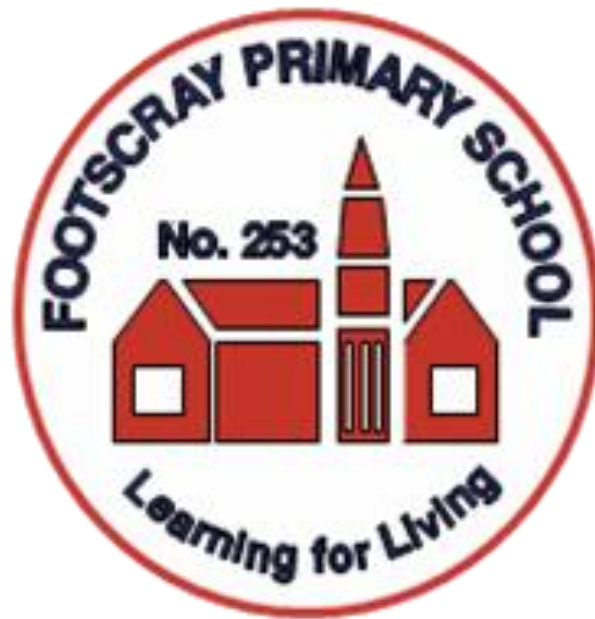


Footscray Primary School

Understanding Bullying



A Statement for Parents

A MESSAGE TO THE FOOTSCRAY PRIMARY SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Footscray Primary School is committed to providing our students with a safe and supportive learning environment. We have a range of policies and resources including our Student Code of Conduct which outlines the rights and responsibilities that all students have in order to maintain a positive and safe environment.

All staff are committed to supporting students in building, maintaining and repairing relationships and to help students develop strategies that enable them to make appropriate choices. Our Student Code of Conduct provides strategies and procedures that enable this to occur.

This document provides an outline of the strategies that our students are taught in the classroom, to support the creation of positive and safe environments. It also provides information on the roles and responsibilities of students, parents and carers and school staff.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

As an IB school that implements the Primary Years Programme, we provide opportunities for our students to understand a broad range of human capacities and responsibilities that encompass intellectual, personal, emotional and social growth. The development and demonstration of these attributes are foundational to students becoming internationally minded, active and caring members who respect themselves, others and the world around them. Our school learning community supports and nurtures students in developing and demonstrating the attributes of the learner profile. The learner profile attributes provide teachers, students and parents with a common language and are part of the daily interactions that occur within our school and across daily learning. At Footscray Primary school we are developing, demonstrating, valuing, appreciating and celebrating the learner profile attributes – reflective, balanced, principled, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, caring, open-minded, inquirers and knowledgeable.

LEARNING HOW TO LEARN & BUILDING RESILIENCE

Throughout primary school, our students are learning valuable life-long skills (Approaches To Learning). Approaches to Learning (ATLs) are an integral part of an IB education and are grounded in the belief that learning how to learn is fundamental to a student's education. Five categories of interrelated skills aim to support students of all ages to become self-regulated learners who know how to ask good questions, set effective goals and pursue their aspirations with the determination to achieve them. These skills also help to support students' sense of agency, encouraging them to see their learning as an active and dynamic process (IBO 2017). By combining the ATL and attributes of the learner profile, Footscray Primary School students think, research, communicate, socialise and manage themselves effectively.

STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS TO ASSIST IN BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS AND RESILIENCE

To help your child relate well with others and build their social and self-management skills, encourage your child to:

SOCIAL SKILLS	
Developing positive interpersonal relationships and collaboration	Interpersonal relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practise empathy and care for others.- Listen closely to others' perspectives and to instructions.- Be respectful to others.- Learn cooperatively in a group: being courteous, sharing, and taking turns.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help others to succeed. - Build consensus and negotiate effectively. - Encourage others to contribute. - Take on a variety of roles in group learning. - Advocate for one's own rights and needs, and those of others. <p>Social and emotional intelligence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be aware of own and others' emotions. - Manage anger and resolve conflict. - Be self and socially aware.
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SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS	
States of mind	<p>Mindfulness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use strategies to support concentration and overcome distractions. - Be aware of body–mind connections. <p>Perseverance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrate persistence. - Use strategies to remove barriers. <p>Emotional management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take responsibility for one's own actions. - Use strategies to prevent and eliminate bullying. - Use strategies to reduce stress and anxiety. - Manage anger and resolve conflict. <p>Self-motivation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practise positive thinking and language that reinforces self-motivation. <p>Resilience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage setbacks. - Work through adversity. - Work through disappointment. - Work through change.

RESPONDING TO A SITUATION

Adopting a positive approach

It is important that as parents, students and school staff we work together to recognise bullying behaviours. The aim is to help children who are bullied and children who bully to learn to live and play together in healthy, positive ways. When dealing with problems between students, our response considers three perspectives:

1. The student causing the problem
2. The student being harmed
3. The situation.

Wherever possible, the students are encouraged to understand the consequences of their actions and to work to improve the situation.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

1. *Direct physical bullying* – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *Direct verbal bullying* – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *Indirect bullying* – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Harassment can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

OTHER DISTRESSING BEHAVIOURS

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Not every negative action should be seen as bullying. Many students get involved in disputes and disagreements from time to time. When they are young, children are developing social and play skills. As they are developing, they may respond to others in the wrong way. Many students become involved in disputes and disagreements from time to time; this is a normal part of childhood and should not always be seen as bullying. While they are learning these social skills it is important that students do not get labelled as bullies.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours.

What are the signs that your child may be affected by bullying?

A significant change in behaviour that cannot be accounted for may be a response to bullying. For example:

- Physical symptoms like loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, headaches or stomach pains.
- Acting out behaviours like destruction or lack of care of prized possessions, angry outbursts over relatively trivial matters, or uncharacteristically heavy handed behaviour with younger siblings.
- Avoidance of school and other activities or withdrawing from the family and retreating to the bedroom.

Please be aware that such behaviours can be caused by factors other than bullying.

As parents and carers, what should you do when you believe bullying is taking place?

If bullying has occurred you should:

- Just listen –let your child explain and express his/her point of view, thoughts and feelings. Don't try to have answers for everything and avoid being judgemental.
- Be mindful that your child will be aware of and affected by your reactions. Try to remain calm.
- Help your child use his/ her own resources, including friends, teachers, siblings and other family members to find a resolution to the issues involved.
- Contact the school by making a time to meet with your child's teacher in the first instance (please refer to the school Bullying Prevention Policy. Furthermore should it be established that bullying has occurred, the process the school will follow is outlined in this policy also).

It is important to be aware that bullying behaviours might reveal that a child may need support in developing his/her social skills. It is important not to think that a child always understands how to behave in social situations with other students.

Strategies for parents:

To help your child relate well with others encourage your child to:

- Make an effort to understand the situation fully. Find out about both sides of the story.
- Acknowledge feelings – the feelings of your child and the others involved.
- Develop strategies to respond in the right way in difficult situations.
- Break the cycle of negative thinking.
- Show confidence.
- Communicate clearly.

What should your child do if they believe they are being bullied?

Your child should be reminded of the following actions. These actions and responses are taught in the classroom:

- Move away from the situation as quickly as possible.
- Talk with someone who can help (a parent, a teacher, a counsellor).
- Think about their behaviour and adjust behaviour if appropriate.

THE ROLE OF BYSTANDERS

Bystanders play a significant role in incidents of bullying. Students need to understand that their actions can encourage or discourage bullying behaviours.

Students SHOULD

- Speak up by discouraging the bully.
- Support the child being bullied by taking them away from the situation.
- Tell someone such as a parent or teacher.

Students should NOT

- Join in.
- Laugh at or encourage a bully's actions.
- Stand around and watch.

Adopting a positive approach

Footscray Primary School has a number of strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.