

# Geelong Baptist College Policies and Procedures

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## **Anti-Bullying**

### ***Introduction***

Geelong Baptist College's approach to bullying falls into 3 categories:

1. Prevention
2. Early intervention
3. Intensive intervention

Geelong Baptist College aims to address the problem of bullying and aims to provide sound support structures for victims of bullying. All staff of the College have a duty of care to students, ensuring a safe and non-threatening environment for all students.

### ***Definition***

A student is being bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time to negative actions on the part of one or more students. Bullying is characterised by an imbalance of power.

### ***Teasing***

Some children seem to enjoy teasing. What children often don't know is when to stop. Something that appears to be good natured and fun can turn into feeling uncomfortable for the receiver. It is at this point that the receiver needs to be able to ask for the teasing to stop. If it continues, this would be considered bullying.

### ***Conflict***

Conflict has a different dimension from bullying as it involves a disagreement where one or both party's needs are not being met but does not involve an abuse of power. If handled well, conflict is considered to be an opportunity for personal growth.

### ***Types of Bullying***

- i. Physical e.g. hitting, punching, kicking the victim, taking or damaging the victim's property.
- ii. Verbal e.g. name calling, constant teasing, insults, racist comments, sexist comments.
- iii. Emotional e.g. excluding peers from groups, spreading rumours, stalking, interference with, or damage to personal property.
- iv. Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as e-mail, mobile phone, instant messaging, social network sites, and defamatory personal web-sites, to support the repeated, harmful and negative behaviour by an individual or group towards another individual or group.

### ***Bullying Myths***

There are a number of myths that surround bullying and make students feel that help is impossible. The table that follows contain seven myths and the real facts that surround bullying.

#### **Myth 1: Bullying has and always will be a normal part of growing up.**

**Fact 1:** Research has shown that peer abuse can be as traumatic as other types of abuse perpetrated against children and that it can cause or exacerbate serious mental health problems. There is nothing whatsoever that is normal or desirable about bullying. The majority of students surveyed have said that they dislike bullying in schools and want programs to stop bullying.

#### **Myth 2: It is easy for teachers to pick who the bullies are in the school.**

**Fact 2:** There is a general expectation that bullying is physical and visible. Bullying, however, can be subtle and involve a range of behaviours that make the victim extremely uncomfortable. Many students who bully are socially adept and are able to conceal their aggressive motives and behaviour from others. Furthermore, colluders in the bully's peer group may actually carry out a great deal of the bullying on behalf of the ringleader.

#### **Myth 3: Victims will take bullying with them wherever they go.**

**Fact 3:** Although the behaviour of some victims may appear to justify the negative reactions they receive from peers, victimisation for the most part is situational and unrelated to the dispositional characteristics of the victim.

#### **Myth 4: Intervention by teachers in bullying usually results in matters becoming worse for the victim.**

**Fact 4:** Bullying is a form of behaviour that needs correction, not necessarily punishment. There are well established techniques for teachers to respond to bullying situations which do not involve repercussions for the victim. Despite this, bullying is highly unreported by victimised students. Only 5-10% of victims report they are willing to seek help from teachers.

#### **Myth 5: Schools have to 'get tough on bullies'.**

**Fact 5:** Schools that have established a 'get tough' approach to bullies have found that the bullying can become more subtle and underhand. Everyone, staff, students, parents and community members need to take responsibility for establishing for establishing positive peer relations.

#### **Myth 6: It will be impossible to get students to disclose bullying because of the 'don't dob' culture.**

**Fact 6:** Schools are able to build confidence in students by responding effectively to bullying incidents. Students can learn that asking for help is different to dobbing. All students have the right to feel safe and valued at the school. Students can also become supportive bystanders for bullied students and seek help from adults.

**Myth 7:** Bullying problems can be solved through awareness raising and the curriculum.

**Fact 7:** It has been found that one off lessons on bullying have a short term effect only. Research shows that an ongoing and active whole school approach dealing with preventative, early intervention and intervention strategies to deal with bullying in schools is essential for lasting results.

***What to do if you are bullied***

- i. If it is minor and it doesn't bother you, ignore it.
- ii. If the bullying continues, tell the bully that you do not like what is happening and you want it to stop. Use an assertive, confident sounding voice.
- iii. If the bullying continues past this point, tell your teacher. He or she will investigate the problem and have a talk to the bully. Also inform your parent who may also bring it to the attention of the College.
- iv. If the bullying continues, tell the Teacher. He or she will notify the Primary or Secondary Principal and a restorative conference will take place.
- v. Any bullying behaviour that continues after this conference should be reported immediately to the Primary or Secondary Principal.

***What to do if you see bullying happening***

- i. If you feel able, ask the bully to stop
- ii. Provide support for the victim by staying with them and encouraging them to leave the area
- iii. Encourage the victim to report the bullying to a Teacher/Principal
- iv. Keep an eye out for any more bullying incidents that may occur

***What can parents do? As parents you are the most influential models for your child.***

- i. Take an active interest in what your child does at school and in their social life.
- ii. Foster a tolerant home life by:
  - a. Encouraging your child to bring friends home
  - b. Accept and tolerate differences within others
  - c. Set firm but fair boundaries
  - d. Demonstrate care and consideration for others
- iii. Discuss Bullying:
  - a. Talk about the schools' expectations
  - b. Advise that retaliation does not solve the problem
  - c. Report incidents of bullying to a teacher or Principal
  - d. Explain what to do if your child witnesses any bullying taking place.