



Morning Comment

Term 2 Assembly – Friday 16 May 2025

Sports Captain Jonty Lang and Peer Support Leader Milla Smith



Today is Pink Shirt Day, but it's more than just wearing pink. It's about standing up – literally and symbolically – to bullying, and standing together for kindness, inclusion, and respect. Pink Shirt Day began with the simple act of students supporting a classmate who was bullied for wearing pink. It's grown into a global movement. Today, we bring it home to our school, and ask: 'What kind of culture do we want here?'

So, what is bullying? Most people picture someone shoving kids into a locker or throwing punches, but bullying isn't always loud or physical. It can be subtle. It can be someone who constantly mocks a classmate, spreads rumors behind their back, deliberately excludes them, or makes mean comments online. A bully can be someone that laughs along. Or someone that makes a joke, but we all know they aren't joking.

There are three things that define bullying: Bullying is deliberate, repetitive and involves a power imbalance in a relationship. It's more than just being mean once. But even one moment can do damage. It damages confidence, it affects how people learn, how safe they feel, and how they see themselves.

Let's be honest – when we're tired, stressed, or struggling ourselves, we sometimes take it out on others. That doesn't make you a bad person, but it does mean we need to be self-aware and reach out for support when we need it.

Before we begin and really bring this message to life, we're going to do something a little different. We'll be sharing real statistics about bullying in New Zealand schools and applying them directly to our school community. To help make these numbers feel real, we'll be inviting different year groups to stand throughout the assembly. When your year group is asked to stand, please do so quietly and respectfully.

Here's the thing, in New Zealand, over 27% of students – more than one in four – have engaged in bullying behaviors at some point. Not because they're bad people, but because sometimes we don't realise the words we say, the things we laugh at, or the way we treat others can hurt.



These aren't strangers. These are just regular students. People just like us – maybe even us. To help see what that number looks like, if you're in Year 10 please stand without talking.

Look around. That's how many people, on average, might have been on the delivering end of bullying at some point – maybe without even meaning to, maybe while feeling insecure or overwhelmed, maybe without fully realising how much power a few words or actions can hold. Thank you Year 10, you may be seated.

Now let's flip it. Let's look at the impact of that. Statistics tell us around 35% of students in Years 9–13, have been bullied. That's roughly 430 students. Can Year 9 and Year 11 please stand.

That's what 430 students looks like. That's the number of people who may have been made to feel small. Left out. Targeted. Some of them might still carry that worry, feel unsafe at school, and invisible.

430 people in a school like ours say they've been bullied at some point during their secondary school journey. 430 students. 430 of us.

These are students who've lost confidence in themselves. Who haven't just been able to laugh it off, who've struggled to concentrate in class and who've gone home upset and worried. And that's just the ones who've reported it. Chances are that number is bigger. Thanks Year 9 and 11, you may be seated.

This is the impact of bullying. It's not just name calling, online comments, or rumors spread, its emotional, its personal, and it can last for much longer than a moment. So, the question isn't who's being bullied, it's what kind of people to do we want to be, what kind of school do we want to be.

Being an upstander, someone who steps in instead of standing by, takes courage. It's not always easy to speak up, but when we stay silent the bullying doesn't stop. Sometimes being an upstander doesn't mean confronting someone head-on, sometimes it just means standing beside someone who needs support – your support. Standing up against bullying means not just laughing along, not staying silent, and not walking away.

In 85% of bullying situations, other students are present. That means most of the time, we are there. Can Years 10, 11, 12, and 13 please stand.

That's how many people may have witnessed bullying and have had the chance to make a difference. When someone does step in, when someone stands up, distracts, speaks out, or helps, bullying stops in over half those cases. Year 9 please also stand.

Right now, 100% of us are standing. And that's exactly how it should be. Because 100% of us have been affected by bullying in some way. Which means we all have the power to make a difference. And that's what Pink Shirt Day is all about.

Please be seated. Thank you.