



PADUA PROMOTES DIGNITY AND RESPECT

Our Response to Bullying

Padua College aims to be 'a positive creative learning community' (Padua Mission Statement) where every person has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and to enjoy positive relationships with all members of the College community. All students have the right to feel and be safe and to learn in an environment that promotes self-worth and personal growth.

Therefore, when any form of bullying occurs within the school community we are concerned to resolve the issues created by:

- Protecting the targets of bullying, building their self-esteem and personal resources, and allowing them to be part of the resolution process
- Challenging the aggressors to take responsibility for their actions and to change their behaviour in the specific instance and in their wider dealings with others.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying due to age, size, status or other reasons. Bullying can involve direct physical abuse, verbal bullying, indirect bullying such as spreading rumours or encouraging others to exclude an individual, and the unfortunate modern phenomenon of cyber-bullying.

It should be noted that there are major laws now in Victoria related to bullying and cyber-bullying. Students or other members of the school community are potentially liable to be charged in serious cases of bullying.

HOW DO WE RESPOND AS A SCHOOL?

Padua College responds to the issue and specific incidents of bullying by aiming to prevent bullying, intervening early when possible, and intervening significantly when required.

HOW DO WE SEEK TO PREVENT BULLYING?

An effective Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) program helps students develop self-management and self-control, improves relationships at all levels of the school community, and reduces conflict among students.

The College also runs programs for all students in Years 7-9 which specifically look at bullying and cyber-bullying and teach students to deal with these issues should they experience them or witness them within the school.

WHEN INTERVENTION IS REQUIRED ...

When bullying does occur, an early intervention often has the best results. Pastoral staff are trained in a range of responses and will use the response best suited to effectively deal with each situation. Student peer mediation may also be effective for less severe cases such as teasing or hurtful remarks.

However, on occasions these early interventions may not work, or substantial bullying occurs before the situation is known by responsible adults. In these instances more significant intervention is required. Significant intervention is the responsibility of the House Co-ordinator in communication with the Homeroom Teacher, and may also involve the Pastoral Co-ordinator and/or Deputy Principal: Head of Campus. The damaging choices made by those responsible for bullying may result in a range of school consequences.

WHAT A STUDENT CAN DO...

- The first and most important step to dealing with bullying is to tell someone about it.
- Trying to deal with bullying on your own almost never works. Students who feel unsafe because of others' actions need to tell someone else the 'who, what, when and where' of what's been happening. You could tell your parents, a staff member at the school, or friend who can help you tell your parents or a teacher. See www.bullyingnoway.gov.au.
- Once you have told others, it is much easier for you to be supported in dealing with the bullying, and for staff members at the school to intervene on your behalf. The earlier this happens, the more likely it is that the situation can be resolved positively.

WHAT PARENTS AND FRIENDS CAN DO...

If your daughter or son or a friend tells you they are being bullied ...

- Affirm them for telling you.
- Assure them that this is something they do not have to put up with and that things can be done about it, but do not over-react. A calm and considered approach is important. Escalating the situation is worse for the students and may discourage them from telling you more.
- Ask them about 'who, what, when and where', but only if the student is comfortable at this stage.
- If it is a school friend, encourage them to tell a trusted adult, and offer to go with them if they are nervous about it.

WHEN CONTACTING THE SCHOOL...

- Sometimes it is difficult if your daughter or son is involved and upset, but it is still important for all involved to remain calm and considered.
- Document what has been reported to you or what you have seen.
- If texts or on-line material is involved, collect this material for the school's information.
- Contact the person you are most comfortable approaching in the first instance, most probably the student's Homeroom Teacher or House Co-ordinator.

Be realistic about the school's involvement. If the bullying is happening at school, the school's response can be far more direct and effective than if the bullying is occurring out of school hours and online.

WHAT PARENTS AND FRIENDS CAN LOOK FOR...

Each individual student who has been bullied or is bullying others will respond and act differently. Homeroom teachers, House Co-ordinators or subject teachers will often identify different patterns of behaviour in their students.

However the students will often mask such feelings at school and so it is vitally important that parents, family members and friends who know the student best identify different moods and behaviours that might indicate that a student is being bullied, or is bullying others. The following are some signs that others might notice.

A student who is being bullied may...

- Not want to go to school
- Change their method or route to school or be frightened of travelling to school
- Change their sleep and/or eating patterns
- Experience frequent tears, anger, mood swings
- Have unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Have missing or damaged belongings or clothes

A student who is bullying others may...

- Repeatedly tease, imitate or make fun of others
- Feel the need to dominate or control others
- Show no compassion for someone who's experiencing bullying
- Repeatedly exclude or ignore the same person
- Whisper behind others' backs or spread rumours on a frequent basis

For those who are targets of bullying, and those who are the aggressors, early intervention is the key to successfully turning around behaviour and resolving these situations. The school is always willing to act in partnership with parents, families and friends to resolve issues and restore the dignity and respect each student is due.

Please do not hesitate to contact your daughter or son's Homeroom Teacher, House Co-ordinator, or any other significant adult at the school regarding concerns about any aspect of school life, but particularly when bullying or other unsafe behaviours are suspected.

WEB RESOURCES

Bullying. No Way! www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/

Alannah & Madeline Foundation www.amf.org.au/bullying/

Professor Ken Rigby (key Australian academic) www.kenrigby.net/