



BULLYING and HARASSMENT POLICY

Latest DET Update: 11/07/2018
APS update to policy: September 2018

Rationale

- Every person in our school community has the right to feel safe and have a sense of wellbeing and belonging.
- 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 and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching.
- A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

Purpose

- To create a safe and respectful school environment and prevent bullying, cyber bullying and other unacceptable behaviours.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.
- To ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- To ensure Alphington Primary School complies with DET policy and guidelines.
- To further empower children who are key stakeholders within our organisation.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- To ensure the school has in place strategies to support compliance with the Child Safe Standards 2, 4 and 7.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards students.

Definitions

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upsets or hurts another person or damages their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.

Cyberbullying is direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

Homophobic Bullying on the basis of sexuality is a common experience for young people who are same sex attracted or for those who may not behave according to gender stereotypes.

Harassment can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

Categories of bullying include direct physical bullying (hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing or damaging property), direct verbal bullying (name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, racist remarks or verbal abuse), indirect verbal bullying (lying or spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes, mimicking or encouraging others to socially exclude someone) and cyberbullying (direct verbal or indirect bullying

behaviours using digital technologies including harassment using a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory website or deliberately excluding someone from social spaces).

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the school's processes in resolving any issue.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.

Implementation

- The school has zero tolerance of bullying and of harassment in any form.
- The wellbeing of every child at the school is our highest priority.
- The school encourages all students to speak up when bullying or harassment is encountered e.g.
 - tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
 - discuss the matter with a teacher that you feel comfortable with
 - the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially
- Everyone within the school community will be alerted to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- The school will:
 - promote and support safe and respectful learning environments where bullying is not tolerated
 - provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying, including descriptions of the different subtypes of bullying
 - put in place whole-school strategies and initiatives as outlined in DET's anti-bullying policy
 - develop a *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* that includes processes and strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying and other forms of unacceptable behaviour
 - involve children, staff and parents/carers in updating the *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
 - include a statement about bullying and cyberbullying behaviours in the Rights and Responsibilities section of their *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
 - work in partnership with parents/carers to reduce and manage bullying
 - take a whole-school approach focusing on safety and wellbeing
 - consistently respond to all incidents of bullying that have been reported to the school and ensure that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents
 - ensure that support is provided to any child who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour

- provide regular updates, within the bounds of privacy legislation, to parents/carers about the management of incidents
 - address cyber bullying as part of its *Internet/Social Media [eSmart] Policy*
- Constructive strategies to deal with bullying and harassment will include:
 - education in coping strategies
 - assertiveness training
 - problem solving and social skills;
 - counselling and behaviour modification

These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.

The school may implement one of the following responses to bullying as appropriate to the incidents and those affected:

- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
 - Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
 - Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the victim student(s), the perpetrator students and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the victim(s).
- If a teacher feels a child is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to an appropriate person in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.
 - Programs will be organised to raise children's awareness about bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in peer support programs, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by outside experts and providers.
 - Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff.
 - The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues.
 - If circumstances warrant, the school may consider using [Bullying No Way!](#) and the [National Safe Schools Framework](#).
 - The school will ensure the policy is easily accessible within the school community, published on the school's website and included as part of the Student Enrolment Package.
 - Pro formas for reporting bullying are available from the school.
 - For further information, including information on sexual diversity, the school will refer to the DET resources at the website below.
 - Please refer also to the school's *Duty of Care Policy*, the *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, the *Gender Identity Policy* and the Child Safe Standards.

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed annually as part of preparing the Annual Report or if guidelines change (latest DET update early July 2017).

This policy was ratified by School Council on October 2018

Reference:

www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/bullying.aspx