

BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

Rationale:

Our school is committed to providing a safe and caring environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear bullying, cyberbullying and harassment prevention policy will inform the community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.

Aims:

- To provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying & harassment.
- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment is acceptable.
- To provide clear advice on the roles and responsibilities of the whole school community for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour.
- To provide clear procedures for everyone to report incidents of bullying to the school.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to any person who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour.
- To seek the support and co-operation of the whole school community.

Definitions:

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Cyber-bullying is the use of technology to bully a person or group with the intent to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically. Cyberbullying can occur in many ways, including:

- Abusive texts and emails
- Hurtful messages, images or videos
- Imitating others online
- Excluding others online
- Humiliating others online
- Nasty online conversations

Harassment is behaviour which is intended to trouble or annoy someone, for example repeated attacks on them or attempts to cause them problems.

It is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) that is uninvited, unwelcome and could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- Mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- One-off acts of meanness or spite
- Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

Implementation:

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community.

We acknowledge that bullying and harassment can result in anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential.

Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

- A whole school approach will be implemented to deal with bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.
- New students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.
- Complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.
- Preventative curriculum programs will be implemented that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The school will implement periodic information sessions for staff, provide specialist resources such as books, videos & kits and off site in-service activities to assist them in responding appropriately to bullying & harassment issues in and outside of the classroom.
- There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Bullying (including cyberbullying) and Harassment Policy, guidelines & procedures.

Primary Prevention:

- Providing programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Bullying surveys administered and acted upon at least twice a year.
- 'Respectful Relationship's' Program implemented across the school.
- Classroom teachers to endorse the school Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Curriculum to include anti-bullying/harassment messages and strategies.
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy will be accessible to all staff, students and parents.

Early Intervention

- A 'Desktop App' will be available to all students with an iPad to encourage the reporting of bullying behaviour.
- Students will be encouraged to report any inappropriate behaviour to a trusted adult in the school community.
- Students that show initiative and positive behaviour in the classroom or yard will be acknowledged via public recognition.
- Parents will be encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of an issue.
- Yard 'Hot Spots' identified as problem areas are to have greater adult supervision to minimise bullying incidents.
- Students are encouraged to use resources available to them to seek assistance if they feel that they are not able to inform a trusted adult.
- Kids Helpline information downloaded onto devices for students to access.

Intervention

- Once identified, each alleged bully, victim and witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying/harassment will be fully investigated and documented.
- Both alleged bullies and victims will be offered counselling and support.
- Incidents involving assault, threats, intimidation or harassment will be referred directly to the Victoria Police Youth Resource Officer.
- If student bullying/harassment persists, parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct.
- If staff bullying/harassment persists the Principal (or nominee) will commence formal disciplinary action in line with DET requirements.
- All complaints of harassment/bullying will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Post Violation

- The Principal (or nominee) will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with the Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines.
- Ongoing measures for identified person/s groups may include:
 - Management meetings.
 - Separated areas in the yard for particular student/s groups.
 - 'Time in' areas.
 - Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies through the "Anti-Bullying" Survey.
 - Rewards for positive behaviour.
- Consequences for staff will be individually based and will follow departmental procedure.

REFERENCES:

DEECD's [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014: Student Engagement Policy](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/studentengagementguidance.aspx>

The school's Acceptable Use Agreement (re cyber-bullying)

DEECD's [Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>

Kids Helpline: <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

Headspace: <https://headspace.org.au/>

Bullying No Way: <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/WhatIsBullying/DefinitionOfBullying>

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

This policy was last ratified at school council in June 2019.