

BULLYING

A Guide for Parents and Guardians



Craigieburn Secondary College

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is the misuse of power by one group and/or individual over another individual and/or group. It aims to hurt, threaten or frighten someone.

Bullying behaviours include:

- Verbal, written or electronic taunts, malicious rumours or gossip, swearing, put-downs, backstabbing, teasing, slurs, mimicking, offensive humour or threats including references to race, culture, gender, sexual identity, mental health and body image
- Any unwanted physical or sexual contact including hitting, grabbing, pinching, stroking, kicking, slapping, punching, pushing, tripping, spitting, throwing objects at a person etc.
- Damaging property or belongings.
- Extortion or blackmail for money, food, clothing etc.
- Overt and/or persistent sexual or threatening non-verbal communication
- Stalking
- Bullying using text messages, pictures, written notes, internet or phoning
- Unfair exclusion by individuals and/or groups

How do I know if my child is being bullied?

Some of the signs that a child is being bullied may include:

- An unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- Feeling ill in the mornings
- Wagging school
- Doing poorly in their school work
- Becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence
- Crying themselves to sleep, having nightmares
- Asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
- Refusing to talk about what's wrong
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Beginning to bully other children, siblings
- Becoming aggressive and unreasonable

Bullying strategies for Parents and Guardians:

Discovering that your child is being bullied or that your child is bullying others is very stressful and upsetting. Most parents initially experience anger, confusion and guilt. Research indicates that parents overwhelmingly want their child to be safe at school as their first priority.

The following information has been developed to provide you with useful strategies in dealing with incidents of bullying.

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Step 1

Listen carefully to your child and show concern and support.

Step 2

Give sensible advice – while encouraging your child to be assertive with a bully would be appropriate, encouraging them to be aggressive would most likely make the situation worse.

Step 3

Assist your child to develop positive strategies including:

- Saying leave me alone and calmly walking away
- Avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying
- Making new friends.

Step 4

Ask your child the following questions to understand if there is a repeated pattern:

- What happened and where and when did the incident happen?
- Who was involved on each occasion?
- Did anybody else see it and, if so, who?
- What solutions have been tried so far?
- The names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Step 5

Craigieburn Secondary College views the relationship with parents and guardians as a partnership and recommends parents and guardians speak to teachers in designated roles of responsibility such as the Principal Class, Welfare Team and/ or Year Level Coordinators after becoming aware of a bullying incident. Schools take their responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour very seriously and they have more success when parents work with the school to solve the bullying problem.

Remember, if you were not aware that your child was being bullied then perhaps your child's teacher(s) did not know about it either.

You should:

- Make an appointment with your child's form teacher or Year Level Coordinator and make notes of the points you want to discuss before the meeting.
- Stay calm at the meeting and present information in a way that makes it clear to the school that you and the school are working as partners in trying to fix this problem.

The school will need time to investigate the situation and to talk to teachers and, perhaps, other students.

Step 6

You can make a follow-up call to see what has been done or alternatively ask the school when you can expect them to get back to you.

Step 7

Work with the school to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Before you leave, ask for clarification about the next steps in the plan.

Step 8

If needed, ask for the school counsellor to become involved.

Step 9

Encourage your child to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

What should I NOT do if my child is being bullied?

- Do not directly approach any other student who you believe may have been involved in bullying your child.
- Do not try to sort the issues out with their parents. This usually doesn't work and makes the situation much worse.

What if my child is bullying others?

- Respond calmly and non-defensively, and commit to working with the school to manage the problem in a helpful way.
- See the situation as an opportunity for your child to learn important developmental lessons.

What should I NOT do if my child is bullying others?

- Do not directly approach the bullied student or their family or try to get other parents to take your child's side.

What can my child do to reduce bullying?

NOTE: The following information for students can apply to students who are bullied and students who have been doing the bullying.

1. All students must understand that they have the right to be shown respect and feel safe, and the whole school community is responsible for making this happen.
2. All students involved in bullying need to understand that it is not an acceptable way to show their power at school. Other more acceptable ways would be getting involved in leadership roles, peer support, SRC etc.
3. Students should be encouraged to tell a trusted adult when they are feeling intimidated, unhappy or uncomfortable at school.
4. Students can try to 'tune out' or ignore low-level harassment from others if it doesn't bother them too much. If the other student is not rewarded by a response, bullying may be prevented.
5. Students can walk away from the situation so they can work out how to react later. They shouldn't deal with it whilst still angry. They can take some deep long breaths and/or count slowly to ten.
6. Students can be encouraged to stand up for themselves assertively by:
 - (1) Speaking in a firm, confident and non-offensive way and telling the other student what they want to happen and how it's going to happen. For example, 'I want you to leave me alone... right now!', 'OK, I'm leaving now... I don't want you to follow me', 'I've got no problem with you'. 'I'm not listening any more so I am going' etc.
 - (2) Students should 'stand tall' and make direct eye contact in a non-threatening way.
7. Students should not bluff. If students warn others that they will speak to a teacher, they must do so straight away.
8. Students should try being assertive and handling the situation themselves before asking a teacher to become involved, although they can tell a teacher what is happening. When students stand up for themselves it increases their own sense of self confidence and can help to deter the bully. This is only appropriate if the bullying is low level and the student is not in physical danger.
9. When students speak to school staff, they should do so in a clear and calm way explaining what has happened, when and where it happened and how they have tried to deal with the matter. It is important that the students really want to solve the problem and are not just trying to 'get back' at other students. It is also important the students try and provide factual information. They should understand that the teacher will need to confirm their version of events with others involved.

NOTE: Students should not incite others to become involved in the situation as this may lead to more conflict and possibly injury to friends and family. Inciting of others especially from outside the school may result in very serious consequences.



What I can do to reduce bullying at school?

- Observe your child and note any behaviour changes that might indicate bullying and take action to actively support your child in finding an equitable solution to bullying.
- Report all incidents of bullying to the school, not just incidents that happen to your own child.
- Let your child know how much you disapprove of bullying and why.
- Model and encourage respect for others at home.
- Talk to your child about the qualities associated with caring friendships and discourage them from staying in 'friendships' where they are mistreated or not respected.
- Explore with your child the long term harm that will be caused to their education if they do not deal with bullying now.
- Take an active interest in their social life and friends. A student who has positive friends is less likely to be involved in bullying.
- Refer any issues to the School Welfare Team who will discuss options for your child in and outside the school eg. Counselling, Assertiveness Training, Stress & Anger Management

School procedures for dealing with bullying

Students and staff have a range of strategies to deal with bullying. However if the bullying is ongoing and/or significant the College will follow up with appropriate strategies including:

- Students involved in bullying will be asked to write a statement for their teacher and Year Level Coordinator (YLC) explaining why, how and when bullying is alleged to have occurred including independent witnesses. Parents can request an interview and/or verbal feedback in respect to this process
- Referral to the student's YLC and/or Principal Class Teacher to use student management procedures as stipulated below:
 - a. Letter of explanation to the family of the alleged bully explaining subsequent actions including monitoring through their Student Planner, school contract etc
 - b. If the Bullying is ongoing, follow up with additional discipline processes including detentions, suspensions etc
NOTE: Expulsion will be used as a last resort after all B&H processes have been exhausted, unless the issue/action of the student is deemed to be of such a serious nature that they need to be exited from the school immediately
 - c. Referral to the Welfare Team in order to undertake mediation to resolve issues to ensure and both victim and bully have a clear understanding of what is required to maintain an agreement to co-exist positively in the school community. Students will be expected to maintain this agreement with further bullying being referred to YLC or Principal Class for further discipline processes as outlined in (b).
 - d. On-going follow up by YLC with staff and students to receive feedback in respect to the bullying issues



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If you have any queries or concerns please contact your child's Year Level Coordinator

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