

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The key to student wellbeing at school

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Dr Rigby has delivered a clear message on bullying and how we can work effectively with both the victim and the bully.

He has challenged us to think more broadly about bullying and the effect it can have not only on the individual, but on the community. He has made it very clear that, as members of that community, we all have a part to play in dealing with bullying.

That challenge is not new to schools. Research shows that bullying behaviour can be reduced by well-planned interventions. Many schools are currently implementing policies and programs that are being effective in preventing or reducing bullying.

Today I wanted to take the opportunity to share with you the strong commitment NSW public schools have to dealing with bullying, and through the experiences of the staff and students at Cammeray Public School, to celebrate the skills, values and attitudes of the children and young people who are our future community leaders

Student Wellbeing

In very simple terms, student wellbeing is all about relationships – the child or young person interacting with his or her environment and the sense of self that develops through and is developed by these experiences.

Wellbeing: Young people's perspectives*

The *NSW Youth Policy: Working Together – Working for Young People 2002-2006* targets all young people and recognises that young people are a diverse group, whose needs differ according to their social, economic and cultural backgrounds.

Young people themselves have sent a very clear message about their wellbeing during the development of the NSW Youth Policy.

- Being seen, heard and valued
- Learning and earning
- Having fun and going places
- Feeling good and staying healthy
- Feeling and being safe
- Working together

Bullying: Young people's perspectives

Research shows that 'children put bullying at the top of their list of fears; indeed children may be more afraid of other children than the deviant adults we so often warn them about' (Galton and Wilcocks, cited in Besag, 1989).

Bullying can lead to:

- **lowered mental health** – damaged self-esteem, increased anxiety, deepened depression, increased likelihood of suicidal thinking, lowered level of happiness
- **induced social maladjustment** – fear of other children, absenteeism from school
- **physical un-wellness** – rise in medical ill-health symptoms

Our shared responsibility

In Government schools, student wellbeing is described as encompassing everything the school community does to meet the personal, social and learning needs of students.

Schools provide effective learning and teaching within secure, well-managed environments, in partnership with parents and caregivers, and the wider school community.

Significance

We recognise the key factors that contribute to student wellbeing, and their significance in addressing the issue of bullying

This realisation means that schools must adopt an holistic approach to bullying

- The role of these in shaping and contributing to perception of self and sense of wellbeing
- Need for children and young people to interact with others in a framework of supportive, positive relationships
- A strong relationship exists between social competence and success in academic performance

In Government schools

Our commitment to student wellbeing is centred around effective learning and teaching, positive school climate and good discipline and community participation.

- Creating an environment to nurture student wellbeing
- Quality teaching practices and programs
- Responsive to individual needs
- Building knowledge, understanding and skills
- Promoting meaningful participation
- A focus on strong partnerships and positive relationships

Our framework for schools

The Child Protection Education Policy is only one of several policies that directly addresses bullying. It must be implemented in all government schools.

The mandatory Child Protection Education policy, procedures and curriculum

- sends a strong message to the community that bullying is unacceptable in schools
- develops in children and young people knowledge and understandings, skills, values and attitudes for forming positive, equitable relationships based on respect

Our framework for schools

- Programs promoting positive relationships, and ensuring quality learning environments, including:
 - student leadership
 - social skills
 - conflict resolution
 - problem solving
 - peer mediation
 - peer tutoring
 - transition programs
 - mentoring
- Our commitment to strengthening partnerships and relationships with parents/community through initiatives such as
 - A Partnership Encouraging Effective Learning (APEEL)
 - Families First
 - Schools as Community Centres
 - Primary Connect

A new code for schools

In 2003 the Minister for Education and Training announced that there would be a crack down on school bullying.

A working party has been set up to draft guidelines on how bullying should be dealt with in schools.

A code will be formulated to help teachers identify bullying behaviour and procedures for dealing with it.

The code will also contain guidelines for students on how to report playground bullying, and advise parents on what to do if their child is a victim.

This new code will complement the strategies that public schools already have in place in their student welfare and discipline policies to address bullying.