

Bullying out of control in middle years of school

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,25565507-952,00.html>

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June 01, 2009 12:00am

BULLYING is out of control in schools as one in four children from Years 4 to 9 claim they are regularly attacked.

The Courier-Mail can reveal that bullying peaks in the final years of primary school where 32 per cent of students are targeted.

Results from Australia's largest study of school bullying shows Year 8 students are major victims, with almost one in three citing taunts and attacks.

The research, commissioned by the [Federal Government](#) and obtained by *The Courier-Mail*, shows Queensland has among the highest levels of bullying in the country - well above the national average in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the highest rate for Year 9.

More than one-third of Year 8 students in Queensland indicated they were being bullied.

Meanwhile, Year 9 students in Queensland were more likely to take part in cyber bullying than most of their counterparts nationwide.

Only Northern Territory students were worse.

Many of the 7000 children from 124 schools surveyed across Australia said they had lost faith in the ability of teachers to protect them.

The report recommends an overhaul of the way in which schools handle the issue of bullying.

Researchers found almost half of all children in Year 9 are both bullied and bullying others.

But researchers also found that the harder schools crack down on physical attacks, the greater the increase in covert bullying, including psychological taunts and reputation-shredding.

The role of children who film fights, such as the recent recording of an [Elanora State High School](#) girl allegedly being attacked, is coming under increasing scrutiny for contributing to victims' torment.

Two national reports on bullying, compiled by [Edith Cowan University](#) in Western Australia and the [University of South Australia](#), have been sent to the Rudd Government.

Federal Education Minister [Julia Gillard](#) said research showed schools needed more guidance to combat bullying which had become a "serious issue for many young people".

"I think these reports are spot-on when they describe bullying and particularly cyber bullying as cruel, ostracising and intimidating," Ms Gillard said.

The findings show:

Two in five students feel things stay the same or get worse after telling an adult.

64 per cent of bullied children seek help from friends rather than parents.

Students from public schools are more likely to indicate they are being bullied.

Cyber bullying is used more by students from non-government schools.

More than half of all students believe it is worse to hit another student than send a nasty electronic message.

Bullying victims show social withdrawal, nervousness, depression and declines in academic performance.

The studies show most covert bullying occurs during breaks at school and in the classroom.

Teasing is the most prevalent behaviour.

Research shows covert bullying is likely to cause the greatest suffering for both sexes and is more likely to go unnoticed by teachers.

Covert bullying in Australia is expected to follow international trends and become "more prevalent and insidious" due to increasing use of technology.

[Kids Helpline](#): 1800 55 1800