Department of
Education & Training

Safe Schools are Effective Schools

A resource for developing
safe and supportive
school environments

Knowledge&Skills
Building a Future

Victoria
The Place To Be

Published by

Student Wellbeing Branch
Office of School Education
Department of Education & Training
Melbourne

May 2006

Also published on www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm

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Authorised by Department of Education & Training,
2 Treasury Place, East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002

Printed by S.R.Frankland Pty Ltd,
274 Ferntree Gully Road, Notting Hill, Victoria, 3168

13-digit ISBN 978-0-7594-0431-1
10-digit ISBN 0-7594-0421-3

Contents

Introduction 2

What is Bullying? 3

The Department of Education & Training's Anti-Bullying Policy 4

Strategies for Safe and Effective Schools 5

- What are safe and effective schools? 5
- Themes from Schools with Good Student Wellbeing Practice 8
- Strategies to Intervene in Bullying Incidents 11
- Strategies for Responding to Homophobic Bullying 14

Strategies for Parents 15

Further Information 18

Case Studies of Good Practice Schools 20

- Boolarra Primary School 20
- Braybrook Primary School 21
- Camberwell High School 23
- Gilmore College for Girls 24
- Shepparton High School 26
- Ruthven Primary School 28

Introduction

A situation where a student feels unsafe in school because of bullying is not tolerated in Victorian government schools.

The Department of Education & Training is committed to providing safe, secure and stimulating environments for all students, and provides a range of anti-bullying policies and strategies for schools to deliver on this commitment.

In 2005 the Minister for Education Services, Jacinta Allan, MP commissioned a review of the anti-bullying policies and practices in Victorian government schools.

The review, carried out by Deakin University and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, identified:

- the need to enhance school community awareness and understanding of bullying;
- primary students as being more confident in their teacher's ability to successfully intervene in bullying incidents; and
- that students enrolled in schools recognised for their successful prevention and management of bullying incidents felt safer, observed less bullying at their school and had more caring and positive attitudes towards victimised students.

The review also identified factors that had proven successful in the prevention and management of bullying, such as:

- effective leadership teams making safety and wellbeing a school priority, and working with their teaching staff to develop and implement strategies; and
- whole-school behaviour management plans that are embedded in schools' Student Code of Conduct and focused on prevention and management.

In response to the review, the Department has introduced new anti-bullying guidelines and policies for all Victorian government schools.

Safe Schools are Effective Schools includes:

- a definition of bullying;
- an anti-bullying policy;
- the key characteristics of safe and effective schools;
- strategies for schools, including summaries and case studies of good practice schools, and strategies on the prevention, intervention and management of bullying incidents;
- strategies for parents, such as the best way to manage bullying incidents when their child is being bullied, is bullying others, or when they observe bullying behaviour.

As part of the *Safe Schools are Effective Schools* strategy, and the Department's commitment to providing safe, secure and stimulating learning environments, schools will be required to review their Student Code of Conduct by the end of 2007. The Department will provide schools with further information regarding this process, including monitoring and reporting requirements.

Safe Schools are Effective Schools is available at:
www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm

What is Bullying?

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Types of Bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying:

Direct physical bullying

This form includes hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.

Direct verbal bullying

This form includes name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

Indirect bullying

This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:

- lying and spreading rumours;
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate;
- mimicking;
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone;
- damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance; and
- cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress someone.

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

Mutual conflict

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

Social rejection or dislike

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

Single-episode acts

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.

Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

The Department of Education & Training's Anti-Bullying Policy

4

Every student has the right to feel safe from bullying at school.

Bullying behaviour in schools should be addressed as part of a school's duty of care to provide safe and supportive school environments.

All schools are required to develop and implement a Student Code of Conduct that identifies goals and standards for student behaviour.

The Student Code of Conduct must include safe school and specific anti-bullying strategies that aim to promote positive student behaviour, prevent anti-social behaviour, and encourage respect, compassion and cooperation.

Strategies for Safe and Effective Schools

What are safe and effective schools?

To effectively prevent bullying, schools need to take a whole-school approach that focuses on safety and wellbeing throughout all school practices.

It is important, therefore, that school safety is not viewed as a separate policy, but as a central component of an effective school.

The key success factors that help make schools safe parallel the eight characteristics contained in the Effective Schools model,[1] which underpins all *Blueprint for Government Schools* (Department of Education & Training, 2003) strategies and initiatives.

The following section describes how the eight characteristics of the Effective Schools model provide a useful framework in which schools can develop a whole-school approach that embeds student safety and wellbeing throughout all components of a school's work.

Professional Leadership

Safe and effective schools start with school leaders who are committed to a shared and well-developed vision of a safe, caring, respectful, supportive and inclusive school community, which sends clear messages that bullying in all forms is unacceptable.

Safe schools are most effectively developed when leadership teams have a vision for a strategic whole-school approach in which student wellbeing is a high priority and there is a focus on prevention as well as management.

Staff collaboration is facilitated through a leadership approach which empowers staff to initiate and take responsibility for safe school initiatives and which focuses on teacher wellbeing.

Students are more likely to behave positively and treat each other well when leadership teams model respectful and caring interactions with both staff and students.

Leaders should be aware of their duty of care towards students, and mindful that an effective and well-executed policy and vision for the prevention and management of bullying is fundamental in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students in their care.

Effective and consistent whole-school behaviour management structures and systems are an essential component of a safe and effective school.

Leaders should be alert and proactive in developing strategies to manage bullying situations.

Focus on Teaching and Learning

In a safe and effective school, teachers have access to appropriate professional learning opportunities to develop and refresh skills that enable them to work collaboratively in creating and maintaining safe, caring, respectful and supportive school cultures.

In a safe and effective school a significant number of teachers have been given the opportunity to develop skills in non-punitive approaches to intervening in bullying incidents.

Safe and effective schools provide opportunities for staff and students to learn from community programs outside the regular school curriculum to enhance their knowledge, awareness and strategies to deal with bullying.

Shared Vision and Goals

The prevention and management of bullying is more readily achieved in a safe, caring, respectful and supportive school culture which promotes positive relationships and pro-social values.

A safe and effective school has an anti-bullying policy developed in collaboration with all staff, students and parents. This inevitably takes time; however, the process of collaboration is just as important as the policy.

Having clear, well-defined and agreed expectations of acceptable types of staff and student behaviour is a starting point that allows all members of the school community to have a shared understanding of unacceptable or bullying behaviour.

In a safe and effective school, teachers intervene firmly and swiftly to manage any bullying situation.

Safe and effective schools work in partnership with parents to reduce and manage bullying.

Structured lunchtime activities, a range of easily accessible equipment and a variety of safe spaces are an important part of a safe school environment, as is vigilant yard supervision.

An approach which ‘blames the victim’ for the bullying situation in which they find themselves is unfair, incorrect and unhelpful. Safe and effective schools support all students to feel safe and emphasise the important role of the teacher in managing bullying situations.

Extracurricular activities such as peer tutoring or mentoring within a school can contribute to the promotion of positive peer relationships through same-age and cross-age student interaction.

In a safe and effective school students adopt pro-social values and behave in a respectful, caring and inclusive manner because they perceive that their teachers model such values and behaviours in their day-to-day interactions.

Purposeful Teaching

A safe and effective school employs relationship-based pedagogy such as cooperative learning and problem-based learning. It contributes to student achievement and positive peer relationships.

High Expectations

Diversity is valued in a safe and effective school and everyone is treated with respect, fairness and dignity.

Safe and effective schools clearly communicate to all members of the school community that everybody has the right to feel physically and psychologically safe and that ensuring this safety is everyone's responsibility.

Learning Communities

In safe and effective schools staff collaborate to implement whole-school programs and procedures to strengthen the quality of relationships between people, build empathy and work cooperatively.

Safe and effective schools work in partnership with parents to reduce and manage bullying and develop safe, caring, respectful and supportive school environments.

In a safe and effective school there are structures based on peer support, authentic student leadership and student ownership.

Accountability

Safe and effective schools regularly self-monitor the level of bullying in the school and review and refine their anti-bullying policy and their positive and pro-social whole-school initiatives.

Safe and effective schools monitor the school environment on a day-to-day basis, and have feedback mechanisms in place to ensure policies and processes are effective.

Safe and effective schools provide a variety of ways in which students can communicate to teachers that they need support because they are being bullied.

Effective schools critically evaluate any prevention and management programs that they are considering implementing to ensure that they are theoretically sound, unbiased and evidence based in terms of content, pedagogy and delivery. They ask key questions about the credibility of the program, whether it is soundly based, and whether the program may have a religious or political bias.

Stimulating and Secure Learning Environments

Safe and effective schools have a strong and consistent whole-school behaviour management system in place.

Safe and effective schools promote and embed anti-bullying within the philosophy of the school.

Safe and effective schools have strong transition programs at different stages of schooling, to ensure that students develop a readiness to enter their new environment, to reduce anxiety and to increase resilience.

Further information on the Effective Schools model is available at **www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/blueprint/es/default.asp**

8 Themes from Schools with Good Student Wellbeing Practice

A key component of the Department's 2005 review of anti-bullying policy and practice was an analysis of the wellbeing strategies used by 11 Victorian government schools that had been identified as having good practice in relation to student wellbeing.

Several general themes emerged; however, there were many paths to the same destination.

The following table categorises the success factors identified in these schools.

Factors Contributing to Successful Wellbeing Outcomes in Good Practice Schools

In Primary and Secondary Good Practice Schools

Very Significant factors	Other Significant factors
• Effective leadership	• Chaplain at the school
• Effective whole-school behaviour management system, i.e. Student Code of Conduct	• Community service opportunities
• Wellbeing as a school priority	• Fun and humour
• Whole-school approach	• School pride and high expectations
• Positive student–student relations	

Effective Leadership

In all of the schools long-term effective leadership was apparent.

The leaders had worked with staff to develop (or continue) a whole-school vision based around the wellbeing and personal growth of students. They had identified key staff members with strong skills and interest in welfare areas and empowered them and the rest of the staff to work collaboratively towards achieving that vision. In some cases support was given through time allowance, in others through trust and encouragement. These leaders were trusted and seen by their school community as leading by example. The end result was the development of a committed team all moving in the same direction to implement a whole-school approach to wellbeing.

Once a critical mass of like-minded committed teachers built up, other teachers started to be positively influenced.

The leadership teams usually had a plan for the long-term maintenance of the school's vision and its continuous improvement.

Effective Whole-school Behaviour Management System

All schools had highly effective whole-school behaviour management systems, otherwise referred to as the Student Code of Conduct, most of which were based on pro-social values, social competencies, incentives and positive peer relationships.

It would appear that an effective whole-school behaviour management system produces the following positive benefits:

- in a culture that is firm about unacceptable behaviour and provides incentives for acceptable behaviour, fewer students bully and fewer students are prepared to support bullies.
- teachers in schools with effective whole-school behaviour management experience higher levels of staff satisfaction and morale. There is a lower rate of staff turnover and hence more consistency and connectedness.
- teachers feel more confident about managing their classes when they perceive that there is a sound and fair behaviour management system in place. They are also more prepared to implement new wellbeing and anti-bullying initiatives when they don't have to spend all of their time managing behaviour and worrying about their students responding negatively. They have more time available to undertake personal and social learning activities with their students.

Positive Student–Student Relationships

All schools proactively focused on strategies for developing positive peer relationships across all year levels.

Sometimes this was achieved through programs that encouraged students in the same year level to work across class groups (e.g. making sure that all Year 7 students at their camp worked in teams with many peers who were not in their home room group) or through integration across different year levels (e.g. cross-age productions, sporting teams, clubs, etc.).

Wellbeing as a School Priority

In most schools there was a clearly stated philosophy, translated into practice, that student wellbeing was a high priority that underpinned effective student learning and behaviour.

A Whole-school Approach

A whole-school approach was apparent in most schools. This was reflected in their policies and documentation, and the consistency between the perceptions of staff, students, parents and the leadership team. Their approaches were strategic, comprehensive and embedded rather than fragmented or 'added-on'.

Anti-bullying Components

Many schools had introduced a variety of specific anti-bullying components such as an anti-bullying curriculum, anti-bullying posters, the teaching of bystander support skills or anti-bullying student committees. Most had an up-to-date anti-bullying policy.

Embedded Social Skills

Schools with a long-term history of developing student social competencies had also managed to successfully embed these in their behaviour-management system, pedagogy, expectations and structures. Many had incorporated 'practice opportunities', such as community service work.

Positive Involvement with Parents

Most of the schools had committed and enthusiastic parent communities who worked in partnership with them on wellbeing and safety issues. The leadership teams had worked very hard to involve the parents and make them feel welcome. Many parents spoke admiringly of how they were always made to feel welcome at the school.

Positive Student–Teacher Relationships

There were many comments by students and parents about how well teachers knew the students and their positive relationship with not only their own students but all students in the school.

Strong Staff Collaboration

This factor was particularly apparent and significant in the good practice primary schools.

Staff collaboration produces positive outcomes, which contribute to a strong sense of shared satisfaction and connectedness. Many of the teachers spoke about 'looking after each other' and the personal and social connections between them had become very strong.

In many schools where there was evidence of staff collaboration, there was also a focus on teacher wellbeing.

Structured Lunchtime Activities

Many schools had slowly developed effective playground supervision techniques for lunch breaks, as well as a variety of clubs, special classes and lessons and student-organised activities. Many of these had similar benefits to those of extracurricular programs. They made lunchtime less 'boring' and kept students enthusiastically occupied.

Values Education

Many schools had a strong focus on directly teaching values such as respect, compassion, cooperation and friendliness.

The value that was most often successfully taught to students was that of respect and it seemed to have the strongest impact on student behaviour.

Effective House System

Schools that had an effective house system found this supported behaviour management (through incentive schemes) and/or helped to develop protective cross-age relationships.

Effective Transition Programs

There was a wide range of excellent transition programs in the 11 good practice schools.

Secondary schools spoke of their respect for the significant wellbeing work of the feeder primary schools and of effective working partnerships with them. Students spoke enthusiastically of how important these programs were for their development of friendships, security and confidence.

Peer Support Structures

Case study schools had a wide variety of peer support structures in place.

Most primary schools had a buddy structure and peer mediation structure. Secondary schools had hybrid structures which were called different things in different schools.

Some of the peer support structures worked extremely well and appeared to have made a strong impact on the culture of the school.

Student Leadership and Ownership

Some schools had found excellent ways to involve students in leadership positions within the school, which gave students an authentic voice and responsibilities.

Having many students involved in a variety of leadership roles appeared to enhance confidence and more compassion towards others.

Strong Extracurricular Programs or Electives

One of the most significant factors in the secondary case study schools was the provision of a wide range of extracurricular activities and opportunities. These appear to have several positive effects:

- students who are involved in productions, clubs and teams get to work with and form relationships with a wide range of both same-age and cross-age peers. This changes the culture of the school and can result in less bullying of younger students by older students; and
- many extracurricular activities occur during lunchtimes (e.g. clubs, team practices and try-outs, or electives) leaving fewer disengaged students for who bullying can be appealing.

Chaplain

Four of the schools had a chaplain who worked part time in the school. Students, in particular, spoke positively of their non-religious welfare-based role in the school.

Community Service Opportunities

Two schools (one primary and one secondary) placed a strong emphasis on community service. Both appeared to be very successful in giving students the opportunity to practise social skills (e.g. conversation and assertiveness) and apply values such as respect and compassion.

Fun and Humour

Several schools had a strong commitment to fostering fun in a variety of ways. Students spoke enthusiastically about the fun they experienced in the school and how important this was to the perceived safety of the school.

School Pride and High Expectations

There was as strong sense of pride in a number of the schools among both teachers and students.

Specific Programs

Several primary schools used specific programs such as *Friendly Kids Friendly Classrooms, Bounce Back!, You Can Do It!, M-Power* and *Mindmatters*.

Teacher Structures that Support Students

Several schools had implemented teacher advocacy structures that connected students with a teacher who acted as a mentor and support.

Strategies to Intervene in Bullying Incidents

There is no clear answer about the best actions students can take when they are being bullied. It can be very difficult for students to stop it on their own.

Here are some suggested responses to students when they ask for help in the first instance:

- *'You could try asking them calmly and politely to stop it and then increase this to telling them firmly and loudly to stop it.'*
- '*Consider putting on a "protective shell" by acting unimpressed. If you feel up to it, make a funny comment.'*
- *'Keep notes (what, who, where and when) and make sure they know about it.'*
- *'Talk to a friend and ask for support and ideas about what you could do to solve the problem.'*

If these strategies don't work, it is best to utilise other strategies as soon as possible.

The following section describes some prevention and intervention strategies that are currently being used in Victorian government schools.

Note: It is recommended that any prevention and management programs that schools consider implementing be critically evaluated to ensure that they are theoretically sound, unbiased and evidence based in terms of content, pedagogy and delivery.

Assertiveness Training

There is some evidence that training students to respond assertively can be a useful strategy.

Responding assertively to a bullying incident requires the student to respond in a way that is respectful to themselves and to others equally.

Central to responding assertively is the student having confidence in themselves and their abilities and knowing their basic human rights.

Teachers can help students to be assertive by encouraging them to:

- plan and practise responses to bullying incidents in a clear and polite manner; and
- respond using an assertive body language, i.e. standing up straight and keeping eye contact.

Teachers can help students to utilise these behaviours though classroom based role-plays, where the students identify assertive behaviours, as opposed to aggressive or passive responses.[2]

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices are increasingly being used by Victorian government schools to manage bullying incidents.

The term Restorative Practices refers to a range of processes which are underpinned by the following concepts:

- misconduct is viewed as a violation of people and relationships;
- these violations create obligations and liabilities; and
- problem-solving focuses on healing and making things right.

These practices, ranging from proactive to reactive, involve the development and enhancement of relationships in schools and teaching of conflict resolution and other problem-solving skills. They also involve classroom management that is participatory and democratic and focused on problem-solving.

These practices require a shift in philosophy from traditional punitive models of behaviour management to those relational models which, as well as holding wrongdoers accountable for their behaviour, provide support for the community affected by the wrongdoing.

Specific Restorative Practices include:

Community Conferences

A community conference brings together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the wrongdoer and the student being bullied, along with their families and appropriate school personnel.

Conducted by a trained facilitator, a series of scripted questions is directed to participants in order to understand the incident and its antecedents and the effects of the incident on the community.

An agreement is reached whereby all participants feel that there has been some restitution and that relationships have been repaired. The agreement also reflects plans to meet identified needs of the participants, such as counselling, and to implement necessary changes to school policy and practice.

Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Small Group Individual Conferences

These are usually confined to a small group of students or an individual student and perhaps teacher(s) who have been involved in a less serious incident of harm. Typically small group conferences might be used to deal with low-level bullying before matters escalate.

Parents, while not directly involved, are informed of the process and its outcomes.

Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Classroom Conferences

These involve the whole-class group in addressing issues which have affected teaching and learning in the classroom and student wellbeing, such as classroom bullying and more generally, classroom disruption.[3]

Bystander Training

A popular strategy in the prevention of bullying is Bystander Training. This form of prevention strategy trains bystander students to behave in a supportive way to students who are being bullied, and to intervene where feasible. It is based on the notion that bad things continue to happen if good people do nothing.

For students to effectively stand up for another student who is being bullied, they need to feel confident in their own skills to intervene and know that they will have the support of teachers.[4]

Bystander Training should:

- stress to all students that they are expected to act responsibly and either challenge the bullying behaviour directly or indirectly or report the incident to a teacher;[5] and
- build the skill of students to challenge the actions of bullies.

When developing Bystander Training modules, teachers can:

- elicit from students how they think they would react if they were observers of a bullying incident;
- ask the students to give a reason for their reaction;
- at the next lesson, feed back to them the results, reading out what students have said about why they would help the student being bullied;
- pay attention to, and discuss, comments that call attention to the potential danger of intervening and when obligations to help should be limited only to one's friends;
- discuss how students might distinguish between dangerous and non-dangerous situations – and take appropriate action;
- consider what forms of discouragement could be effective without inflaming the situation;
- discuss how students might get others to voice their disapproval together with their own;
- rehearse possible scenarios and actions using role-plays;
- monitor what happens by getting the class to report back periodically; and
- always bear in mind that a direction by a teacher that a student is expected to help students being bullied is likely to be disregarded, but there are ways of indirectly mobilising positive action under the influence of peer pressure.[6]

Friendly Schools and Families

The Friendly Schools and Families Program was a whole-school anti-bullying intervention implemented in a number of primary schools in Perth between 2002 and 2004. It was implemented in 20 randomly selected Perth metropolitan primary schools and nearly 4000 students, their families, and 450 teachers took part in the program. The intervention was an initiative of the Child Health Promotion Research Unit and was based on a 'health-promoting school' model and included 'validated' components that had been identified in international research.

The basic assumption behind the program is that effectiveness in reducing bullying and increasing pro-social behaviour is the result of many small moves, not just one approach. Some of the key components of the program are:

- open communication about bullying in the whole-school community;
- a consistent and positive response from all teachers towards bullying behaviour;
- the teaching of peer support skills to enable all students in a bystander role to discourage bullying;
- resilience skills that would be needed if students were bullied;

- modified playground environments that would be more stimulating to students;
- the teaching of social skills and pro-social values;
- high visibility of playground supervisors during lunch and recess breaks;
- school pride campaigns; and
- teacher professional development.

The Friendly Schools and Families Program was adapted following the outcomes of this project.

Friendly Schools and Families aims to assists with the design, development, implementation, dissemination and evaluation of a social skill-building and comprehensive anti-bullying programs in schools. It provides templates to evaluate current anti-bullying policy and practice within a school, review action taken, identify areas that may require further attention, and also to help schools engage in evidence-based activities to reduce bullying. Support and guidance can also be accessed through the program.

As adapted from the Friendly Schools and Families website: available from **www.friendlyschools.com.au/about.php**

Buddy Systems

Buddy systems can help to promote friendship and support between older and younger peers through regular collaboration between their classes, which fosters a sense of whole-school community.

The key characteristic of most buddy systems is the participation of older students in positive, supportive, structured and facilitated one-on-one relationships with younger students. Buddy systems can create feelings of connectedness that enable both older and younger 'buddies' to bond more closely with their school within a psychologically safe environment, thereby increasing the likelihood of more positive school behaviour and less bullying.

You Can Do It! Education

You Can Do It! Education is a system for helping children to develop social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing.

You Can Do It! Education involves a number of educational programs based on research which identifies four necessary foundations for all children to possess in order for them to achieve and experience social, emotional, and behavioural wellbeing: confidence, persistence, organisation, and getting along. Four blockers that contribute to poor psychological health, under-achievement and disaffection are also identified: low self-esteem–anxiety, general work avoidance, general disorganisation, and rebelliousness–anger.

As adapted from the *You Can Do It!* Education website: available from **www.youcandoiteducation.com**

14 Strategies for Responding to Homophobic Bullying

All students including gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex students in Victorian government schools, have a right to feel safe at school and be free from bullying.

Indications of the extent of homophobic bullying in schools can be gained from the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society's report on the sexual health and wellbeing of same-sex-attracted young people in Australia, 'Writing Themselves in Again'.[7] This report found that the most common place of homophobic abuse was at school. Seventy-four per cent of young people who had suffered homophobic abuse reported at least one incident of verbal or physical abuse at school.

Preventing Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

To prevent incidents of homophobic bullying, schools should take a whole-school approach according to the Department's safe schools strategy.

Schools should have high expectations of their students and staff. Safe and effective schools clearly communicate to all members of the school community that everybody has the right to feel physically and psychologically safe at school. Safe and effective schools ensure that the school environment remains safe.

The most important thing teachers can do is create and continually model a school environment that respects and celebrates diversity.

To promote a whole-school environment that is inclusive of the needs of same-sex-attracted and transgender students is to ensure that incidents of homophobic bullying are kept to a minimum. Inclusivity should be reflected in a school's curriculum, teaching and learning, organisation and ethos, and in community links and partnerships.

Intervening in Incidents of Homophobic Bullying

Homophobic bullying should be dealt with in the same way as any bullying situation, including racist or sexist behaviour.

It is important, however, to acknowledge that the behaviour is homophobic, and respond to it accordingly. A teacher can:

- state that they find the comments or actions offensive;
- ask the student if they know why the teacher has found their statement offensive;
- ask the student to consider the statement in light of agreed school rules around discriminatory language, and the feelings of the student who they have been bullying; and
- agree to a management strategy, as set out in the school's Student Code of Conduct.[8]

Due to the sensitivity around issues of teenage sexuality, the utmost care should be given to the most appropriate strategies to manage the situation. The student who is being bullied should be consulted about how they would like the situation to be managed. However, the teacher or school leader should take responsibility for the situation and follow up the incident at a later date.

Strategies for Parents

The following section outlines a set of suggested actions that parents can utilise when their children are being bullied, or are bullying others.

Children who are being bullied may:

- Be frightened of walking to and from school
- Change their usual route
- Not want you to go on the school bus
- Beg you to drive them to school
- Be unwilling or refuse to go to school
- Feel ill in the mornings
- Begin wagging school
- Begin doing poorly in their school work
- Come home regularly with clothes or books destroyed
- Become withdrawn, start stammering, lack confidence
- Become distressed and anxious, or stop eating
- Attempt or threaten suicide
- Cry themselves to sleep, or have nightmares
- Have their possessions go missing
- Ask for money or start stealing (to pay the bully)
- Continually 'lose' their pocket money
- Refuse to talk about what's wrong
- Have unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Begin to bully other children, or siblings
- Become aggressive and unreasonable
- Give improbable excuses for any of the above.

Adapted from *Kidscape*, available at
www.kidscape.org.uk/parents/signsof.shtml

16 What Parents Can Do if their Child is Being Bullied

Listening and Understanding

If a parent thinks their child is being bullied, they can ask them directly about it or initiate a discussion about bullying at the school in general. Parents can talk about whether there are any students in their child's year level who bully others.

Parents should listen carefully to what their children have to say without interrupting.

Parents should show concern and support by letting their child know that they understand how distressing it is for them to be in this situation. It is important that children are reassured that it is normal for them to feel hurt, lonely, scared, angry and lost.

Parents can congratulate their child for having the courage to confide in them.

Parents can emphasise to their child that all students at school have the right to be treated with respect and be safe from bullying and abuse.

Comments such as *'what did you do that made them behave like that towards you?'* should be avoided.

Children should not be dismissed by making statements such as *'don't worry about it'* or *'lots of kids get bullied… it helps make you tough'.*

Most children who are bullied are worried about paybacks if they tell an adult. Parents should be clear that they are not prepared to keep this secret, but can reassure their child that they will handle the situation sensitively. Parents can tell their child that they will focus on solving the problem rather than trying to get anyone in trouble.

Good Advice and Support

Discussing the bullying with the child's teacher is usually an important step in the process. However, in some situations parents can start with some good advice and support, and then monitor the outcomes.

Parents can ask questions such as *'what have you tried so far to stop the bullying'* and *'how well they think these actions have worked so far'.*

Parents should not encourage children to fight back, as it will probably increase the level and duration of the bullying, lead to the involvement of more students and result in injuries and repercussions.

At home, parents can help their child to develop these positive strategies:

- practise saying *'leave me alone'* and then calmly walking away.
- problem-solve ways to avoid people situations that might expose them to further bullying
- discuss ways in which they can make new friends.

Parents should encourage their child to continue to talk with them about all bullying incidents. They should also stay calm and focus on solving the problem for their child.

Discovering that your child is being bullied is very stressful and upsetting. Most parents initially experience anger, confusion and guilt.

Parents shouldn't overreact and need to think carefully about whether what has happened is serious enough to discuss with their child's teacher.

Trying to keep an open mind is important; parents should remember that they are hearing only one part of the story.

Parents should avoid directly approaching any other students who they believe may have been involved in bullying their child. Parents should also avoid trying to sort the issues out with the family involved. This usually doesn't work and makes the situation much worse. Approaching them may also signal to their child and members of the other family that their child cannot deal with a problem.

Collect and Write Down Information

Parents should try to obtain as many facts as they can through discussion with their child so that they can identify if there is a repeated pattern. Try to identify and write down:

- what happened;
- who was involved on each occasion;
- where and when these things happened;

- who witnessed each situation;
- did anybody else see it, and, if so, who;
- when the bullying first began;
- what solutions have been tried so far; and
- the names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Work with the School to Solve the Problem

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 and see the school as an ally.

Once parents have a reasonably clear picture of the situation and the facts they should let their child know they are approaching the school.

Parents should make an appointment with their child's teacher, and not just turn up at school.

At the meeting:

- It is a good idea for parents to make notes of the points they want to make before the meeting.
- It is useful for parents to stay calm and avoid making accusations against the school. If parents become angry, make accusations or demand certain actions, it may make the situation worse.
- Parents should present information in a way that makes it clear to the school that they see themselves and the school as partners in trying to fix this problem.
- It can be helpful to remember that if a parent was not aware that their child was being bullied, then perhaps the child's teachers would not have known about it either.
- Parents can ask about the policies and procedures the school has to deal with bullying.

The school will need time to investigate and to talk to teachers and, perhaps, other students. A follow-up call to see what has been done can be helpful. Alternatively, parents can ask the school when they will contact them.

At the next meeting, parents and the school can establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Children should have some say in the strategies used. Before parents leave, they can ask for clarification about the next steps in the plan.

Follow Up

If a child does not appear to be coping, parents can ask for the school counsellor to become involved.

Parents should encourage their child to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

What Parents Can Do if their Child is Involved in Bullying

Parents should acknowledge the possibility that their child may be involved in bullying another student.

Respond calmly and non-defensively, and commit to working with the school to manage the problem in a helpful way.

A situation can be made worse for a child if parents directly approach the bullied student or their family or try to get other parents to take your child's side.

Parents should see the situation as an opportunity for their child to learn important developmental lessons.

What Parents Can Do to Reduce Bullying at School

Parents should let their children know how much they disapprove of bullying and why.

Any type of bullying at home should be avoided, and respect for others should be modelled and encouraged.

Emphasis should be given to seeing things from another child's point of view.

Supporting any other child who is being bullied should be encouraged.

It is helpful for the school if parents report all incidents of bullying that they are aware of at the school, not just incidents that happen to their own child.

Differences should be respected and embraced rather than ridiculed.

Parents should talk to their child about the qualities associated with caring friendships and discourage them from staying in 'friendships' where they are mistreated or not respected.

Further Information

Department of Education & Training Information

Safe Schools are Effective Schools	www.sofweb.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm
Victorian Government Schools Reference Guide	www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/referenceguide/
Student Code of Conduct	www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/welfare/conduct.htm

General Websites on Bullying

Disclaimer: The Department of Education & Training provides these sources as information only. The Department does not necessarily endorse their content.

Bullying. No Way! (Australia)	www.bullyingnoway.com.au
No Bully (New Zealand)	www.police.govt.nz/service/yes/nobully/
Anti-Bullying Network (Scotland)	www.antibullying.net
Safe Caring and Orderly Schools (Canada)	www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm
Bullying Online (UK)	http://www.bullying.co.uk/
Kidscape (UK)	http://www.kidscape.org.uk/
Stop Bullying Me (Canada)	http://www.stopbullyingme.ab.ca/
Stop Bullying Now (US)	http://www.stopbullyingnow.com/
The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (Australia)	http://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcshs/

Websites on Bullying for Students

Kids Helpline (Australia)	www.kidshelp.com.au
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Case Studies of Good Practice Schools

20 Boolarra Primary School

School Details

Boolarra Primary school is located in Gippsland in the foothills of the Strzelecki Ranges. There is little cultural diversity among the student population, with most being from English-speaking backgrounds. There are 88 students at the school and a small core of seven staff which is augmented by part-time staff and specialists. The school is organised into four composite classes.

Whole-school Approach

The school takes a whole-school approach to student wellbeing and focuses strongly on developing positive peer relationships. The use of composite classes contributes to strong positive cross-age relationships between students, as does the small size of the school and the community. Use of cooperative learning activities in classrooms also contributes to positive peer relationships.

There is consistency in the way in which student behaviour is managed as a result of strong teacher collaboration. Contract Replacement Teachers are also informed about expectations and strategies for classroom management to ensure consistency. The consistency and effectiveness of the school's overall behaviour management plan has increased staff confidence and morale.

Values Education

There is an emphasis on teaching all students pro-social values such as responsibility and respect.

Structured Lunchtimes

All teachers follow a consistent approach to yard duty with a focus on the recognition and reward of pro-social behaviour.

There is a lunchtime program which provides a range of activities for students to be involved in if they are feeling 'left out'. Older students often help younger students to find an appropriate playmate from their own age group, or include them in their own games.

Some of the activities offered (on different days and in different terms) include chess club, gardening, music, singing, art club, dance, science, information technology and library. Practices for seasonal sports like cross-country training and various ball sports are also held at lunchtime. Year 6 students and members of the Student Representative Council also organise some of the lunchtime games and activities.

The children can also 'log in' with the yard duty teacher before lunchtime to play a yard-duty hiding game called 'Spotto' which involves the teacher.

Teachers Supporting Students

There is an effective teacher support structure in place which enables teachers to provide extra support to specific students if they need it. Each student is asked to name three teachers with whom they feel a connection and that they could talk to if they had a problem. One of these teachers is then selected as a support teacher and advocate for the student.

Peer Support Systems

There is a Year 6/Preps buddy program in place and a peer mediation program operates in Year 6. The school trains all Year 6 students in conflict management skills and mediation skills, in keeping with its emphasis on the teaching of social skills. Once students are trained, they have the option of continuing as an official peer mediator.

Student Leadership

Student leadership is a vital part of the school, and there is a junior school council operating. The Student Representative Council has many roles, including making decisions about which community service activities the students will support.

Anti-bullying Components

The school has a strong anti-bullying policy and this has been clearly communicated to parents. It outlines what teachers will do if they become aware of a bullying situation. Teachers have committed to responding quickly in bullying situations to make sure that they do not go further.

A graduated series of warnings/consequences are given to students involved in bullying situations. The first time a student is involved in bullying they are warned, there is a discussion with a teacher and the incident is recorded to help teachers to identify emergent patterns. After a second incident, parents are contacted and suitable consequences are negotiated. After a third incident, a behaviour management program is established in partnership with parents or carers. A non-punitive approach is also used in some ongoing bullying situations.

Braybrook Primary School

School Details

Braybrook Primary School is situated in an industrialised area ten kilometres from Melbourne's city centre. Braybrook draws students from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The current enrolment is 95 students organised into six composite classes.

Teacher Collaboration

The staff population is very stable, some teachers having been there for many years. There is a conscious effort to select teachers and Contract Replacement Teachers who fit with the school's approach to teaching and learning and student management. The teachers' shared philosophy contributes to consistency and continuity and is seen in their strong working and personal relationships and commitment to continuous improvement.

Whole-school Approach

Students' and teachers' expectations of each other are discussed at the beginning of the year and class rules are developed that are consistent with these. Composite classes contribute to strong positive cross-age relationships between students, as does the small size of the school.

Wellbeing as a Priority

The school sees student wellbeing as a priority and has operated on this basis for many years. Programs, policies and management strategies all reflect this assumption.

Effective Behaviour Management

Behaviour management in the school is multifaceted and proactive rather than reactive. Positive incentives are used at an individual and whole-class level. The teaching of social skills is perceived to be inseparable from effective behaviour management.

Playground supervision is very thorough, with yard duty teachers briefing each other about potential problems. Incidents are recorded and administration is able to identify and respond to patterns of negative behaviour. Teachers intervene swiftly to quell disruptive behaviour and parents are informed of incidents either immediately or after school.

For misbehaviour in the classroom, students can be 'timed out' in other classes. Behaviour overall presents few problems and the school has never given a suspension.

Positive Approach to Diversity

Braybrook has been a multicultural environment for many years and diversity is acknowledged and celebrated. At Braybrook, students understand that 'no matter what country we are from, we are all more similar than we are different'.

Positive Student–Student Relationships

Braybrook is a small school and students know most of the other students and their families. Different year levels mix at school, on weekends and holidays. Peer support behaviours have become so established in practice that a formal buddy system is no longer in operation, or deemed necessary. Students look after each other as a matter of course, and older students care for younger students. Students work in cooperative groups that are constantly re-organised to maximise every child's connections with other students.

22 Braybrook Primary School...continued

Positive Teacher–Student Relationships

There is a strong sense of connectedness between students and teachers with high levels of respect and trust shown. The students all address the staff by their first names. Caring and respectful behaviour is modelled by the staff.

Classroom Teaching and Activities

Howard Gardner's model of *Multiple Intelligences* is used extensively in curriculum design and learning activities. Projects often span more than one year level and students work collaboratively with teachers to develop assessment rubrics, including criteria for appropriate use of social skills. Teachers acknowledge not only the different strengths of students but also the valuable skills of their colleagues.

Anti-bullying Components

Bullying is directly addressed and students have a sound understanding of what it is and is not. Students understand the concept and importance of supportive bystander behaviour.

Values Education

The pro-social values of respect, responsibility, honesty, acceptance of differences, caring, and friendliness are directly taught and modelled by all staff. Students are given real responsibilities which they take seriously.

Embedded Social Competencies

Social skills are directly taught and have been part of the school's program for many years. *Friendly Kids Friendly Classrooms* and *Dirty Tricks* are used extensively and recently elements of the *You Can Do It!* program have been added.

Older students regularly teach social skills and convey anti-bullying messages to younger students. The specific social skill of 'including others' is a strong focus and is seen by staff to be revealed in the culture of the school.

Teachers encourage students to be friendly to every member of the school community and visitors. Social skills are also embedded in classroom practice, and included in assessments. Positive feedback for use of social skills is another way in which the school includes them in behaviour management approaches.

Lunchtimes: Structured Activities and Playground Features

Students can participate in a variety of teacher supervised lunchtime activities, for example sports practices, recorder, dance, drama, homework, jewellery-making and knitting.

Lunchtime has also been shortened by ten minutes, because it was seen that during this time that most incidents occurred.

Positive Involvement with the Parent Community

Continuity of staff has produced close and positive relationships in which parents have close rapport with teachers, and work in partnership with them. Because many families have had a relationship with the school and its teachers over time, parents have a clearer understanding of the school's aims and cooperate more with the school.

Camberwell High School

School Details

Camberwell High School is situated in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Its student population of approximately 1200 students is drawn from 50 feeder schools.

Whole-school Approach

The heart of the school culture is a focus on respect, celebration and affirmation of success, tolerance of diversity and positiveness. Teachers work collaboratively to translate these beliefs into practice. The leadership team and staff believe that the modelling of pro-social practices by classroom teachers is one of the keys to effective behaviour management.

The school's behaviour management plan is based on the development of positive peer relationships, pro-social values, such as respect and tolerance, vigilance, and swift intervention.

Wellbeing as a Priority

There is a strong commitment to wellbeing in the school. The school is organised into two sub-schools, Junior and Senior, each led by a Sub-school Head. Each class has a home group teacher who generally teaches the class for 1–2 subjects. The school has a number of pastoral team leaders rather than year level coordinators.

Teacher Structures that Support Students

A planned mentor program supports the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) for Year 12 students.

Pride in the School and High Academic Expectations

Students have a strong pride in the school.

Positive Student–Student relationships

Students perceive the culture of the school to be one of respect and tolerance in which everyone fits in and it is easy to make friends. Students come from such a wide range of feeder schools that it is easier to make friends as everyone is in the same boat and cliques from previous schools don't operate.

Positive Teacher–Student Relationships

Students and parents see the leadership team and staff as approachable and very devoted to the school and students. Students see their teachers and the principal as positive and approachable and they feel that the staff know them personally. They express confidence about talking to staff about personal problems in the knowledge that something will be done to support them.

Teacher Support Structures

Each Year 12 student chooses a teacher mentor (4 or 5 per teacher). They sometimes have lunch together out of the school.

Peer Support Systems

A peer support system is in place in which Year 9 students are trained as peer supporters. Sixteen Year 8 students meet each week to learn counselling skills for a peer resource program to support others. Year 9 students also counsel students with problems. They are trained to recognise signs of loneliness and depression, and help students with friendship skills.

Student Leadership and Ownership

There are many varied opportunities for student leadership. The school has a very strong tradition of inter-house competition. Each house has six house captains who are responsible for helping to organise a large range of house activities. All organise and lead school assemblies and this gives them an authentic audience, and helps to build a strong sense of community and common purpose. The Student Representative Council leaders are responsible for organising key events in the school calendar.

Anti-bullying Components

Students in some year levels hear visiting speakers with an anti-bullying message and anti-bullying messages are in the diary and delivered through the health program.

Extracurricular Activities and Electives

There are many varied extracurricular opportunities at the school. The school has a strong debating tradition and an extensive music program, in which performance is a key element. Other extracurricular events include house competitions and the school production.

Positive Involvement with the Parent Community

Parents are involved in this school and feel that they are treated very respectfully by the staff and leadership team and that they are listened to and consulted.

Specific Programs

The school has used *REACH, Bird Cage* and *M Power*.

24 Gilmore College for Girls

School Details

Gilmore College for Girls is a relatively small secondary school in the Western Metropolitan Region catering for approximately 350 students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

Whole-school Approach

There is a whole-staff approach to student wellbeing and a focus on caring for all students. The whole-school operates on a culture based on the active promotion of positive relationships. The school timetable has been changed from a traditional 48-minute structure to four 72-minute periods per day, allowing for extended periods for in-depth study.

Wellbeing as a Priority

Wellbeing is a crucial priority of the school's charter. Accessibility and approachability characterise relationships within the school and team teachers have time to be with their students. There is a strong emphasis on developing individual strengths, and both parents and students perceive that the staff at the school are very skilled at meeting the learning and personal needs of all students.

Effective Behaviour Management

Overall, the school experiences only small amounts of misbehaviour. The teachers work hard to develop positive relationships with their students and this appears to be the basis of their behaviour management approach.

Positive Approach to Diversity

The school has high cultural diversity. Despite its highly multicultural population, there are no racial problems and any conflict or harassment is of a general kind. Tolerance for difference in any way is directly taught. The students accept the differences in their classmates and also support them.

Positive Student–Student relationships

The school's strong focus on the value of respect is evident in students' positive and supportive relationships with each other.

Positive Teacher–Student relationships

There are very close and positive relationships at this school between students and their teachers. Students use words like 'feel comfortable', 'warm', 'supportive, 'easy to talk to' when describing their teachers. Many are pleased to return after the holidays as they miss their teachers and their teachers feel the same way. Students perceive that their teachers don't talk down to them and genuinely like them. Teachers are very approachable. Teachers make a deliberate effort to get to know their students really well. They are seen by students to listen to both sides and respond fairly and in a caring way.

Teacher Support Structures

In Years 7–8 students are taught by only two teachers, thus maximising the availability of teacher support.

Effective Transition Programs

The Year 10 students help the newly arrived Year 7 students with organisation and getting to know people at the school. Year 7 or 8 students visit the local primary schools as part of the transition program. There is a 'Girls in Action' day at which Year 5 girls in local schools are invited to the Gilmore for activities. There is an effective Year 7 camp where the focus is on students getting to know each other.

Peer Support Systems

The school's peer support system emerges from the community stream of Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) Program. Self-selected Year 11 students are trained in 'Supportive Friends' a peer support program to recognise loneliness and depression in their classmates.

Student Leadership and Ownership

Student leadership is considered important at the school. House teams are led by students who receive training in leadership skills. The Student Representative Council has students from Year 7–12.

Members of the Student Representative Council have opportunities (on School Council) to look at statistics on bullying. They then feed statistics on the year levels in which bullying is taking place back to the girls at assemblies. Many of the leaders (in addition to the peer support trained students) also see their role as 'companions' and keep a watch for lonely kids as well.

Anti-bullying Components

In Year 7, work is done in Pastoral Care sessions on bullying and getting along with others. However, the major focus is on developing positive relationships rather than on countering bullying. A great deal of work is also done on resilience. Year 10 also has two periods a week on workplace issues, such as bullying at work and sexual harassment.

Values Education

All students clearly understand that the school's key value is 'respect'. There are signs in every room and in the students' diaries reminding them of its importance. Parents reported a 'culture of respect' in which girls looked after each other and each other's belongings. A 'no put-down' rule is in place, and girls have practice in intensive listening.

Extracurricular Activities and Electives

Students at Gilmore and their parents express pride in the diversity of opportunities at the school. The girls can be involved in a great many extracurricular activities, including Tournament of the Minds, Rock Eisteddfod, the State School Spectacular, debating, environmental projects and sports. Many of the teachers support these activities in their own time. Many of the activities are also cross-age opportunities.

26 Shepparton High School

School Details

Shepparton High School is situated in rural Victoria with an enrolment of approximately 838 students, who are from quite diverse backgrounds.

Whole-school Approach

The School's notice board statement outside the main building states that the school is 'Caring, Concerned and Committed to Quality Education'. This reflects the school's adoption of a whole-school approach to student wellbeing.

Programs in the wellbeing and student development area are valued and, as much as possible, embedded in the curriculum rather than layered on top. Staff performance review is linked to action teams headed by a key learning area leader and a year level leader, bringing student management and curriculum in synergy.

Wellbeing as a Priority

Wellbeing is a very high priority in the school and there is significant investment in programs, personnel and professional development in aspects of student wellbeing. A school chaplain is part of the school's support of students. A school nurse, who not only provides first aid but also runs wellbeing programs, is funded by the school.

Effective Classroom Management

The school's Student Code of Conduct has been developed with significant input from students. Teachers believe it is essential to intervene as soon as there are indications of a problem and follow up. They work on the principle of using the lowest level of intervention first.

Key staff members make a point of getting to know all of the students at the school and their names and to be visible and approachable in the yard at lunchtime. Teachers on yard duty talk to each other about potentially difficult situations as they change over. Teachers try to model the desired cooperative and respectful behaviour in their relationships with the students, especially when there is a behaviour management incident. They don't just demand compliance. Teachers are encouraged to use a cooperative group work approach as an aspect of behaviour management.

Positive Approach to Diversity

The school has taken a strong proactive position towards its diverse student population. There are many signs that ethnic conflict is minimal. Groups of students mix well in sport and at break times. Harmony days are held, with an emphasis on tolerance. A large mural designed and executed by Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) students has the theme of 'we are one but we are many'. It is fused with the school's crest and is prominently displayed in the school. The school also has an on site facility for hearing-impaired students on site and this has also contributed to an acceptance of diversity.

Pride in the School and High Academic Expectations

Most of the students are proud of their school and perceive the diversity of the school and the large range of available electives as two especially positive features. They also see the school as delivering strong academic results.

Positive Student–Student relationships

There is a strong culture of positive peer relationships and many students give a lot of the credit for this to the Year 7 camp held at the beginning of each year (see below).

Positive Teacher–Student relationships

Students saw their teachers as friendly and caring.

Teacher Support Structures

Year 12 students have one teacher who acts as their mentor.

Effective Transition Programs

The Year 7 transition camp has been highly effective in developing positive student relationships. It is held in a commercial camp in the north of Victoria and Year 7 students participate in a range of structured teamwork challenges and activities. An attempt is made to ensure that all students work in a team with every other student in Year 7 and, as a result, students soon begin to feel comfortable with each other and make friends. The message from the camp of tolerance and cooperation continues to be adopted by many students. The Year 11 peer supporters also attend the Year 7 camp.

Peer Support Systems

Selected Year 11 students are trained as peer supporters as part of the school's anti-bullying and anti-harassment campaign.

Student Leadership and Ownership

Student leadership is important at the school. Student leaders have authentic input into policy development and review. Students feel empowered to take initiative even if they are not in a leadership role. Students can easily start a club or organise a performance of some kind at lunchtime with the full support of the student body. A sculpture garden, which celebrates the school's music program with a group of large, stylised mosaic figures, has been created and made by students.

Anti-bullying Components

The bullying and anti-harassment policy has been developed and extensively reviewed and is now published in the school diary. The section defines bullying and explains why bullying behaviours must be addressed and how the school goes about this. A flow chart shows the involvement of welfare personnel, coordinators, peer supporters or counsellors and administration. A bullying survey is given to students every year. The Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC) uses a hybrid version of non-punitive approaches when dealing with bullying situations. Students are given the message that it takes more courage to stand up for someone than to ignore bullying and this is starting to have some impact.

Values Education

The school focuses on the responsibility of all members of the community to work cooperatively in partnership and show tolerance for differences.

Structured Lunchtime Activities

Over the past few years the school has employed an activities officer to organise activities at lunchtime. However, financial constraints have temporarily limited this direction. The school works on the assumption that when students are busy and engaged, they're less likely to be getting into trouble or bullying anyone. The chaplain and others also run a few activities, classes and clubs for the students at lunchtime.

Extracurricular Activities and Electives

The school's annual musical production is one way in which positive peer relationships have been developed.

Electives are a positive feature of the school program and have recently been introduced to the Year 8 program. Students speak very positively about the electives as an aspect of what they like at the school. The school believes that the electives program has resulted in a drop in the number of Year 8 students being placed in Time Out.

Specific Programs

The school also uses some gender-focused programs such as *True Blue*.

28 Ruthven Primary School

School Details

Ruthven Primary School is situated in the northern Melbourne suburb of Reservoir. It is a school with 280 students and two classes at each year level. There are many children with impairments and disabilities and the school employs ten integration aides. Ruthven also has a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Teacher Collaboration and Connectedness

The principal and staff's vision for the school is that all students aim high, develop confidence, achieve and become lifelong learners. The teachers collaborate very effectively to achieve this shared vision and there is a great deal of teamwork and sharing of resources and materials.

Whole-school Approach

The Ruthven school song, sung at every weekly assembly, reinforces messages about the school's values and goals.

New staff members are introduced to the values and direction of the school through a three-day training program at the end of January.

Effective Behaviour Management

Good relationships, pro-social values and an engaging curriculum underpin behaviour management at the school. The staff intervene swiftly in any incident of concern. Classes negotiate their own set of 'essential agreements' at the beginning of the year and classroom rules and consequences are displayed in every room.

Yard duty teachers have ten rules and a behaviour-tracking sheet. The leadership team focuses on re-educating students about pro-social values and behaviours rather than a disciplinary approach with consequences for misbehaviour.

Pride in the School and High Academic Expectations

The school's motto is 'Aim High'. The academic program creates school pride and high expectations and this is clearly understood by parents and teachers. Children are encouraged to take risks with learning.

Positive Student–Student relationships

Positive peer relationships are apparent in the school and reflect cooperative group work. The school has also has a long history of using cooperative learning. Many students in Years 4–6 play sport in cross-age teams because of the small size of the school and thus get to know each other well.

Peer Support Systems

The school has an SRC and a buddy program teams Years 5–6 students with Preps. Selected students in Year 6 are trained as peer mediators.

Student Leadership and Ownership

A house system operates in the school to foster team spirit and encourage children to support one another. The leaders of each house report at assembly.

Students are taught to take the lead in parent–teacher interviews and report directly to them about their schoolwork. This format leads to high levels of attendance at parent–teacher interviews.

Anti-bullying Components

The children have been taught to use the ICI approach (Ignore, Confront, and then Inform) in bullying situations.

Values Education

There is a strong focus on teaching the following key values: Responsibility for learning, Cooperation and Teamwork, Respect, Loyalty, Support and Consideration for Others, Honesty, and 'Humour, Fun and Enjoyment'. The values approach of the school is seen to be an essential element of aiming high and academic excellence in educational results. The values are embedded in the teaching and learning practices, rather than added on to them. There is a deliberate focus on values at the weekly assembly and the values are a significant component of the school song.

Embedded Social Competencies

The school teaches social skills and rewards pro-social behaviours in a variety of ways. There is a special effort 'raffle' and teachers place a marble in a jar for pro-social skill observed in the classroom. When enough are collected, students receive a larger whole-class reward. There are awards for excellence in behaviour as well as sporting excellence. Students take turns to speak at assembly each week and this is part of a planned program of confidence building through the development of social skills. The principal gives positive feedback on their presentations.

Specific Programs

The *You Can Do It!* program is also a part of the school's programming.

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