

## TALKING ABOUT BULLYING: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION STARTERS

### Years 5-6: Recognising and understanding bullying

#### *Steps to run the discussion*

This discussion starter supports teachers to scaffold a collaborative discussion with students as a whole class or in small groups. The discussion requires about 20 minutes and consists of five steps. (Refer to [How to use](#) for more information.)

#### **1. Present the definition of bullying**

Share the [definition of bullying](#) with your students. Explain that this is how bullying is generally defined by society; however, in order to fully understand bullying, we need to unpack the ideas.

#### **2. Choose one Inquiry question**

Choose from one of the three Inquiry questions. Think about the current level of understanding and specific needs of your class when selecting the question.

Allow about 20 minutes for the discussion of one Inquiry question (including reflection). The Inquiry questions are designed to encourage students to think deeply about many issues surrounding the concept of bullying. Your students may come up with a variety of responses. As the students provide their responses, listen carefully and consider the key ideas underpinning these responses.

#### **3. Ask students to provide justification for their answers**

When students respond, it is essential that they always give reasons for their responses. Some questions may be grammatically closed (yes/no), but the student's justification for their response will enable the ideas presented to remain conceptually open for ongoing discussion. If students provide a 'yes/no' answer, ask: 'Why do you think that?'

The provision of justification enables all participants to gain a deeper understanding of the reasoning underpinning the responses. This in turn gives opportunity for students to build on the ideas of others, make considered connections and explore disagreement respectfully.

#### **4. Use one or two appropriate Probing questions (more if you have longer than 20 minutes)**

Use one or two appropriate probing questions to deepen the students' line of inquiry. The probing questions are based on the response, or you can use the general 'procedural' questions of inquiry. You can also use a probing question to encourage students to think about alternative perspectives.

#### **5. Reflect on thinking and learning**

At the conclusion of the discussion, take five minutes to reflect on the learning:

- How did we work as a community of learners?
- What new thinking and learning has taken place for our class community today?
- How can we apply this new thinking and learning to our relationships with peers at school and beyond?

## Three inquiry questions

### ***Inquiry question 1: How can we identify bullying?***

#### **Probing questions:**

- Are there times when bullying might be difficult to identify?
- How can we identify online bullying?
- In what ways is bullying different from arguing/fighting with others?
- What is it that makes bullying so damaging?
- Do those who choose to bully others always recognise their own actions?
- How can we help others recognise situations that involve bullying?

### ***Inquiry question 2: Why do some people choose to bully others?***

#### **Probing questions:**

- If someone chooses to bully others, does that mean they are a bad person?
- Why do some people choose to bully in an online environment?
- What purpose does bullying have in students' relationships?
- How do you think those who choose to bully others feel about themselves?
- Is it possible for someone who makes bad choices to turn their behaviour around?
- What might influence someone to change the way in which they treat others?

### ***Inquiry question 3: How can our actions have an impact on bullying?***

#### **Probing questions:**

- What does it mean to be a bystander to bullying?
- Does this look different in an online environment?
- Is it ever appropriate to ignore bullying behaviours?
- If you choose to ignore bullying, what impact might this have on the people involved?
- If someone bullies you, is it then appropriate to bully them also?
- In what ways could you make a difference?

## Additional probing questions (procedural questions)

- Why do you think that? (justification)
- Can anyone build on that idea?
- How are these ideas connected?
- In what ways are these ideas similar/different?
- Does anyone have an alternative suggestion/different possibility?
- Can you clarify that?
- Could there be another way to think about this?
- Does anyone have a different reason?
- What might someone say if they disagreed with this?
- How can we know this is accurate/true?
- What might follow from this?
- Can you think of a time when that wouldn't be the case?