Bullying in schools 'stable and managed'

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About one in five of 15-year-old students here reported experiencing some form of verbal bullying, while one in 10 has encountered social bullying.

Physical bullying is less prevalent at about 5 per cent, according to a student perception survey conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2015.

Education Minister (Schools) Ng Chee Meng gave these figures yesterday after Non-Constituency MP Daniel Goh asked how prevalent bullying is in schools and what steps were being taken to detect bullying.

"When students misbehave or make mistakes, schools will discipline and educate them so that there is learning and it will not be repeated," he said, adding that school staff will also counsel students involved in bullying and those affected by it.

School personnel, he said, are trained to give attention to and address hurtful behaviours; and students learn social skills, empathy, respect and awareness of how mean actions can affect others.

Schools have also strengthened peer support by equipping students with skills such as befriending and listening. These students will alert teachers when they observe situations that affect the safety of classmates, said Mr Ng.

Bullying on the whole "has been stable and managed", he said.llied children would be a "useful medium".

About one in five of 15-year-old students experienced verbal bullying; physical bullying is at about 5 per cent. PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ALL SINGAPORE STUFF

Dr Goh also asked how the Ministry of Education is responding to the growing instance of people posting video recordings of bullying online.

Last month, a video of a fight that broke out among three boys in a classroom at St Hilda's Secondary School went viral online. An adult intern with an external agency was present but did not have the "training or authority to manage the situation", said the school.

Video posting and filming using cellphones are actually prohibited in classrooms, said Mr Ng, reiterating that "proactive measures" like teaching students how to cope with bullying are more important.

In response to supplementary questions from other MPs, he noted that cyber bullying - hostile or aggressive messages that are conveyed through electronic or digital media - is a growing area of concern.

To address this, schools have in place measures such as providing accessible channels for students to safely report bullying cases, and investigating and following up promptly on reported cases.

In severe cases, Mr Ng said schools would call up parents and get them involved in follow-up action like counselling.