



Bullying

Children's Services Policy No 2.18

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Replaces issue/policy: NA

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Date revised: 24th April 2009, January 2012, April 2015, November 2015; and May 2019

Aim:

- To create a safe and healthy environment for children where bullying behaviours are not tolerated.

Background Information:

"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).

Online bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, e.g. the internet or mobile devices.

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 is an ongoing misuse of power involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour."¹ This may occur among children of any ages, sex or background.

In most instances, children need adult assistance to deal with bullying. This includes adults taking responsibility to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying, for dealing fairly and effectively with allegations of bullying, and for helping to create a safe and healthy environment in each of Council's Children's Services.

Relevant Legislation:

- Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations (modified July 2018)
- Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010
- National Standards for Outside School Hours Care - www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-quality-standard

Resources:

- Aggression and Young Children, Diane Louise Szarkowicz, Early Childhood Australia Inc. (2004)
- Australian Government (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2014)
- Bullying No Way - www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- National Outcomes Measures for Early Childhood Development – Phase 2: Scoping Paper - <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/national-outcome-measures-for-early-childhood-deve/contents/table-of-contents>

¹ <http://news.bullyingnoway.gov.au/the-facts/Pages/What-is-bullying.aspx>

- Raising Children Network website, www.raisingchildren.net.au
- National Quality Standards – Quality Area 5 – Standard 5.1 and 5.2, Elements 5.1.2, 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.
- Early Childhood Australia – Digichild, <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-work/digital-business-kit/digichild/>.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with Policy 2.17 Guiding Children’s Behaviour and Policy 3.4 – Use of Electronic Media.

Application:

This policy is primarily directed towards Willoughby City Council Out of School Hours Care services.

This policy will apply to Long Day Care and Family Day Care on a case-by-case situation and as determined to be developmentally appropriate by the Children and Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager.

Note:

In this policy “staff” refers to staff employed by Willoughby City Council and educators registered with Council’s Family Day Care Scheme.

Practices:

According to the Raising Children Network², half of Australian children have admitted to being bullied at least once. Bullying can have serious ramifications, especially on a child’s self-esteem and social skills. Children who are bullies may risk growing up to become a bully in adolescence/adulthood or becoming violent in other ways.

Signs of Bullying

In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, or intimidation. It often occurs over a period of time.

Possible signs a child is being bullied might include:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches;
- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed;
- Complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach aches;
- Having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship;
- Does not want to attend school/after school care/vacation care; and
- Does not want to attend parties, visit other children.

** Children may also disclose to a trusted adult that they are being bullied.

Effects of Bullying

Children who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and anxious, have low self-esteem, have higher absenteeism and lower academic achievement. They may frequently feel sick, may engage in negative behaviours and, in extreme cases, have suicidal thoughts.

Preventative Strategies

Bullying thrives where there is not enough supervision. The program of activities should be designed to meet the needs and interests of all children in attendance to prevent periods of boredom.

Staff are to model appropriate behaviours towards other staff and children, including refraining from teasing, humiliating, or talking ‘behind another’s back’. This should also

² Raising Children Network website, www.raisingchildren.net.au

include using appropriate language when dealing with behaviour management issues, and assisting children to use the same.

Children will be encouraged to verbalise their emotions and to develop empathy and compassion. Staff will also talk with the children about bullying regularly and when necessary and will remind and encourage children to report bullying in all its forms, e.g. verbal, physical, online etc., to staff.

Procedure when a child discloses alleged bullying

- Listen when a child attempts to tell you about behaviours that might indicate bullying;
- Learn as much as possible about the child/ren involved and the tactics used;
- Empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault;
- Ask the child what they think could be done to help, what will make them feel safe;
- Tell the child what action you are planning to take, including that you will need to talk to the alleged bully;
- Notify all parents involved of the allegation of bullying;
- Notify the Children and Youth Services Team Leader of the allegation;
- Try to talk with the alleged bully and any witnesses without allowing them the opportunity to discuss what they may say (bullies often do not act alone and the responses of the bully and friends may therefore differ from the victim);
- Remember that bullies can be 'nice' children from 'good' families; and
- Once the investigation is complete, advise the children, parents, Children and Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager of the outcome.

Procedure when staff suspect possible bullying

- Pay closer attention to the suspected victim and their interactions with other children;
- Depending on the strength of the staff:child relationship, tell the child that you are concerned about them and consider asking some questions such as "Do you have any nice friends at after school care or Vacation Care?", "Are there any kids at after school care or Vacation Care who you sometimes don't get along with?";
- Consider talking with the parents/guardians of the child to determine if they have similar concerns.

Strategies for dealing with bullying

- Make it clear to the bully that this type of behaviour is not acceptable.
- Don't force a meeting between the bully and the victim. Forced apologies are not constructive.
- Encourage the child who is being bullied to report any further occurrences to the staff.
- Encourage and support the child who is being bullied to develop other friendships.
- Ask the child who is bullying for possible reasons for the bullying. Address any issues raised as appropriate.
- Discuss with the child who is bullying and their parents what the possible sanctions may be if the bullying continues.
- Refer children and parents to the South Eastern and Northern Sydney Family Referral Service (1800 066 757) for additional support. This applies to both the child being bullied and the child doing the bullying.

Sanctions

Possible sanctions will be dependent on each individual case, but may include:

- A warning;
- Temporary exclusion from the social group in the OOSH environment (i.e. child is not to play with their usual friends if it is determined that these friends encourage/participate in bullying);
- Temporary exclusion from OOSH; or

- Permanent exclusion from OOSH.

General

- The priority of the service is to ensure the safety of the child being bullied.
- Although there may be underlying reasons 'making' a child bully others, it is essential that the child being bullied receives the adult attention and support in the first instance. It is important that the needs of the child who bullies does not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.
- The relevant school may be contacted to ensure consistency between strategies used by the school and the OOSH service.

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; and
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence

** However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.