

**Templestowe Park
Primary School**



Parent Handbook Student Wellbeing

**How to respond if you
believe your child is
bullying or being
bullied**



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Purpose of this Document

Dear Parents & Guardians,

We have designed this booklet for all families at Templestowe Park PS to assist you to take action if your child is having social difficulties at school. This includes the following situations:

- If they are being teased or bullied at school or after school
- If your child is bullying or teasing other children

The handbook will provide you strategies to assist your child during these times and how to notify the school if you have any concerns. It also outlines some of the strategies that we use at school to promote student wellbeing and safety.

After considerable consultation with students, parents, teachers and outside agencies, Templestowe Park PS has implemented a range of strategies that we hope will improve student wellbeing and interpersonal relationships. This handbook was a suggestion from our parent community.

It is essential that students, families and schools work together to support the wellbeing and safety of our students. It simply does not work if the parents, school or community work in isolation.

“It takes a village to raise a child”

African proverb

By working together we can provide a community that supports our students as they develop both academically and socially during their primary school years and assists them to become caring, responsible and successful young people.

Mark Roberts
Principal

What is Bullying and not Bullying?

National definition of bullying for Australian schools says:

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Not Bullying

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- One-off acts of meanness or spite. This includes calling someone a name
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

These conflicts can take place regularly with children. However, they still need to be addressed and resolved.

Roles that Children Play in Bullying

Bullying occurs within interpersonal relationships, usually within a peer group. Like all relationships, these can be complex and variable.

Within a group, individual students may take on different roles in bullying on different days, in different circumstances or with different peers.

The roles within bullying are:

- as the person being bullied
- as the person bullying someone else
- as a person who witnesses bullying happening or knows about someone being bullied.

Read below how the **labels 'bully' and 'victim'** are unhelpful and can cause additional problems.

It is more helpful to describe the role, rather than to label the child. A student who is bullied in one context may do the bullying in another, and a student who sees bullying in one context may be bullied in another.

Bystanders

Most of the time bullying takes place with students (and others) present. People who witness bullying are called **bystanders**. Bystanders can play a number of roles:

- assisting the students who are bullying and actively join in
- encouraging or showing approval to the students who are bullying
- doing nothing or being passive
- defending or supporting the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

The actions of a supportive bystander can stop an incident or help a student to recover from it. When bystanders defend or support a student who is being bullied, often the bullying stops quickly.

When talking to students about ways to be supportive bystanders, parents and teachers need to be aware of (and respect) the reasons that students may not step in. They may:

- fear for their own safety (now and later) or position in the group
- think that someone else will help
- be worried about making things worse
- not know what to do
- think their actions won't make a difference
- think it's none of their business
- think the student being bullied deserved it
- think it's fun to watch.

Avoid labelling Students

Using the terms 'bully' and 'victim' to label students is not recommended for schools.

Instead, clearly identifying and labelling the inappropriate behaviour is more constructive, achieving positive and lasting solutions for everyone involved.

Although these terms are often used in research and the media, they can cause additional problems for schools.

These labels can imply that bullying is due to unchangeable things about the students involved. In reality, students can change the way they behave with support from the school and others.

Unfortunately, the labels can 'stick', and make it harder to change.

Using such labels involves making a judgement about a person's character (both those who are bullying others and those who are targeted) rather than their behaviour. The labels of 'bully' or 'victim' can also cause further harm if a child accepts them as part of their personal identity.

Signs your child might exhibit if they are being bullied

The following signs might indicate if your child is being bullied.

- doesn't want to go to school
- changes their method or route to school or are frightened of walking to school
- changes in sleep patterns
- changes in eating patterns
- frequent tears, anger, mood swings
- unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- missing or damaged belongings or clothes
- arriving home hungry.

BULLYING or Teasing?

What you can do!

Bullying is when someone **KEEPS** picking on you, says or does **LOTS** of mean things that upset you, makes fun of you **A LOT**, tries to make others not like you or **KEEPS** physically hurting you.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- 1** Tell the person in a strong and confident voice, "I don't like that. Stop!"
- 2** Say "yeah, whatever" and walk away.
- 3** Tell your teacher, mum, dad or a trusted adult straight away!
- 4** If you see someone being bullied tell an adult straight away!
- 5** Ask your friends to speak up for you. And remember to do the same for them!



Teasing can be an argument or fight between friends, equal comments (not ganging up), not repeated incidents and playful comments.

What you can do

- 1** Pretend that you don't care.
- 2** Tell the person in a strong and confident voice, "I don't like that. Stop!"
- 3** Try and work out your disagreement. Ask an adult if you need help.
- 4** Make a joke or funny comment back to distract them.
- 5** Walk away and play a new game with your friends.



If you are not sure, always ask an adult for help!

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How to respond if you believe your child is being bullied

Children and young people need to know that they are being heard, that their feelings matter and that their issue will be investigated respectfully. Bullying should be taken seriously.

Listen calmly and get the full story

Your calm response is important to allow your child to tell you all about the situation. After they've told you their story, ask questions to get more details if you need to: who, what, where, when.

Your first response when a child tells you of a concern can make a difference to the outcome.

Although you may feel some strong emotions about your child's experience, try to keep calm to avoid more distress to your child.

Reassure your child they are not to blame

Many children blame themselves and this may make them feel even worse.

You could say things like, 'That sounds really hard to deal with. No one should have to put up with that.' or 'I'm so glad you told me. You should be able to feel safe at school; that's not fair at all'.

Ask your child what they want to do and what they want you to do

A critical part of your response is to avoid jumping in to solve the problem.

While it is natural to want to protect your child, helping them to find their own solution is a better option. It helps them feel they have some power in the situation.

Learn some strategies to talk about with your child

These pages provide tips and ideas for different bullying situations. One idea is to practise strategies at home to help your child feel more confident.

[If your child is being bullied](#)

[If your child is bullying others](#)

[If your child has seen bullying](#)

Watch the [Quick Tips for Parents](#) videos by Dr Michael Carr-Gregg for more ideas.

Contact the school

Your child may be reluctant for you to do this, so discuss the idea and reassure them that the school would want to know and is able to help.

Make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher and, if you need to, ask to talk with the principal. Contact the school immediately if you have a concern about your child's safety. Read more about [Parents and schools working together](#).

Check in regularly with your child

Keep the conversation going. It can take time to resolve issues, so check in regularly with your child about their experiences and their feelings. Your ongoing support is important.

How to Report Bullying or Teasing Concerns to TPPS and Courses of Action

The most important thing to do is report the bullying or harassment is that if you have a serious concern that you need to notify the school immediately. Waiting days or weeks can allow the issues to continue and the school cannot do anything unless they are made aware of it.

1. Write notes (and any other records) based on what your child has told you so you can be as clear as possible about what happened.
2. Make an appointment with your child's classroom teacher to discuss your concern. The teacher will document the account for future reference. The teacher will refer to our 'Anti Bullying Policy' and the 'Definition of Bullying' to ascertain what actions need to be taken. They will explain the expectations and responsibilities of students and staff.
3. The teacher will provide you with suggestions and information to support your child in the meantime. This information can be found within this document and the in the 'School Documentation' section under 'Student Wellbeing' on Compass.
4. The teacher will inform you of the steps they will intend to do in regards to your concerns.
5. The teacher will set a date to follow up on the concerns raised in the meeting. The follow up may be a phone call (minor) or further meetings if required.
6. The teacher will notify appropriate school personnel about your concern.
7. If you still have a concern after speaking with the teacher and they have investigated, you can request an appointment to see one of the Assistant Principals or Principal.
8. As part of the investigation, the teacher will collect additional information from other witnesses. This can include students or school staff.
9. If required, the teacher will develop an action plan based on the additional information gathered. This will then be discussed at a follow up meeting.
10. If required, the incident will be recorded in a student management system.
11. If required, follow up with parents/caregivers and students will take place at a designated time in the following weeks or months.

Parent Lines

If you want to speak to someone else about your child, contact the parent line below.

Parentline Victoria

www.parentline.vic.gov.au

13 22 89 (cost of a local call)

8am to midnight 7 days a week

References

Bullying No Way! Safe Australian Schools. Together.

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>