

Working Together

Good practice in Queensland Schools

Case studies of effective school based
action against bullying

Current 21 October 2010



Queensland Government

On 23 February 2010 the Premier announced the formation of the *Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence* (the Alliance) to provide advice on best practice measures to address bullying and violence in Queensland schools to the Minister for Education and Training, the Honourable Geoff Wilson MP.

The Alliance is independently chaired by Professor Ian O'Connor (Griffith University) and includes representatives from:

- Education Queensland
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Queensland
- Queensland Council for Parents and Citizens Association
- Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools
- Queensland Independent Schools Parents Council
- Queensland Teachers Union
- Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union
- Queensland Independent Education Union
- Catholic sector principals
- State sector principals
- Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (Queensland)
- Indigenous education representative
- Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

In September 2010, the Alliance endorsed the release of *Working Together: Good practice in Queensland schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying*.

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Introduction

The Queensland Government has been working hard to address the increasingly complex issues of bullying, cyber bullying and violence in schools.

Working Together: Good Practice in Queensland Schools – Case studies of effective school based action against bullying provides examples of good local practice in Queensland state, independent and Catholic schools. The case studies are provided to assist schools in determining their own local action to address bullying.

These case studies represent concerted effort and dedication by the schools profiled. Thank you to all the schools for generously sharing their work and their stories.

The case studies have been de-identified to ensure a focus on the good practice of the schools rather than the schools themselves. They have been grouped according to three themes of: Whole School, Restorative Practices and Social and Emotional learning approaches. Where schools have used a commercial program, a link has been provided for further information.

The views expressed, products and programs included are the views of the schools themselves, and does not imply endorsement by the state, independent or Catholic schooling sectors. Inclusion in this package is not to be taken as endorsement of a particular program or approach.

The Good Practice Case Studies are part of a package of materials developed by the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence (QSAAV). The role of QSAAV is to provide the Queensland Government with independent advice on strategies to address issues of bullying and violence in all state and non-state schools throughout Queensland. One specific task of the Alliance is to identify evidence-based best practice across Queensland education sectors, nationally and internationally, which may be implemented in Queensland schools.

A key achievement of QSAAV has been the development of an effective framework which is based on national and international best practice to assist schools to take action against bullying. Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying is available at

<http://education.qld.gov.au/student-services/behaviour/ksaaav/index.html>

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

School A – A School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Approach

School A has an enrolment of approximately 950 students between Year 8 and 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The school uses the following definition: *Bullying, harassment and/or intimidation involves the abuse of power with the intention of causing distress to other person/s, or for personal gain or gratification.*

PROGRAMS/APPROACHES

School Wide Positive Behaviour Support

School A was one of the first Queensland schools to adopt [School Wide Positive Behaviour Support](#) (SWPBS) as a whole-school approach to managing student behaviour. SWPBS has been operating in the school since 2005 and is well embedded and supported by the school community. Due to the transient nature of a significant proportion of the population, staff are required to reiterate and re-teach the behavioural expectations frequently to ensure all new students are aware of the expectations.

SWPBS data determines which behaviours need addressing. The data regularly collected as part of SWPBS provides evidence that bullying is not a significant problem at School A. Therefore the school has not addressed it outside of the SWPBS framework.

Respectful behaviour is modelled by all school staff.

The Healthy Connections Program

A number of the administration team have a Health and Physical Education background and, with several other staff members, have developed *The Healthy Connections Program*. This program has a personal development and human relationships focus. It is comprised of weekly timetabled lessons of 70 minutes for all year levels, which focus on different aspects of health and wellbeing appropriate to the needs of the year level. For example, in Year 8 the students participate in the *Rock and Water* program, anti-harassment workshops and trust and team building lessons. These lessons reinforce the school's expectations of student behaviour.

Safe School Strategy

School A also has a *Safe School Strategy*. This is published in the staff and student diary. The school definition of bullying and 12 student management strategies are listed in the strategy.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Bullying is approached and dealt with using the model of expectations and consequences developed by the school as part of SWPBS, and the school's student behaviour plan. It is not dealt with as a separate behaviour that has consequences outside of these.

CHALLENGES

One challenge is to develop strategies and responses that are appropriate for both the student who is bullied and the student doing the bullying. Developing strategies to assist the school to attend effectively and appropriately to parent concerns is also required.

School B – A Peace Builder Approach

School B is a primary school with an enrolment of approximately 480 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School B defines a bully as: *Someone who purposely hurts or overpowers others, using physical or emotional ways.* This definition was chosen in consultation with the students and community.

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

A non-government community agency, working with the school and community to develop 'common ground' and common language, assisted the school to become a [PeaceBuilder](#) school. *PeaceBuilders* is a youth violence prevention program adopted by organisations to shift the entire climate to a peaceful, productive and safe place for children, teenagers, parents and staff.

The beliefs and actions agreed upon by the community to enhance the wellbeing of the whole community guide the day-to-day management of the school. These beliefs and actions are embedded in the school and community culture.

Teachers explicitly teach the behaviours '*we want the kids to own*'. An *Expectation Wall* provides a daily visual reminder in many classrooms of the expected behaviours. Students were involved in developing the behavioural expectations.

School B also places a high priority on teaching about tolerance and difference and building empathy in students. Staff teach students the skills to develop positive relationships with peers, and in *Circle Time*¹ address community issues of importance, encouraging a transparent environment and information gathering. *Circle Time* issues are communicated to the community via the newsletter. The *Breakfast Program* is another opportunity for students to develop positive relationships with peers. Each morning the school offers breakfast for all children which provides a time where children can sit together and participate in positive conversation. The older children also assist in the set up and clean up from the program.

Parents are valued and are considered to be an essential part of the team at School B. The first conversation with parents is never when an issue or situation is problematic. The school builds the relationship and involves all parents early to work together to 'nip issues in the bud'. As a significant number of parents do not enter the school grounds, many parent-teacher relationships are developed and maintained by teachers spending time at the school gate. These relationships are also fostered by school staff participating in the social life of the students and community.

As part of fostering a peaceful, productive and safe school climate, School B sets aside an A+ *Reward Day* to reward great behaviour. Teachers across Year levels organise reward sessions for all children who meet the school's positive behaviour requirements. Each term those who do not meet the requirements are counselled on strategies to assist them to achieve in the following term.

¹ **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The school uses a *Peaceful Playroom* as a place where students are taught to improve their social skills. It is used during break times. Students are withdrawn from the playground, taught skills in socialising and making friends, and are then supported to use these skills back in the playground through a support person monitoring and providing prompts and reminders. In situations of bullying, parents are included from the beginning. Disciplinary measures are used when the bullying includes physical violence and when students do not change their behaviours to those included in the *Expectation Wall*.

School C – You Can Do It Approach

School C is a primary school catering for approximately 80 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined in the school's behaviour plan for students as: *Any behaviour that is intended to hurt, belittle, intimidate or take unfair advantage of another person either physically or emotionally.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

School C has adopted the [You Can Do It program](#), and through the persistent embedding of the principles of the program in school life, it has provided a common language for staff and students. The program assists in expressing and maintaining behavioural expectations and it functions as a framework and reference point to discuss these expectations.

The biggest contributor to changing the school culture has been the change to the processes for staff to deal with reports of school violence and bullying by students.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The school community has agreed to a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying, which means staff are expected to respond to all reports of incidents until satisfactory consequences have been implemented and the student gives assurances that the bullying behaviour will not continue. All incidents are viewed as serious and are responded to consistently with an investigation, regardless of how insignificant any particular incident may appear.

A three stage process to dealing with bullying behaviour is a standard response. The first stage is that students fill in an incident form that requires reflective as well as factual responses. Secondly, a letter is sent home and finally, parents are interviewed.

The *Community Circle* process plays a critical role in reinforcing the behavioural expectations at School C. This process involves sitting in a circle of peers where students talk about a particular incident and how it affected them. *Community Circles* promote a direct exchange between the student who has done the bullying and the other student/s that have been affected. Rather than the adult being the one who talks and determines consequences, the adult facilitates (with set rules) an exchange that allows people to express their feelings and make amends in a safe and non-threatening process. This process is used in any instance where initial attempts to change behaviours are not successful or when an incident is serious, for example, a fight, verbal abuse, denigrating the families of others with the intention to hurt or obvious rejection of a child over an extended period. The process is generally conducted by the principal.

In relation to cyber bullying, the current school policy requires students to hand all electronic devices to teachers if and when they are brought to school. Any reported incidents of cyber bullying will be responded to in the same manner as other forms of bullying.

The *Student Internet Agreement*, signed by all students, includes provision for the students to have one chance, if there is evidence of misuse, before their agreement is revoked, and access to electronic media at the school is restricted.

CHALLENGES

Assisting children to understand the violence they see in interactive computer games, on television or that may occur elsewhere has no place at school, is an ongoing challenge.

School D – Whole School Approach

School D has an enrolment of approximately 460 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School D defines bullying as: *The inappropriate use of power by an individual or group over another less powerful person or group that is deliberate and repeated over time. Bullying can be direct or indirect.*

PROGRAMS

A whole school approach to the management of student behaviour is embedded at School D. It is called the 'School D Five' and lists the five key expectations explicitly taught to students. A whole school reward and behaviour level system reinforces these expectations. All students begin with a C grading for behaviour and are expected to maintain or improve it. Students are able to participate in a reward day at the end of each term.

Units of work are developed to teach positive behaviour and are implemented throughout the year, commencing with a one week unit at the beginning of the year, and followed by focused one-day units each term. These teaching units ensure that students in all year levels understand the *School Behaviour Code*, school rules based on the *Code*, and the consequences that can result from inappropriate behaviour.

More importantly, the units of work help instil the personal qualities necessary for achievement and social-emotional development. This is achieved through explicitly teaching the foundations of safety, participation and hard work, respect, organisation and resilience, as well as conflict resolution skills and strategies for responding to bullying and harassment. Specific lessons address assertiveness and the role of the bystander. There is also a focus on cyber bullying which covers developing empathy in students, the legal consequences of cyber bullying, and the implications of leaving a digital footprint.

Positive connections are also encouraged and vulnerable students may be linked with peers to create bonds of caring.

PROCESSES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

At School D, challenging behaviour is logically linked to the function of the behaviour. Therefore, explicitly teaching an alternative behaviour which serves the same function as the problem behaviour is the first step in intervention. Bullying is addressed within the 'School D Five' framework of consequences as a Level Three Behaviour which may attract disciplinary consequences including detention, writing an apology or delivering a verbal apology, and would involve a process of reflection.

Students who do not maintain a C grade in behaviour do not participate in reward days and are required to attend counselling or group sessions with a team, which includes the principal, to address the problem behaviour.

The principal expects school staff to exercise active supervision skills and hyper-vigilance in addressing behaviour that does not comply with the 'School D Five'.

CHALLENGES

The major challenge for School D is to ensure that new staff align their own expectations of managing behaviour and supervision to the high expectations required at the school.

School E – Whole School Reward Program

School E is a culturally diverse high school with 785 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Through staff and parent consultation, School E adopted the definition: *Bully involves the abuse of power with the intention of causing distress to the other person(s), or for personal gain or gratification. Behaviours may include repeated behaviour that can be covert and subtle, and be social, psychological, verbal, physical and/or sexual in nature.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The programs and approaches employed by School E to prevent and address bullying were chosen by the staff team. A whole school *Student Reward Program* underpins all other programs. The key principles are:

- Feeding the spirit is important to learning. Students respond to encouragement.
- Acknowledge and celebrate success...praise, praise, praise...little and often.
- Provide a cumulative, visual picture of application and achievement across all subjects.

The following programs focus on the development of students' social and emotional wellbeing.

High priority is given to addressing the cultural needs of students. The school has a number of cultural awareness packages and posters aimed at providing a better understanding of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Hmong and Polynesian cultures. These programs are supported by three Community Liaison Officers, greatly enhancing the capacity of the school to engage successfully with the community in building aspiration for learning. The school motto *Quality and Equality* is the key ingredient in all school celebrations.

A number of mentoring programs are employed to develop positive connection, including:

- 8s are *Mates Program*, where Year 11 students mentor new Year 8 students
- Academic mentoring program for Year 11 and 12 students
- Year 7 transition programs which include the secondary school delivering 3½ hours of curriculum per week for neighbouring primary students
- *Helping Friends* training in Years 10 and 11
- *Indigenous Aspirations Program*.

Structured programs to teach appropriate behaviours are delivered mainly through the Year 8, 9 and 10 Health and Physical Education curriculum and include [Mind Matters](#) activities, decision making skills, and [Rock and Water](#) for all Year 8 students. The school's *How to Respond to Bullying program* is implemented through the school's seven step action plan.

Anger control programs are also provided for selected students through a partnership with Youth Justice. School E is currently negotiating training by the Youth Justice team for staff.

The guidance officer coordinates a comprehensive *Student Support Services Team* that case manages identified students. Members of this team include the school nurse, Youth Support

Coordinator, Community Liaison Officer, Community Education Councillor, School Based Police Officer, Chaplain and Learning Support staff.

Every teacher is required to undertake a confidential *Essential Skills* profiling reflection session twice a year and whole school data collected from these profiles is used to identify areas of need, which in turn influences planning for future professional development activities for staff.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Incidents of bullying are responded to by using the consequences and responses stated in the school's behaviour plan, which includes a bullying and cyber bullying policy.

Mediation sessions may be used where appropriate to deal with bullying behaviour. Behavioural expectations at the school are high and disciplinary sanctions will be applied if students do not respond to formal warnings to improve their behaviour. This reflects the seriousness of bullying behaviour and gives a strong message that it is not acceptable at the school. All students and parents at School E are aware that incidents involving physical violence automatically result in very severe consequences. This message is delivered constantly at year level assemblies, newsletter articles, home visits, induction of new students and re-entry procedures after suspension.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES APPROACH

School F – Restorative Practices Framework

School F caters for approximately 1200 students from Year 5 through to Year 12 and is organised into three sections: Junior (Years 5-6), Middle (Years 7-9) and Senior School (Years 10-12).

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined in the School F *Anti-Bullying Policy* as: *usually a repeated attack on, or harassment of, another person or group of people*. It is acknowledged in this Policy that bullying can occur unintentionally, if individuals are insensitive to the feelings of others. In this way, this definition gives priority to the lived experience of the target primarily, rather than the intention of the student who does the bullying. Types of bullying defined in the policy include physical, verbal, electronic, social and emotional. School F's Anti-Bullying Policy was revised in 2007 with input from students and staff in a process which involved both groups in the study of the literature around the issue.

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

Since 2004, School F has been implementing a [Restorative Practices framework](#) to underpin its approach to pastoral care and discipline, student development, and Social-Emotional Learning programs. This approach was chosen because it offered explicit detail of practice, enabled study and reflection on the strategies employed, and its philosophical base was congruent with, and supportive of, School F's particular values. Implementation is supported by a continuous, ongoing process of staff professional development.

The [Restorative Practices](#) model focuses on building and developing positive, healthy relationships between students, and between students and adults in the school community. Attention to the personal and social development of individual students and their connectedness to each other and to their school are key parts of this approach. In each of the three sections in the school, an age-appropriate approach is taken to the development of these relationships and the personal development of students.

In the Junior School, much of the work in social-emotional development is based around the regular, scheduled use of Circle Time² within each class. Through this regular experience of discussing feelings and emotions, the students develop an emotional literacy that serves them well in times of stress. They are better able to communicate with one another and with adults about things that are important to them or that concern them. The familiarity of the students with the Circle Time format also enables it to be used as a means of addressing conflicts or wrongdoing within the class group, should the need arise.

A similar personal development focus continues into the Middle School years through a coordinated weekly program which addresses a range of topics including bullying and aggression, but also dealing with emotions such as shame and anger. This regular program is supported by other activities within the school such as camps and personal development activity days, some of which are integrated within the formal curriculum. In the classroom, major units of study in both of the main intake Year levels (Year 5 and Year 8) introduce students to the philosophy and practice of the pastoral care approach. In the Year 8

² **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions

humanities program, a unit focuses specifically upon conflict, violence and bullying, and building resilience in students.

Reflection days, camps, and other specific activities in the Senior School employ a more mature approach to addressing similar topics in the context of the students' later stage of adolescence.

These proactive, positive approaches to building relationships and to the personal development of students have improved student culture in significant ways. Things still do go wrong, however, but when they do, a restorative approach focuses first on understanding and repairing the harm that has been done to people and relationships. Through restorative processes, the student 'wrongdoer' is challenged and enabled to be accountable for these consequences of his wrongdoing.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The *Restorative Practices* approach is of particular relevance to bullying because of its relationship focus. In a restorative approach to a bullying incident, the student who has bullied is challenged by the Year Level Coordinator or Head of School to understand and appreciate the level and depth of the harm caused to the other student, and is held accountable for the real consequences of the behaviour by being called to face the 'target' student and that student's parents or other supporters. Through a carefully controlled and safe process (a Community Conference), the 'offender' and the 'target' students and their respective communities of care (usually their parents) come together to explore the harm that has been done and to determine how it might be repaired. Through the conference process, the 'target' of the bullying is given a real voice in determining what needs to be done to feel safe again, with the support of the other members of the community. The conference is also a vehicle through which the student who has been bullying comes to an appreciation of the pain and hurt caused to others through the bullying behaviour, including the student's own parents or supporters.

The Community Conferences can be life-changing experiences for all involved. They are certainly intense experiences. Less significant cases of bullying (as determined through the eyes of the 'target') may be handled with a scaled-down version of the full conference. Such a mini-conference could be facilitated by a specially-trained member of staff, such as a Year Level Coordinator, and would involve the 'offender' and 'target' and one or two student supporters for each. This approach, and the process used to facilitate such meetings, minimises any chance of the 'target' being re-victimised either by the process, or as a result of the response on the part of the school. Participants report that such restorative practices are respectful of each of the persons involved, while sending clear disapproving messages of the particular behaviour which the community is directly and forcefully confronting. In almost all cases, the bullying stops.

Since the introduction of the *Restorative Practices* approach within School F, and the subsequent reduced reliance on punitive responses, the culture of the student body has moved from an "us and them" mentality towards a greater appreciation of the role of staff in supporting the growth and development of students across the school. This has led to a reduced reluctance on the part of bullying 'targets' to see reporting bullying as "dobbing" someone in.

In the Middle School in particular, a regular survey instrument is employed to explore students' experiences of conflict and bullying within the school, and serves to identify students with whom specific interventions are made by members of the pastoral care team.

To monitor and evaluate the approach, in 2007 School F engaged with a local university to conduct a joint longitudinal study of students' psycho-social wellbeing (among other measures). This survey instrument was administered in 2007, and again in 2009, involving almost the entire student population in each phase of the study. This research is proving invaluable in developing understanding of the students' needs across a range of psychological and social areas, as well as in modifying the approach as needed.

CHALLENGES

Because the *Restorative Practices* approach runs counter to the dominant media culture to which the students are exposed, there is a constant need to reinforce the schools messages and to keep true to its values and philosophy. This occurs through the Personal Development program, and through curricular units focussing on various aspects of Restorative Practice.

The increasing potential for cyber bullying is also a challenge for those in education who are not digital natives to understand and to effectively respond. The upside in dealing with the use of the internet and mobile phones for bullying by young people is that these forms of communication usually leave a trail of evidence with which the offender can be confronted.

School G – Restorative Conversations

School G caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 12. It consists of three schools, Junior School (K-Yr 6), Middle School (Yr 7-9) and the Senior School (Yr 10-12), and has a current enrolment of approximately 820 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Rather than focusing on the term 'bullying', School G focuses on the development and maintenance of healthy and meaningful relationships among its members. When relationships break down, irrespective of the reasons, the school seeks first to resolve issues in a restorative way. This in no way diminishes the school's intolerance of bullying behaviours. Ultimately, bullying is about inappropriate relationship skills and the school sees an educative responsibility towards teaching students the ways in which respectful relationships can be and need to be conducted.

THE SCHOOL'S APPROACH

School G boasts a strong pastoral care system which provides a firm basis and network of support to all students. The school's curriculum and values are interwoven throughout this pastoral approach, thus strengthening support provided to all students and affording many opportunities to explore issues with students.

In order to develop an effective and relevant program which minimises tolerance of bullying behaviours and highlights positive behaviours, a group of students from the Junior, Middle and Senior Schools were engaged in a think-tank to explore social and relationship issues in the preparation stage of this project. Arising from the think-tank, students from School G along with senior staff developed a school-wide program which seeks to heighten awareness of others before self as an underpinning value across the school community. This project has unfolded in the form of: assembly presentations which incorporate anti-bullying films and YouTube clips; guest presenters; senior student friendship advocates; posters; and boxes which allow students to anonymously identify positive and negative behaviour amongst students.

Further to this, a middle-school-based group was established in 2008 to explore and educate fellow students about the risks and positive aspects of internet use. This group has its foundations in a similar organisation established in America entitled *Teen Angels*.

School G also endeavours to involve the parent body in this education process, via publications and invitations to presentations by guest speakers. The school acknowledges the fundamental importance of a partnership between school and home.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

With education as the primary means of managing the issue of bullying, School G engages in a restorative process when relationships break down. Ultimately this process requires the support of all parties and more traditional methods of discipline are used when the student/s doing the bullying is/are not remorseful for their actions. The school believes that empathy and compassion are traits which can be strengthened, developed and learned and a restorative response allows this to occur. Senior staff and many teachers have been trained in the processes of restorative practices, under the tuition of expert in the field, Margaret Thorsborne. This training is ongoing, and several staff undertake this professional learning annually. The success of such an approach relies on the expertise and wide-spread understanding of staff, parents and students. The language of restoration, respect and

responsibility is part of classroom language and is used in everyday interaction with students at School G.

CHALLENGES

School G considers that models of punishment-based discipline rarely deal with the heart of inappropriate, bullying behaviours. Nonetheless, society tends to expect a heavy-handed response to such breaches of conduct. Being required to face other students whom they have bullied in a structured, supportive environment where consequences are discussed, agreed upon and reparation is made in a genuine empathic way is not a soft option. They are approaches which allow for genuine growth, change and healing. The central challenge for School G is the development of a sustained broad community understanding and valuing of a restorative approach to relationship breakdown. Importantly, education needs to be broad-based and ongoing, and involve parents, students and teachers. The effectiveness of the approaches used also need to be monitored and evaluated regularly.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL APPROACHES

School H – The Strength of Relationships

School H caters for 1256 students from Years 5 to 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School H defines bullying as: *usually a repeated attack on, or harassment of, another person or group of people. It could be physical, verbal or psychological. Bullying can occur unintentionally—if we are insensitive to the feelings and safety of others.*

Bullying can be.....

Physical bullying, such as kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, spitting, fighting, damaging or destroying other people's property, jostling, pinching, touching, or physical intimidation.

Verbal bullying, such as offensive or abusive comments, sarcasm, crude jokes and comments, ridiculing appearance, actions or beliefs, teasing or putting other people down (sledding and pay outs), verbal intimidation, whistling.

Electronic bullying, such as obscene or threatening phone calls, texting and emails or internet posting about people.

Social bullying, such as exclusion (rejection from groups), spreading rumours, gossip, racial or sexual comments, graffiti or notes about others.

Emotional bullying, such as victimisation, instilling fear in others, extortion (forcing other students to hand over money, food or other possessions), forcing other students to do their work.

STUDENT FORMATION PLANS

Responses to bullying at School H are embedded in the school's approach to student formation implemented through the organisational structures, supervision and interaction with students, pastoral care structures, extensive outdoor education programs, school activities, assemblies and the student formation curriculum. The *Student Formation Plan* is a fully articulated plan of personal development for students that aims to develop young people who are flexible in a changing world and fully prepared to make a difference in that world.

The *Student Formation Plan* articulates responsibilities and strategies to achieve the following goals (the extracts are in italics below and have been amended for reproduction):

- *Develop students according to the values and ethos of the school.*
- *Develop personal relationships based on trust and mutual respect between staff and students in order that staff will have a positive influence in the lives of students.*
- *Develop a sense of ownership, belonging to and pride in School H life, traditions and physical environment.*
- *Provide a physical and emotional environment where students and their property are respected and safe.*
- *Develop understanding and valuing of difference in race, culture, gender and class. This will involve the building of respect and knowledge of racial and cultural diversity, women and their treatment, multiple masculinities and its expressions, etc*
- *Have fun.*

ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY

School H gives explicit messages to its whole school community about its response to bullying behaviour. All members of the school community are provided with a copy of the *Anti-Bullying Strategy* which is sent home at the beginning of the year with a letter from the school principal. The following text in italics is an extract from the School H *Anti-Bullying Strategy*.

How can you help someone who is being bullied?

- *If you know of bullying, report it.*
- *Show the person bullying that you and your friends strongly disapprove of his actions*
- *The person being bullied may be too scared or upset to tell anyone. Remember that NOBODY deserves to be bullied.*
- *Give support to students who are being bullied. Help them to report it.*

If you are bullied, don't retaliate verbally or physically. Report It.

- *Bullying will continue if those responsible think they can avoid being held accountable for their actions.*
- *Approach your House Dean, House Tutor, Counsellor or another adult with whom you feel comfortable.*
- *Try not to show that you are upset, try to look and sound confident. Don't give them the satisfaction of thinking that they have hit their target.*
- *Consider whether you have been bullying others yourself (e.g. have you been name calling, annoying, threatening, showing off?) If you have, change your behaviour.*
- *If the bully continues after reporting it, report it again and talk to your House Dean.*
- *Consider talking to the school Counsellor for help in developing skills, which can be useful in situations where you might be bullied.*

At School H, our community values require us to hold those who might bully others to be accountable for their actions so that they might learn more appropriate ways of relating to others, and to provide real support for those who have been affected.

What are we doing at School H to prevent bullying?

- *Responding appropriately to every report of bullying*
- *Surveys on the incidence of bullying*
- *Through the curriculum, examining aspects of bullying*
- *Inclusion of anti-bullying sessions in the school's Student Formation Curriculum*
- *Involvement of all staff*
- *Visual advertising around the school*
- *Encouraging positive peer group pressure*
- *Explanation of this policy during Student Formation Classes, Year Level Assemblies and publications to parents*
- *Encouraging peer support*
- *Teacher observation of students in and out of classes*

- *Ongoing professional development of staff*
- *Providing a supportive environment for students*
- *Counselling for those affected by bullying*

School I – Beating Bully Bulldozer Approach

School I is a small rural school with approximately 80 students.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

The definition of bullying used in the school's behaviour plan was developed by staff and the parent association is: *Bullying is the deliberate, persistent, verbal or mental intimidation (including ignoring/excluding) or harassment of a person with the intent of causing hurt or discomfort.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The [High Five bullying prevention program](#) is used with Prep and Year 1 students and was chosen for its appropriateness for very young students.

Beating Bully Bulldozer is a program used by the school for all year levels, but particularly Years 2-7, to address the issues and behaviours associated with bullying.

The Beating Bully Bulldozer (BBB) program appealed because of the common sense approach and engaging characters. The information relating to 'what isn't bullying' was considered very useful. The school uses a series of videos across all Year levels called *Sooper Puppy* and BBB supports these videos well. *Sooper Puppy* addresses many social issues and behaviours, such as name calling. The students relate very well to the cartoon characters.

Monday afternoon and Friday afternoon are set aside every week for every class to reinforce the messages and skills in BBB and to view the *Sooper Puppy* videos as a class group. These groups are sometimes held at lunch time, when necessary, to reinforce particular behaviours with specific groups or individuals.

Mentoring is also employed as a strategy to support the development of positive behaviours. A group of students who exhibited challenging behaviour developed a cancer relay team raising more than \$2000 for cancer research, after working on goal setting and developing a group focus.

Focussed structured lunchtime activities are organised by students for every lunch time of the school week (including chess and other board games, as well as team sports e.g. soccer and netball). This reduces bullying behaviour.

PROCESSES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

The parents are contacted as soon as possible. Students are required to write their account (where appropriate) of the situation as a class activity. Written accounts often identify areas of concern in an efficient manner.

As a consequence for their bullying behaviour, students are required to write an apology or do something that demonstrates an improvement to themselves or the school community. For example a student may complete a *Time to Think About* sheet under the headings: What I did; What rule I broke; My side of the story; and What I can do next time. Other students commit to organising an activity for the school community, for example, setting up an obstacle course for the Prep students.

CHALLENGES

Applying the strategies employed by School I in the transition to a large high school may be a challenge for some students, and equipping these students to deal with bullying and the social challenges of large school environments is essential.

School J – Focus on Prevention

School J caters for approximately 450 students from Prep to Year 12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School J defines bullying as: *The deliberate, persistent, verbal or mental intimidation or harassment of a person by another person or group with the intent of causing hurt or discomfort.*

As outlined in the Parent Handbook, the School J Position Statement is:

- *School J is totally opposed to bullying in all its forms: physical, psychological and verbal (written and spoken).*
- *School J believes prevention through whole school involvement and awareness is the most effective way to combat bullying.*
- *The school community aims to create an environment of understanding and cooperation in which the victims of bullying will feel empowered to seek help and, by collaboration with staff and others, confront the influence of the bully.*
- *The attitude and response of the school community will help bullies realise their behaviour is anti-social and damaging to themselves. The bully will recognise the need to be guided towards more appropriate interpersonal skills.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

The school has focused on prevention to develop the following three anti-bullying initiatives:

- *Is It True? Is It Kind? Is it Necessary?* Program, which teaches students to ask these questions before they speak or act.
- The *MIRROR* approach which allows the students to take pride in the person they see in the mirror.
- A buddy culture under which all students see themselves as equals and senior students mentor younger students.

These programs are unique to School J's curriculum and have had great success in preventing bullying, rather than reacting to it after the event. All three programs help students develop positive social skills and form good relationships with others.

Under the *Is It True? Is It Kind? Is it Necessary?* Program, students are encouraged to consider how their words or actions may affect others. Self control and thinking before speaking and acting are challenges that many adolescents face. During the pastoral time in Years 7 to 9, teachers focus on these questions; intensely in Term 1, and then regularly throughout the year. Role plays are especially powerful in encouraging the students to reflect on real-life situations and how they can be better managed. Subject teachers across the middle and senior schools then use these questions to engage students in reflective practice and remind them of the importance of self-discipline when choosing a response. The questions are prominent in all classrooms and have a strong influence on the culture of discussion and mutual respect in these precincts of the school. This program is compulsory and helps students to make good choices when it comes to their communication, not only with each other but with the wider community.

The *MIRROR* approach is incorporated into everything the students do at School J. MIRROR stands for Merciful, Independent, Resourceful, Respectful, Open-minded and Resilient. From Prep, students are exposed to these six terms and are encouraged to reflect every attribute of MIRROR in their daily lives in order to relate successfully and respectfully with others. Students are supported to commit these terms to memory and be able to explain them in an age-appropriate manner. Positive demonstrations of these attributes are recognised and accrue towards a reward for the students, from a special mirror ball key ring for the primary students to an afternoon at the waterfront for students in the higher years. Posters reinforcing these attributes are displayed around the campus and showcase the students demonstrating these attributes. The chaplain and school student leaders regularly refer to the attributes at school community gatherings and through the newsletter.

School J has also implemented a buddy culture which encourages all students to see themselves as equals in the school. Older students are assigned to read with a younger student on a weekly basis and during sports carnivals, the older students provide a 'safety net' by running or swimming alongside their young buddies. The buddy system fosters a culture of extended family within the school, where the older students automatically know to look out for the wellbeing of the younger students.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

While the focus of the school is on prevention, School J takes a zero tolerance approach to bullying. This starts at the pre-entry interview stage and is formally reinforced during assemblies and class.

All staff are vigilant in recognising and addressing any negative interactions. Dealing with bullying at School J is about rehabilitative practices and mediation rather than a punishment-based approach. Each instance of bullying at the school is evaluated individually and a range of consequences incremental to the level of emotional and/or physical harm is used.

The most important factor in dealing with a bullying incident at School J is ensuring relationships are restored between the student who has been bullied and the student who has done the bullying. Rather than just a cursory handshake or apology, mediation between the parties involved is compulsory. Students receive one-on-one counselling from classroom teachers, the assistant principal or chaplain to contemplate how they felt and what could have been done differently and they then talk with the other person involved. Staff are supported with pocket guides of restorative questions and students are followed up with later to ensure that the process has made a positive difference.

Parental input and understanding of School J's preventative anti-bullying initiatives is also of particular importance to the school. There is an open door policy and parents are encouraged to speak to the principal, assistant principal or chaplain about their bullying concerns.

School K – Social Emotional Programs

School K is a P-12 school, with just under 1200 students enrolled in four precincts: Early Years: P-2, Junior Years: 3-5, Middle Years: 6-9 and Senior Years: 10-12.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School K defines bullying as: *when a person is exposed repeatedly and over time to acts of aggression – physical, verbal, cyber, indirect/psychological – with the intent to cause embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. Bullying usually involves abuse of power by an individual or group.*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

[You Can Do It](#), [MindMatters](#) and [KidsMatter](#) are proactive programs which the school has adopted to cater for the social and emotional needs of students.

Cyber bullying has been an increasing area of concern, particularly in the Middle Years precinct. In order to address cyber bullying, School K has implemented a number of initiatives including:

- Guest speaker, Greg Gebhart (ACMA) addressed student, staff and parents
- Cyber Safety Leaders were selected from the student body to help spread positive cyber safety messages throughout the school
- Staff professional learning (including the Cyberia program – a major professional development initiative of the Australian Government Quality Teacher Program which invited participants to develop strategies to foster cyber-safety in their school)
- Cyber safety programs integrated into the curriculum (e.g. Middle Years Media Studies)
- The Cyber Taskforce, comprising of six staff, compiled age-appropriate cyber safety programs/resources for students in Years 3-12. These programs were taught across all year levels in 2009
- Creation and launch in 2009 of the *Consequences for Cyber Offences* document to enable cyber offences to be dealt with in a fair and consistent manner across the school. This document was promoted amongst staff, students and parents and was also previewed by our Adopt-A-Cop before its launch.
- Continued cyber safety education for students, particularly with the roll out of a 1:1 laptop program in 2010 for students in Years 8-10.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

School K's *Anti-Bullying Policy* is currently being reviewed and the *Consequences for Cyber Offences* document is accessed throughout the school.

CHALLENGES

School K has identified a challenge in responding appropriately to cyber bullying incidents which happen at home and/or outside school hours. Frequently these issues have repercussions at school which require a response. The school is aware of its boundaries, limitations and lack of control beyond the school gate, but wants to provide students with support and strategies when operating in the digital world. Responding to complaints of 'bullying' when there are no witnesses or evidence has been identified as another challenge.

School L – Friendly Schools and Families

School L is a primary school catering for 374 students from Prep to Year 7.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

School L has an anti-bullying policy in its Safety Policy on the school's website. The policy, including a definition of bullying, was adapted from the [Friendly Schools and Families](#) whole-school pack. *Bullying:*

- *Is a repeated and unjustifiable behaviour*
- *Intended to cause fear, distress and/or harm to another*
- *May be physical, verbal or indirect/relational*
- *Conducted by a more powerful individual or group*
- *Against a less powerful individual who is unable to effectively resist*

HOW PROGRAMS WERE SELECTED

School L has the *Friendly Schools and Families* whole-school pack, which consists of a classroom pack with posters and five manuals from Level 1 suitable for Prep and Year 1, up to Level 5 suitable for Year 7 students. There are also resources for whole school planning e.g., considering environmental modifications such as supervision, play space and activities to promote safe lunch-breaks. The pack includes a CD-ROM with PowerPoint slides that can be presented to parents and staff, and assembly items. A booklet called *Friendly Families* is also available to give to parents. The program does not directly deal with cyber bullying but it mentions the teasing, threatening, excluding, lies and rumours types of bullying which can be discussed in the cyber bullying context.

Some of the advantages of the program are that it is evidence-based and uses current theory and practice in its approach. The program doesn't require expensive training for the teachers to be able to use it. Worksheets for lessons can be photocopied from the manuals. It is based on the [National Safe Schools Framework](#) and provides portfolio assessment options if the school wants to use them. The program has a unit on bullying, a unit on self-concept, and a unit on friendship skills and peer groups depending on the age level.

The guidance counsellor runs part of the program with the class teachers in Year 2 each year and the parent booklet is sent home to Year 2 families. A parent evening is conducted before the program commences, as parents often express concerns but may not have a lot of information about bullying. Year 2 was selected because that is when the word 'bullying' is more often heard than in the younger classes. Some of the units are also run in selected older classes as an intervention for social problems as they come up. The Year 7 teacher does some work around cyber bullying in Term 4, and last year a Year 3 teacher did some of the [Bounce Back](#) modules with her class.

In addition, each year students in Year 1 participate in *Fun Friends* and students in Year 5 participate in *FRIENDS for Life*, which are designed to increase children's resilience and coping skills for dealing with difficult situations. The programs use a cognitive-behavioural approach which focuses on managing feelings, positive thinking and problem solving.

PROCESSES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

The main proactive strategies are School L's anti-bullying policy, the universal classroom programs and specific teaching and learning. Processes for dealing with bullying incidents are outlined in the *Safety Policy* document as shown in the extract in italics below:

Action

- *Protect the bullied student from further harm*
- *Write down the name/s of the bullied student, who reported the incident and the bystander/s*
- *Interview the bullied student to find out what happened*
- *Suggest strategies that the bullied student might use to avoid being bullied in the future*
- *Individually interview bystander/s using the Shared Concern Approach; discuss strategies these students might use to avoid bullying in the future*
- *Monitor the situation over the following few days*
- *Notify the principal of the incident*
- *Where necessary, speak to class without using any names, Circle Time³, small group meetings, class meeting box*
- *Where appropriate and using discretion, work with parents of the bullied student to assist their child to avoid being bullied in the future; keep them informed about progress and the measures taken*
- *If necessary, where appropriate and using discretion, inform the parents of the student bullying and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification.*

Record Keeping

All complaints that cannot be resolved will be recorded by the staff member handling the complaint and kept on the relevant file/s. Details should include:

- *The nature of the complaint*
- *Dates and names of parties concerned*
- *Staff members involved in handling the complaint*
- *Action taken and outcomes.*

Sometimes the guidance counsellor will individually support children involved in bullying.

CHALLENGES

Cyber bullying has been an issue in upper primary school. School L has addressed the issue with the students concerned, but acknowledge it is a difficult area as the school has limited control over internet and mobile phone use outside school hours. Bullying can be an emotive area for parents and requires careful management.

³ **Circle time** - circle time aims to create a space for students to communicate through discussion, reflection, emotional understanding, personal empowerment, personal identity and making connections. Students explore relationships, feelings, reflections and emotions.