying as those with lower self-esteem.
- HOWEVER, those with lower self-esteem report:
 - More extensive bullying;
 - Higher levels of stress as a result of being bullied; and
 - More negative effects of this stress.
- It is students with genuinely high self-esteem who are most likely to support and defend students who are bullied.



How do we develop healthy self-esteem in adolescents?

1. *Positive messages from important people*

The positive and sincere feedback adolescents receive from people who are important in their lives helps him/her gain confidence through feeling loved and feeling that he/she belongs and is accepted.

2. *Life experiences*

Dealing with success, failure and frustration as well as learning to take risks all help adolescents develop their own self esteem.

Newsletter Item 17

Aim: To provide tips for parents to help build self esteem in their son or daughter

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Building your son or daughter's self esteem



As a parent you can help your son or daughter to build his/her self-esteem so he/she has sufficient confidence to deal with a bullying situation and to communicate with people in their support group.

What can parents do to help build their son or daughter's self esteem?

- Encourage your son or daughter to take on challenges and to 'have-a-go'.
- Show your son or daughter that you believe in him/her. Help him/her to find solutions to problems rather than giving him/her the answers. Ask questions like, "What could you do?" or "What do you think?"
- Set aside time to listen to your son or daughter and show him/her that you value what he/she has to say.
- Foster his/her growing need for independence. Begin with basics like caring for his/her own belongings.
- Set realistic goals for your son or daughter and when he/she is old enough help him/her to set goals.

Remember adolescents learn through observing and absorbing the values of their friends, parents, teachers and other adults who are important in their lives. These skills contribute to building your son or daughter's own self esteem.

Newsletter Item 18

Aim: To provide tips for parents with information about peer influence

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Peer Influence



One of the main reasons young people give in to peer influence is because they are afraid they will lose their friendships and not fit in with the group.

Explain to your son or daughter that if peer influence is telling you to do something you know is wrong without questioning why or to do something you feel uncomfortable about doing, then you need to think carefully about your choices and decide whether this is really worth doing.

A good rule is if it makes you feel bad it is probably bad for you! If peer pressure is telling you to act in a generally appropriate way, to do something that seems right, or to do something positive that doesn't hurt anyone, it is safe to say that this influence is positive.

Explain that going along with a healthy group of friends is not a bad thing, as long as following the group doesn't cause you to act without thinking about how you really feel about the situation yourself. In a situation where peer influence is positive, individuals in the group will be acting as individual parts of a whole, each working with each other in a cooperative and supportive way.

Newsletter Item 19

Aim: To provide tips for parents about dealing with their son or daughter and peer influence

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Peer Influence



Many students who tease their peers to go along with the crowd feel uncomfortable about their own behaviour.

If you are worried about your son or daughter's friendship choices here are some suggestions:

- **Get to know the friends of your son or daughter.** Learn their names, invite them into your home so you can talk and listen to them and introduce yourself to their parents.
- **Do not be too critical of your son or daughter's friends.** Your child has chosen these friends.
- **Keep the lines of communication open** and find out why these friends are important to your son or daughter.
- **If you are worried, check first** whether your concerns about their friends are real and important.
- If you believe your concerns are serious, **talk to your son or daughter** about his/her own behaviour and choices -- not his/her friends.
- **Encourage reflective thinking** by helping your son or daughter think about consequences of risky behaviour before these situations happen.