

Students in Mortlach School

Bullying and School Safety - Secondary (2016/2017)



A safe school environment is critical for students' learning and well-being. Schools are safer when school staff, students, parents and community agencies work together to prevent bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment. **Bullying** is when a person tries to hurt another person, and does it more than once. It can be physical, verbal, or social, and can also take place over the internet with emails or text messages. Sometimes a group of students will bully others. **Exclusion** is when students feel excluded or treated unfairly at school because of ethnic or cultural background, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other perceived categorical boundary. **Sexual harassment** is any unwanted or inappropriate language or touching that makes a person feel upset, hurt or angry. Exclusion and sexual harassment are forms of bullying, and often students that are excluded or harassed are victims of other forms of bullying. Students who are bullied are prone to experiencing low self esteem, anxiety, depression, and disaffection from school. In extreme cases bullying can lead to suicide.

Key Findings from the Research

- Data from *OurSCHOOL* surveys in 2009-10 found students who reported being victims of bullying were five-and-a-half times as likely to be suffering depression, and were almost three times as likely to have a low sense of belonging at school. They were also less likely to be intellectually engaged.
- Schools vary in their reported prevalence of moderate and severe bullying. In 2009-10, data from *OurSCHOOL* found that among middle schools the prevalence of moderate and severe bullying varied from 4% to 52%, with one-half of all schools having a prevalence between 24% and 35%. The prevalence of moderate and severe bullying reported was less in secondary schools; on average it was 22% compared with the middle school average of 29%.
- There are several actions schools can take to prevent bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment. School staff must be able to recognize different forms of bullying and be willing to step in when they observe a student being bullied.¹ Positive school policies and practices can make it safe for students to report bullying when it occurs and ensure that there are clear consequences for bullying that are consistently enforced. Schools can help equip students with appropriate strategies to deal with bullying, exclusion and sexual harassment.²
- Data from students can help school staff develop positive practices and policies.

Students from Mortlach School completed the *OurSCHOOL* survey which included questions about bullying, school safety and exclusion and sexual harassment. This report summarizes their views.

1. The prevalence of school bullying

The literature distinguishes between bullies, victims and those who are both bullies and the victims of bullying.³ The percentage of students who report being victims of bullying is a useful school-level measure of the extent of bullying and its potential effects on youth. Students' reports of taking part in bullying and students' accounts of witnessing bullying are less useful as a school measure, because even a single incident of bullying may be seen or talked about by a wide range of students.

Overall, 24% of students in Mortlach School reported being a victim of bullying about once a week or more often, for at least one of the four types of bullying. In addition, *OurSCHOOL* classifies students as being moderate or severe victims. Figure 1 - shows the results for all students in Mortlach School, and separately for boys and girls, compared with the national average. Figure 2 indicates the types of bullying most often experienced by the students at Mortlach School. The results are based on students' reports of being victims of physical, social, verbal and cyber bullying in the previous 30 days.

Figure 1: Prevalence of bullying at Mortlach School

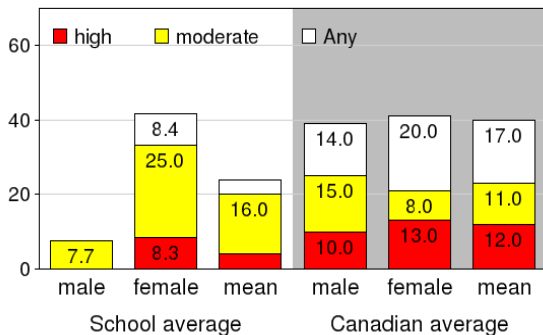
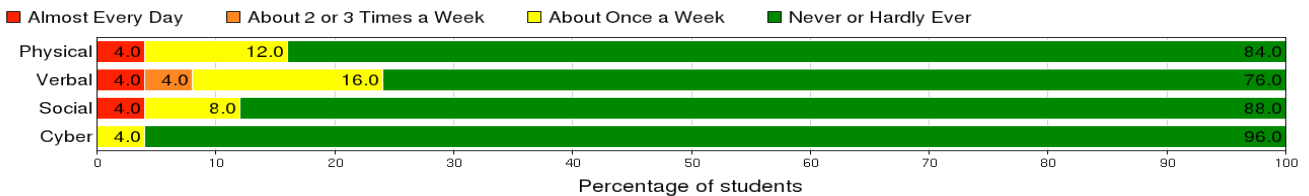


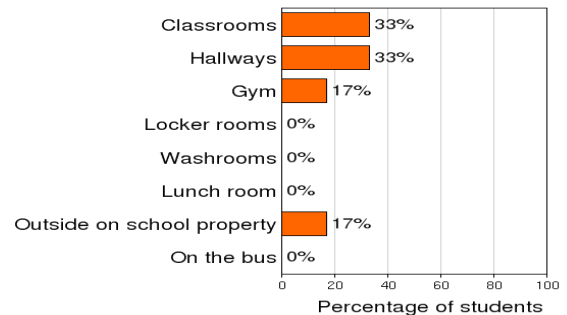
Figure 2: Bullying by Type at Mortlach School



2. Where and when bullying occurs

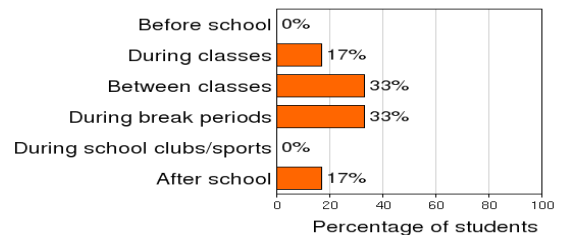
Bullying tends to occur most frequently in classrooms, hallways and the lunchroom, but this can vary among schools.⁴ Students quickly learn where the 'hot-spots' are, which tend to be places where there is inadequate supervision.⁵ Students at Mortlach School were asked where bullying happened most often in and near their school. The results are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Where bullying occurs at Mortlach School



The students at Mortlach School were also asked when bullying most often occurred. Figure 4 displays the results.

Figure 4: When bullying occurs at Mortlach School



3. How students respond to bullying

Students in Mortlach School who reported being bullied in the past 30 days were asked what they did the last time they were bullied. Figure 5 summarizes their responses.

Figure 5: How students respond when bullied at Mortlach School

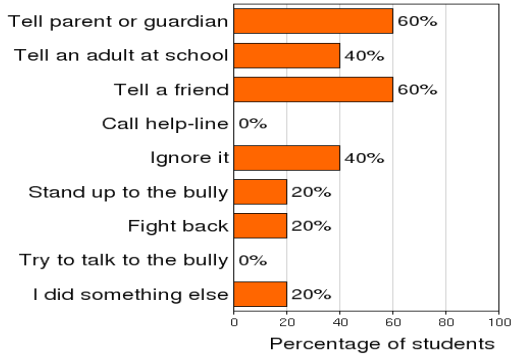
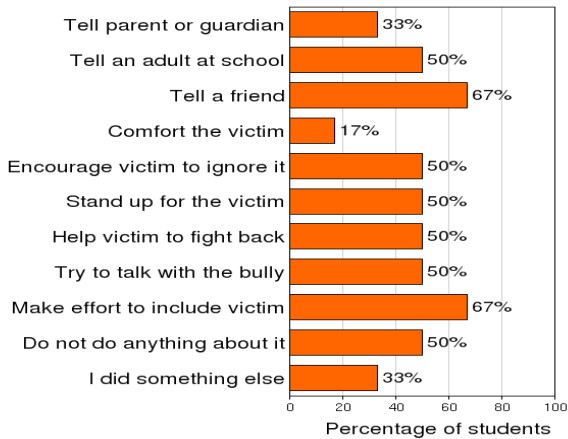


Figure 6 summarizes student responses when they saw or heard about a student being bullied.

Figure 6: Response when others are bullied at Mortlach School



4. Measures to prevent bullying

School policies and practices can help prevent student bullying. Students at Mortlach School indicated the extent to which they felt certain anti-bullying measures were practiced in their school. Figure 7 shows the percentage of students that agreed or strongly agreed that these practices were evident in their school.

Figure 7: Measures to prevent bullying at Mortlach School



5. Students who feel excluded

Many students feel excluded by their peers or treated unfairly by school staff because of their ethnic or cultural background, gender, social class, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or other perceived categorical boundaries. Figure 8 shows the percentage of students who felt excluded by other students for various reasons.

Figure 8: Reasons students feel excluded at Mortlach School

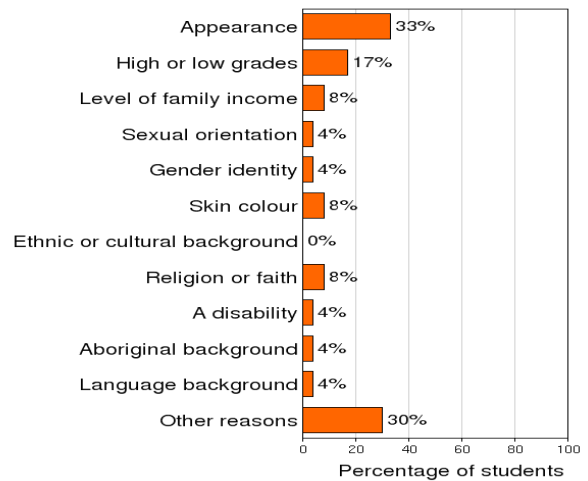
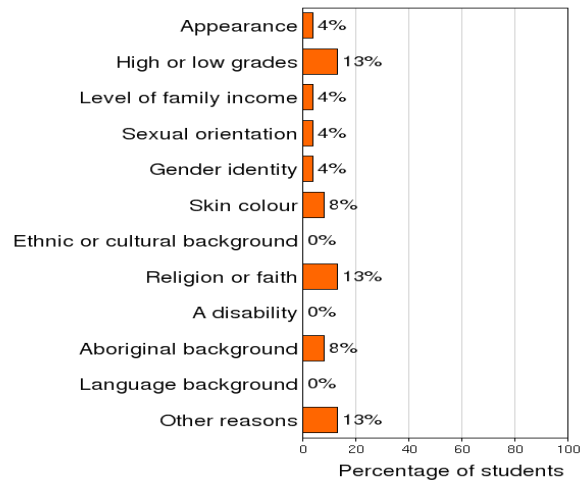


Figure 9 shows the percentage of students who felt they were treated unfairly by school staff for these same reasons.

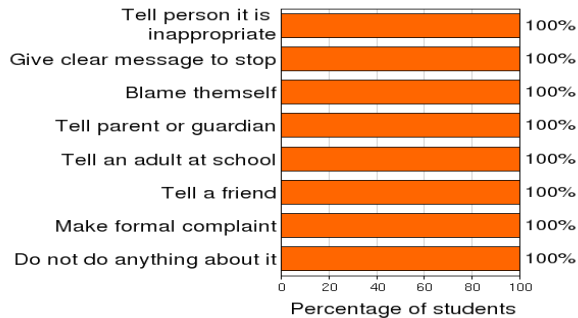
Figure 9: Reasons students feel they are treated unfairly by staff at Mortlach School



6. Sexual harassment at school

Students were presented with a definition of sexual harassment and asked if they had felt sexually harassed at school in the past 30 days. In Mortlach School, 0% of girls and 7.7% of boys felt they had been sexually harassed. Those who indicated being sexually harassed were asked how they responded at the time. Figure 10 summarizes their responses.

Figure 10: How students respond if they are sexually harassed at Mortlach School



7. Feeling Safe at School

Students were asked whether they felt safe at school, and safe going to and from school. Overall, 0% of girls and 15.4% of boys in Mortlach School indicated that they did not feel safe at school. A further 16.7% of girls and 7.7% of boys indicated a neutral position, neither agreeing nor disagreeing that they felt safe at school. Figure 11 shows the percentage of students that felt safe at school.

Figure 11: Students who feel safe at Mortlach School

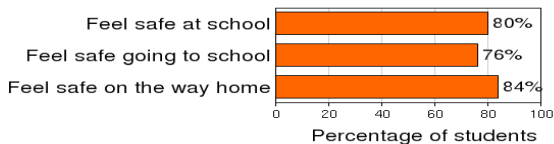
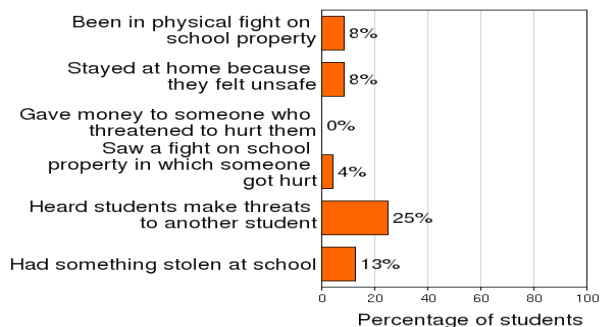


Figure 12 shows students' responses to six other questions concerning how safe they felt at school.

Figure 12: Indicators of an unsafe environment at Mortlach School



About OurSCHOOL

OurSCHOOL is an evaluation system that includes a dynamic web-based student survey, and optional teacher and parent surveys. The system provides leading indicators of student engagement and wellness, and the aspects of classroom and school learning climate that research has shown affect student engagement and learning outcomes. Please see www.thelearningbar.com for further information.

About this School Report

This report was prepared by Dr. J. Douglas Willms, Director of the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy at the University of New Brunswick. It was based on data from 24 students at Mortlach School that completed the *OurSCHOOL* student survey in 2016. Schools can print this report free of charge for use in staff meetings and professional development activities. It can also be reproduced for distribution to parents.

References:

1. Pepler, D. J., Craig, W. M., Ziegler, S. & Charach, A. (1994). "An Evaluation of an Anti-Bullying Intervention in Toronto Schools". *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 13(2): 95-110.
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3. Haynie, D. L., Nansel, T., Eitel, P., Crump, A.D., Saylor, K., Yu, K. and Simons-Morton, B. (2001). Bullies, victims, and bully/victims: Distinct groups of at-risk youth. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 21, 29-49.
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