

# School Stories

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## **Brief background to school initiative**

This school helped students distinguish between telling and dobbing and upheld the motto: “It’s okay to tell”.

## **School profile**

- Metropolitan co-ed government school
- 756 students
- Years: 8–12
- Very multicultural

## **Supportive School Culture – Example 2**

### **Action**

In their ‘Stopping Bullying at School’ pamphlet this school defined dobbing as telling on someone to deliberately get them into trouble, drawing attention to themselves, acting helpless or make themselves look good. Telling, on the other hand, is asking for support to solve a problem you have been unable to resolve yourself.

Staff were trained in the Shared Concern method, which involved interviewing all individuals engaged in bullying incidents, including bystanders. The idea was to increase the empathy of those engaging in bullying behaviour toward the students they bullied. Strategies were devised to change the behaviour and attitudes of those involved in bullying incidents. Follow-up meetings were held with all participants to ensure the situation had changed positively for the bullied student. Some students needed individual counselling to help develop self-protection and risk-minimisation strategies.

The ‘Strong Schools’ lessons were taught in Year 8 Studies of Society and Environment classes. This involved defining bullying behaviour, examining how it is a problem for the school and answering the questions:



1. Why is bullying serious?
2. Why do students bully?
3. What can be done if you are bullied?
4. What does the school do about bullying?

The modules were taught in the form of class discussion and worksheets with interesting activities. The examples include both direct bullying, such as name-calling and physical bullying, and indirect bullying, such as exclusion.

The school also ran a Peer Support Program. Year 8 students were allocated a Year 11 buddy. The students volunteered for the program when they were in Year 10. If the response was too great, staff selected the students who would become the Peer Support Students. The Year 11s were trained by staff. After the two- day training, the Year 11s were matched up with a Year 8 student. The Year 11 buddies supported groups of Year 8s during class time (half an hour per week for an entire semester). This time was used for discussion, games (trust) and personal development.

## **What we learnt**

### **If we could do it over**

The school would have liked to have adopted more of a whole-school approach.

### **Recommendations for other schools**

Remain vigilant. Conduct regular ongoing awareness-raising activities with parents, students and teachers. Emphasise correct bystander behaviour.