



Georgiana Molloy Anglican School Our Position on Bullying

It is an unfortunate reality that bullying occurs in all schools. We believe that at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School it is essential that we continue to work with families to establish a student culture that rejects bullying in all of its forms and that this culture says that bullying has no place at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School. Students are entitled to walk through the Georgiana Molloy Anglican School gates each morning and participate fully in the life of our school free from humiliation, oppression and abuse.

In recent times the use of the internet has enabled bullying (**cyber bullying**), to take on the form of subtle, or often no so subtle, inferences on Face Book, MySpace, or mobile phone text messages. GMAS has software placed on the system that does not allow students the access to Face Book and MySpace while the students are at school.

Bullying in all its forms has no place in the Georgiana Molloy Anglican School community. Georgiana Molloy Anglican School is committed to a zero tolerance of bullying and our anti bullying culture, embedded throughout the school from the start, bares testimony to our proactive stance on this most important issue. Once an act of bullying at school is reported to the school the school acts swiftly.

The school policy is that we inform parents of the action taken on the offender to the innocent. It is important that justice not only has to be done, but has to be seen to be done.

Students who are the victims of bullying, beatings or any other inappropriate behaviour that is reported to the school need to know that:

1. They were right to have made the report, and are supported for having done so,
2. The report is always taken seriously and acted upon, and
3. That something has been done to try and ensure that the problem does not recur, or the damage repaired as best as possible in the circumstances.
4. All parties are informed of the action taken by the school.

We are proud enough to say that, although our school (like all others) will find incidents of bullying from time to time, we have the policies, procedures and systems in place to deal with these incidents quickly and professionally, allowing the students to move forward positively. Overlaying these systems is a culture amongst the students, embedded from day one, that promotes the exposure of bullies rather than propelling the code of silence and anti "dobbing" cultures that permeate some other institutions allowing bullying to run riot undetected through the power of fear of retribution. Cross curriculum studies K-12 allows for bullying issues to be integrated into the academic programme of our school, paving the way for a proactive rather than a reactive approach to educating students in the issue of bullying.

Education in the broadest sense is a partnership between the family and the school. If communication is an open two way process, then bullying issues can be "nipped in the bud" before they become major. As a school we never bury our heads in the sand and pretend that issues are not there to be dealt with. Complacency allows bullying to thrive. It is important that all families understand our stance on this issue, and feel able to confidently bring issues of concern to our immediate attention at any time.

Bullying by Definition

Bullying at school is different from the ordinary "rough and tumble" of children growing up in the classroom or the schoolyard. What makes it different is that there is usually a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim and that the incidents are usually persistent and deliberate.

Bullying is the act of intimidating a weaker person to make them do something; feel afraid, timid, act differently. It is an act that is detrimental to students' well-being and development. It has a psychological impact on the victim. Bullying can take the form of verbal taunts and exclusion / intimidation tactics, along with the more obvious forms such as physical abuse.

Signs of Bullying

Bullying may be very hard to detect as perpetrators rarely "perform" in view or ear shot of Staff. The people who are most likely to know what is going on first hand are other children. Our school outlines some general behavioural signs that parents and staff should look for:

- Bruises, scratches or cuts that the child cannot really explain.
- Torn or damaged clothing.
- Damaged or missing belongings.
- Headaches, stomach aches and other pains that the child cannot explain.
- Unexplained tears or depression.
- Unusual outbursts of temper.
- School refusal.
- Not seeking to socialise with peers.
- Seeking alternative means or route to / from school.
- Quality of academic work decreases.
- Seeking money without reason.

The Big Picture

"No matter how thinly you slice the bread there will always be two sides."

Whereas our school totally rejects bullying at all levels, families must realise that the victim as well as the perpetrator can be educated to reduce the incidence of bullying. When incidents of bullying occur, it is important for all concerned to understand that they each can play a role in bringing about a resolution to the problem rather than merely digging in their heels and self righteously casting blame towards the other party.

Research indicates that victims often may already be experiencing difficulties in socialising with their peers. This can often be the catalyst for the bullying through the eyes of the perpetrator. Research also shows that perpetrators often suffer personal insecurities and low self esteem which they mask through overt bullying behaviour towards others.

An open and honest communication channel is the key to the resolution of bullying issues.

Speaking Out

Children who are being bullied are often initially reluctant to speak out for fear of staff and / or parents making the issue worse, or possible retribution from the perpetrator. This situation gives the perpetrator the confidence to continue the actions undetected, creating a no-win downward spiral for the victim.

Although our school culture will reject this myth of retribution, Our school encourages the following ways through which children can be encouraged to speak out and how parents can assist:

Children need to:

Feel believed and listened to:

- Develop trust in how staff will handle issues.
- Develop trust in how parents will handle issues.
- Be encouraged to talk more openly about what has happened.
- Be encouraged to resolve conflict appropriately in the home.

Parents need to:

- Involve their children in decision making about what to do.
- Listen to what children say.
- Tell children that they understand.
- Discourage their children from retaliating verbally or physically.
“An eye for an eye simply sends everyone blind and magnifies issues.”
- Support the school in dealing with the issues, as education is a family / school partnership.
- Take an active interest in their children’s social development.

It does not help if parents:

- Let emotion and / or anger impair their thought processes.
- Feel guilty or ashamed.
- Make children think that the issues are not important.
- Blame the children.
- Blame the school.
- Accuse people without knowing all of the facts.
- Look for scapegoats.
- Demand to know all the details at once before investigations can occur.
- Look for easy solutions.
- Charge in all guns blazing and in so doing make matters worse for the child.

School Based Pathways: Resolution of Bullying Issues at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School

First Pathway - Open Discussion./ “No Blame Approach”

When an issue of bullying is first reported in our school, the parties involved will be interviewed separately and written statements will be obtained and later filed. The parties will then be brought together to allow each to communicate their position and to understand the position of the other in the presence of the interviewer. The party or parties at fault will apologise and will be asked to modify their behaviour without retribution. A letter will be sent to parents of the parties involved documenting the process.

Second Pathway – Formal Interview (punitive response and counselling offer)

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the first pathway will lead to a formal interview comprising the following people:

Students involved (victim and perpetrator).
Parents of both students.
Class teacher/s
Homeroom Teachers
Head of School/Year Coordinator
Deputy Principal
Principal

Punitive measures will be implemented as deemed appropriate along with the suggestion that either internal or external counselling be sought by both parties. The process will be documented by letter to all parties involved.

Third Pathway – Suspension

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the second pathway will lead to the guilty party / parties being suspended from Georgiana Molloy Anglican School. Parents will be contacted by telephone and asked to come to the school to meet with the Deputy Principal and / or the Head of School/Year Coordinator. It will be a condition of return that a student suspended as above will have sought professional counselling either internally or external to the school during their suspension. The suspended student and their parents will be required to provide the Deputy Principal with a counsellor's report indicating that significant progress has been made in terms of the counselling process. This whole process will be documented by letter confirming the above.

Fourth Pathway – Withdrawal / Exclusion

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the third pathway will lead to the Principal asking that the guilty party/parties be withdrawn from Georgiana Molloy Anglican School. Failure to withdraw would lead to official exclusion from the school. This decision would not be made lightly and would involve the school taking all reasonable steps to assist the family of the effected student pastorally in rebuilding their child's educational opportunities elsewhere.

Shades of Grey

It is fair to say that degrees of bullying need to be taken into account when the school decides its response. For example, should a Year 6 student deliberately physically assault a Year 1 student without provocation, then it would not be prudent for the school to deal with the resolution through first pathway only. Conversely, the first pathway would be ideal for a situation where for the first time one Year 5 student was teasing another without realising the hurt that this was causing.

The school therefore reserves the right to assess each situation on its merits and respond via the most appropriate pathway.

The Principal reserves the right to modify a pathway response in relation to any incident.

An Optimistic Future at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School

The partnership that exists between families and our school is a strong one based upon mutual respect. There is a pervading spirit that leads all parties in this partnership to work first and foremost for the benefit and betterment of the children in our care.

Bullying is an unfortunate fact of life. It occurs at all levels of society and at differing degrees throughout all of our lives. Media images often portray acts of bullying and violence in somewhat glowing terms, with some television programmes along with many, DVD's, lyrics and computer games promoting ideals that schools like ours fight so hard to condemn.

Children are more vulnerable than most as they grapple with the demands of early socialisation at school, acceptance from their peers, adolescence and academic pressures. The way forward is not to produce a glossy prospectus, blindly promoting a school that is free from the issues facing wider society, but to acknowledge that at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School we have a large and growing community of students, and therefore face the reality that bullying issues will inevitably occur from time to time.

We are proud that at Georgiana Molloy Anglican School we have a policy and proactive strategies in place that allows us to effectively deal with issues of bullying when they occur.