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Creating a quality learning community through opportunity, innovation and participation

Dear Parent/Carer

As a result of increasing access to telecommunications and social media the opportunities for your child to feel safe and secure are decreasing.

Bullying and Cyber-bullying are becoming a significant issue within our society. Wadalba Community School recognises the need for us to work with you to proactively address this issue. In order to do this we have developed an interactive online anti-bullying information and reporting site "Wotz up, Wadalba" and all students have been trained in its use.

Below please find a series of FAQ that will assist you to recognise and respond to Bullying and Cyber-bullying.

## **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

## **WHAT IS CYBER-BULLYING?**

Cyber-bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as Facebook, mobile phones. Twitter, etc.

## **WHAT IS NOT BULLYING**

Conflicts or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying.

## **WHAT CAN I TELL MY CHILD IF THEY SAY THEY SAW SOMEONE BEING BULLIED?**

You should talk to your child about the role of bystanders and them know their actions can make a difference. A bystander is someone physically nearby or aware of bullying happening, but not directly involved. If we are aware of something happening but do nothing to stop it, we are subtly approving of it. Although your child might not be directly involved, their behaviours can contribute to allowing bullying and harassment to take place.

You can talk to your child about keeping safe but thinking about what positive action they could take to discourage bullying, including:

- Speak up and let the person doing the bullying know that what they are doing is bullying; tell them to stop it
- Refuse to just stand by and watch or join in with the bullying
- Support the student who is being bullied to ask for help
- Let a teacher or a support person know what is happening
- Refuse to join in online chats or texting that is spreading rumours and gossip hurtful to others

## **HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?**

Signs that your child may be being bullied include:

- Dislike and avoidance of going to school or participating in school activities
- Lack of friends
- Missing belongings
- Torn clothing
- Increased fearfulness and anxiety, mood swings, crying
- Decline in academic performance
- Poorer physical health and changes in sleep habits
- Increased negative self-perception

You can find out a lot by taking an interest in what your child does at school and online. If at all possible try to be available at the end of the school day to talk with your child about their day. Let them know you are interested. Also check your child's social media sties and mobile phone regularly.

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## **WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF MY CHILD BEING CYBER-BULLIED?**

The signs of cyber-bullying can be the same as signs of other bullying, also including certain behaviour with phones and computers, for example:

- Being hesitant to be online
- Seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- Being visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone, or suddenly avoiding it
- Minimising the computer screen, or hiding the mobile phone when you enter the room
- Spending unusually long hours online in a more tense, pensive tone
- Receiving suspicious phone calls, emails or packages
- Withdrawing from friends, falling behind in schoolwork, or avoiding school
- Becoming suddenly sullen, evasive, withdrawn, or showing a marked change in personality or behaviour
- Having trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, excessive moodiness or crying, or seeming depressed
- A decline in academic performance

## **WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?**

Stay calm when talking with your child. From the start, help your child to feel safe and supported. Say:

- That you are pleased that they have told you
- That you believe them
- That it is not their fault and you are sorry to hear it has happened
- That you take it seriously because bullying can have serious long-term consequences (i.e. don't trivialise the bullying; it feels bad)
- That you are there to help them if they wish to talk through and practise ways to respond to bullying, and who might be the most appropriate person to talk to and what to say
- Check that your child has notified his/her Year Advisor or used the 'Wotz up, Wadalba' notification

## **WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PREVENT MY CHILD FROM BEING BULLIED OR USING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?**

- Talk with your child about bullying – name the actions as bullying and talk about how they are not okay
- Show your child how to behave in a respectful way with school staff, students and other parents
- Teach your child to look after their own safety in person and on line
- Talk to your child about positive action they could take to discourage bullying if they see it happening
- Offer to practise ways of dealing with bullying with them, so they can develop some skills before they need it
- Talk to your child about ways to help others who are being bullied
- Make it clear to your child that it's okay to tell a teacher or other trusted adult if they know that bullying is occurring
- Talk to your child about their rights and responsibilities in an online environment
- Most importantly do not encourage your child to retaliate using violence

## **WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD IS USING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?**

Take it seriously but remain calm about the issue. Children and young people who bully others generally do not know appropriate ways to get on with others. They need to learn how to treat others respectfully so that they don't continue to experience difficulties getting along with others.

- Make it clear to your child that their behaviour is not OK. 'It was all in fun' is not an acceptable excuse; get them to think about whether they would feel like it was fun if someone did it to them
- Discuss the negative impact on the child who is being bullied. Try to get your child to see it from the other child's perspective
- Avoid bullying your child verbally or physically; never resort to physical punishment yourself because violence carries the message that misusing power is okay
- Arrange consequences that fit with your child's actions – for example, no video games for a week
- Supervise your child's activities and spend more time with them, and reinforce appropriate behaviours
- Ensure you provide a positive model of relating to others, especially in appropriate ways to settle differences and disagreements
- Communicate regularly with the school. Find out how you can work with them

**It is tempting to make excuses for our children's behaviour, but an important role for parents is to prepare children to be part of society. As parents we need to be clear about our own expectations and boundaries about behaviour and ensure that our children are made aware of them.**

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### **WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD DOES NOT WANT ME TO TALK TO THE SCHOOL?**

Provide your child with as much support and advice as you can to help them to focus on ways to deal with the bullying, including practising what to say and do. Encourage them to talk to friends and a trusted staff member.

Offer to talk to a trusted staff member about the problem and ask their advice. Explain that you will not ask staff to punish the students involved but instead to observe the situation and provide advice.

Once you have made contact with the staff member – and if things don't get better – encourage your child to meet with the staff member to develop a plan to improve the situation.

### **WHAT CAN I DO IF MY CHILD HAS TOLD THE SCHOOL AND THE BULLYING IS STILL CONTINUING?**

- Check with the Year Advisor to ensure your child has notified him/her about the bullying
- Discuss what actions have been taken by the school and identify how you can assist
- Request a referral to the school counsellor

**When schools are dealing with the issue, they will not be able to tell you any details of how they are managing the student who has been doing the bullying. This is due to this student's right to privacy.**

### **HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT HOW WADALBA COMMUNITY SCHOOL DEALS WITH BULLYING?**

- Refer to the school's 'Wotz up, Wadalba' website - <http://www.wotzupwadalba.org.au/>

### **SHOULD I APPROACH ANY OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE BULLYING?**

It is not advisable to approach any of the people involved in bullying behaviour as this may make the situation worse. This includes use of telecommunications or social networking.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE BULLYING IS HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL, WHO CAN HELP?**

If the bullying is happening outside school and involves students from your child's school or other schools, you should report the incidents to the school. If an incident involves violence, internet or mobile phone abuse, or demands for money, then you should make a complaint to the police.

Wadalba Community School strives to provide a safe learning environment for your child, however we are not able to ensure that behaviours do not occur in the wider community. It is only when we work in partnership that we are able to address the needs of the students. Our primary role is to educate your child and we do endeavour to instil in our students a strong sense of Respect, Responsibility and Excellence. However as parents and carers, you are the main role model for your children and it is the values that you teach that will enable them to become strong, resilient and responsible members of our community.

Yours faithfully,



Mrs Sally Conn  
Principal

21 March 2012