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Bullying and Harassment

The Department for Education, school communities, services and agencies work together to create learning communities which are:

safe
inclusive
conducive to learning
free from harassment and bullying

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bullying has serious short term and long term psychological and social consequences for both students who are bullied and those who bully others. The following negative consequences have been identified for both students who frequently bully and for those who are bullied. They may:

feel unsafe at school
have an increased likelihood of being depressed or having thoughts of self-harm; this is especially true for those students who are bullied
have lower levels of academic achievement than might otherwise be expected
have negative attitudes towards school and relatively high levels of school absenteeism over time

Students who are frequently bullied:

are more likely to have physical symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches
have ongoing low self esteem
experience high levels of anxiety and are more likely to be referred for additional support services
may resort to violent retaliation

Harassment

Harassment is behaviour that offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment by targeting an individual or group due to their:

identity

race

culture or ethnic origin

religion

physical characteristics

gender

sexual orientation

marital, parenting or economic status

age

ability or disability

Harassment may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour or a single act, directed towards an individual or group.

Harassment may be intentional or unintentional and use specific words or actions that offend and distress another person.

Harassment may be regarded as minor or harmless by some, but has the potential to cause significant harm to individuals or groups effected or targeted.

Violence

Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person that results in psychological harm or physical injury. Violence may involve provoked or unprovoked acts and can be a single incident, a random act or can occur over time.

Violence and harassment can occur as part of bullying, but can also occur in one-off conflicts or between strangers.

The school takes bullying very seriously.

Sometimes staff are not told by students when they are bullied. It is very important that victims of bullying tell a school staff member immediately it happens. It is much harder to address bullying at a later time.

Parents can support the school's antibullying work by encouraging children to report all incidents of bullying immediately to their teacher or a staff member.

Parents should never approach other students or seek to investigate bullying or harassment in the school yard. This is the responsibility of school staff and all reports are taken seriously.

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