Preventing and Responding to Bullying

Proserpine State High School promotes a positive school environment, fostering a caring, respectful, inclusive and supportive school culture. Every member of the school community (students, staff, parents) has a role to play in creating a safe and supportive environment

Staff at Proserpine State High School understand that student learning is optimised when they feel connected to others and experience safe and trusting relationships. Students who feel secure are more likely to be active participants in their learning and achieve better physical, emotional, social and educational outcomes. Teachers who feel valued and supported are more likely to engage positively with students and build stronger connections within the school community. Parents who are positively engaged with their child's education leads to improved student self-esteem, attendance and behaviour at school.

What is bullying?
The agreed national definition of bullying for Australian schools (National Centre against Bullying) is:

"Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.
Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).
Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and 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 can take many forms. The National Centre against Bullying identifies four types of bullying:
1) Physical bullying – This is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions such as hitting, tripping, etc. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.
2) Verbal bullying – Repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.
3) Social (covert) bullying – Indirect actions, such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a joke on someone that makes the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.
4) Cyber-bullying – This method of bullying uses technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms and social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

What is not bullying?
Proserpine State High School acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do not constitute bullying:
- Social bantering with minor insults and jokes;
- Mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance);
- Not liking someone or a single act of aggression;
- One-off acts of meanness or spite;
- Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

While these behaviours would not be considered bullying because they do not involve deliberate and repeated harm and a power imbalance, they do need to be addressed in the same way as other inappropriate student behaviours.
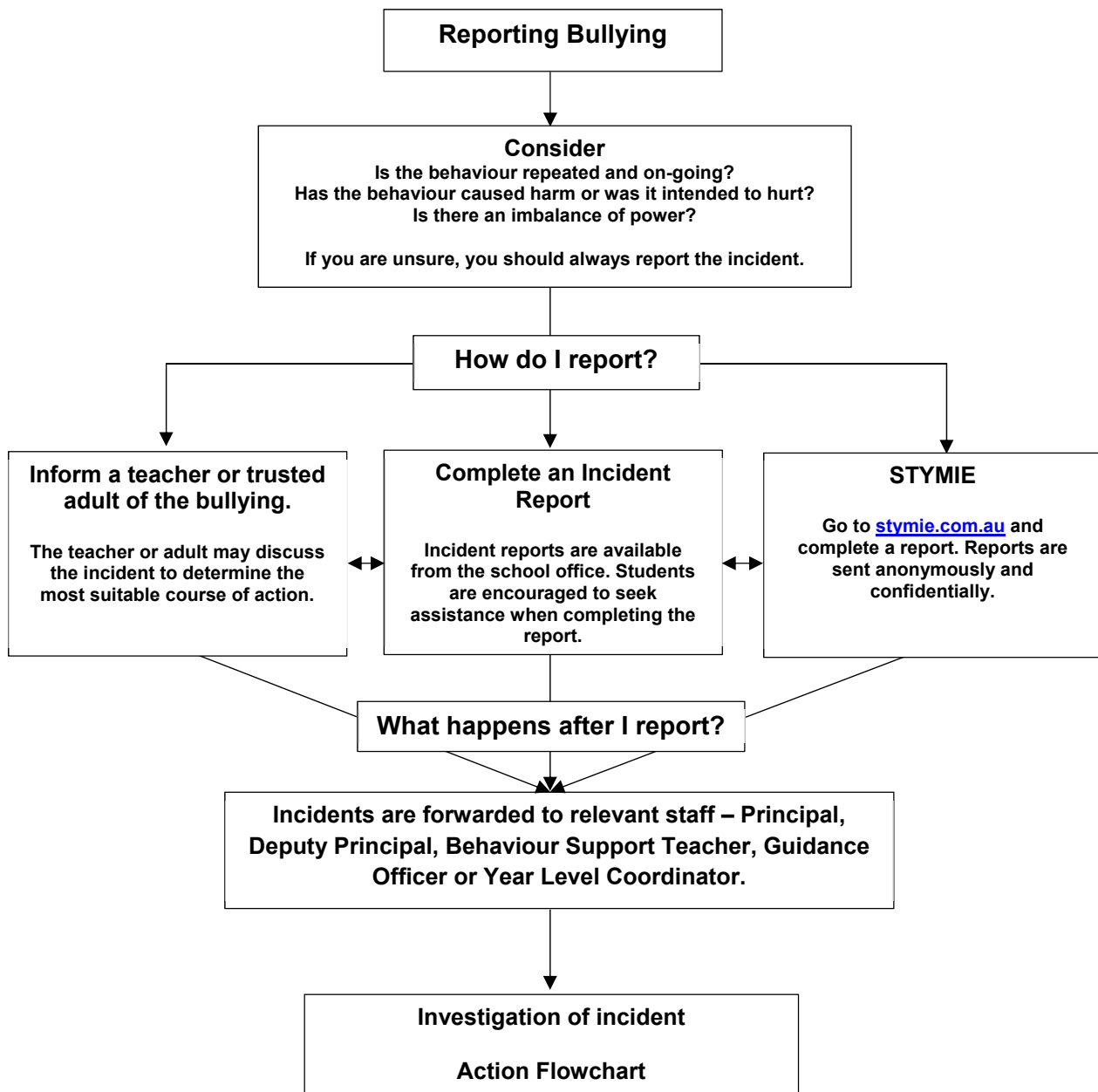
Responsibilities

Student

- Show respect for all members of the school community;
- Become an active bystander and provide support for others against bullying
- Attempt to resolve bullying by being direct and assertive;
- Report all incidents of suspected bullying using school procedures and support structures.

Parent/ Carer

- Support the values of tolerance and respect;
- Encourage children to practise these values in all contexts, including at school;
- Encourage their child to record evidence of bullying and report bullying;
- Provide support and encourage their child to seek help;
- Communicates with the school to resolve bullying issues;
- Report all incidents of suspected bullying using school procedures (STYMIE).

Reporting incidents of bullying

Students at Proserpine State High School are encouraged to report all incidents of bullying or suspected bullying. Staff will respond to all reports of bullying, either observed or experienced by students. Different responses may be appropriate depending on the nature and degree of bullying.

Reporting Bullying

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Consider
Is the behaviour repeated and on-going?
Has the behaviour caused harm or was it intended to hurt?
Is there an imbalance of power?

If you are unsure, you should always report the incident.

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How do I report?

Inform a teacher or trusted adult of the bullying.

The teacher or adult may discuss the incident to determine the most suitable course of action.

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Complete an Incident Report

Incident reports are available from the school office. Students are encouraged to seek assistance when completing the report.

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STYMIE

Go to **stymie.com.au** and complete a report. Reports are sent anonymously and confidentially.

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What happens after I report?

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Incidents are forwarded to relevant staff – Principal, Deputy Principal, Behaviour Support Teacher, Guidance Officer or Year Level Coordinator.

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Investigation of incident

Action Flowchart

Cyberbullying

At Proserpine State High School, cyberbullying is treated with the same level of seriousness as in-person bullying. The major difference with cyberbullying however, is that unlike in-person bulling, cyberbullying follows students into their community, their homes and their bedrooms, giving them no opportunity to escape the harassment or abuse during the evening, weekends or holidays.

It is important for students, parents/carers and staff to know that state school principals have the authority to take disciplinary action to address student behaviours that occur outside of school hours or school grounds. This includes cyberbullying. Parents/carers and students who have concerns about cyberbullying incidents occurring during school holidays should immediately seek assistance through the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner or the Queensland Police Service.

Students enrolled at Proserpine State High School may face in-school disciplinary action, such as detention or removing of privileges, or more serious consequences such as suspension or exclusion from school for engaging in behaviour that adversely affects, or is likely to adversely affect, other students or the good order and management of the school. This includes behaviour such as cyberbullying which occurs outside of school hours or settings, for example on the weekend or during school holidays. It also applies to inappropriate online behaviour of enrolled students that is directed towards other community members or students from other school sites.

Parents/carers or other stakeholders who engage in inappropriate online behaviour towards students, staff or other parents/carers may be referred to the Office of the e-Safety Commissioner and/or the Queensland Police Service. State school staff will be referred for investigation to the Integrity and Employee Relations team in the Department of Education, if deemed appropriate.

Any questions or concerns about the school process for managing or responding to bullying, including cyberbullying should be directed to the principal or the principal's delegate.

Student intervention and support services

Proserpine State High School recognises the need to provide intervention and support to all students involved in incidents of bullying, including cyberbullying.

Students who have been subject to or witness to bullying have access to a range of internal support staff.

All staff at Proserpine State High School are familiar with the response expectations to reports of bullying, and will act quickly to ensure students' concerns are addressed. Depending on the nature of the reported bullying incident, a formal plan of action may be developed and documented to support the implementation of strategies to assist the student.

Students who engage in bullying behaviours towards others will also be provided with support to assist them to use more socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours in their interactions. This includes counselling, social development programs, referral to mental health services or involvement in a restorative practice strategy. School disciplinary measures may also be used to reinforce the seriousness with which the community takes all incidents of bullying. These measures may include internal school suspension, withdrawal from social events or celebrations or more severe punishments such as suspension or exclusion from school.