



Bullying & Harassment Prevention Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

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 Prevention (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms are unacceptable at Montrose Primary School. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

Aims:

- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment is acceptable.
- Everyone within the school community is alerted to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

Types of bullying behaviour

- **verbal or written abuse** - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
- **violence** - including threats of violence
- **sexual harassment** - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation
- **homophobia** and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality
- **discrimination** including racial discrimination - treating people differently because of their identity
- **cyberbullying** - either online or via mobile phone.

What is not Bullying?

There are also some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying:

- **mutual conflict** - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- **single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying
- **social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that is carried out through the internet or mobile phones. Cyberbullying is bullying using digital technologies including mobile phones, email and social media tools.

Types of cyberbullying

- **pranking** - repeated hang ups, anonymous, mocking or threatening phone calls.
- **image sharing** - forwarding or sharing unflattering or private images without permission.
- **sexually explicit images** - people of any age, who forward or share images of a sexual nature of a person under 18 need to be aware that this is a criminal offence (child pornography) that may result in prosecution.
- **text and email** - sending insulting or threatening text messages or emails.
- **personal online information** - publishing online someone's private, personal or embarrassing information without permission, or spreading rumors online.
- **identity theft** - assuming someone's identity online and negatively representing them in a way that damages their reputation or relationships.
- **hate sites** - creating hate sites or implementing social exclusion campaigns on social networking sites.

Other types of cyberbullying

It is also cyberbullying when a student, or students, uses technology to run a multi-step campaign to bully another student. For example, setting another student up to be assaulted, video-recording their humiliation, posting the video-recording online and then sending the website address to others.

Cyberbullying vs Bullying

While cyberbullying is similar to bullying in some ways, there are also differences.

Differences:

- ***Cyberbullying is invasive***

Cyberbullying can be difficult to escape and is incredibly invasive. It is more likely to occur outside of school, including while at home, and can happen at any time.

- ***Cyberbullying can involve a large audience***

Cyberbullying can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly shared to a large audience, for example, rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once. This material can also continue to be available and harmful long after the cyberbullying has ceased.

- ***Cyberbullies have a sense of anonymity***

Cyberbullying can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the target, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

Similarities:

- ***Power imbalance***

The power imbalance between the 'bully' and 'target', the repetitive nature of the bullying behaviour and the intent to harm, humiliate, embarrass, ostracise, or isolate can occur in bullying and cyberbullying.

- ***Types of behaviour***

Types of behaviour including spreading rumours and making threats or insults, can occur in bullying and cyberbullying.

- ***Reasons for behaving in a bullying way***

People often engage in cyberbullying for the same reasons they engage in bullying.

Bullying Roles

It is important to recognise bullying behaviours and make it clear they are unacceptable, but it is also important to try not to label students as 'a bully'.

Bullying is not acceptable

Most students don't want bullying to occur but often don't know what to do about it. It's important that all forms of bullying are taken seriously and that schools, parents and students work together to ensure that everyone understands that bullying is not acceptable - ever.

People in a bullying scenario may take on one of the following roles:

- a person who engages in bullying behaviour
- a target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour
- an assistant who assists the bullying behaviour and actively joins in
- a supporter who encourages and gives silent approval to the bullying, by smiling, laughing or making comments
- a silent bystander who sees or knows about someone being bullied but is passive and does nothing, this may be an adult bystander
- a defender who supports the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

- All adults, including teachers, school staff and parents, should model positive bystander behaviour and intervene if they observe bullying behaviour occurring between students. Standing by and doing nothing, or leaving students to 'sort it out' themselves, sends the message to the whole school community that the bullying behaviour is being condoned.
- Young people are still learning and practicing social skills. Everyone has the capacity to change their behaviour but being given a label can stick and make these changes much harder.

The Impact of Bullying

Bullying has a negative impact on everyone involved; the target, the bully and the bystanders.

Impact on students who are bullied

Students who are bullied are more likely to:

- feel disconnected from school and not like school
- have lower academic outcomes, including lower attendance and completion rates
- lack quality friendships at school
- display high levels of emotion that indicate vulnerability and low levels of resilience
- be less well accepted by peers, avoid conflict and be socially withdrawn
- have low self-esteem
- have depression, anxiety, feelings of loneliness and isolation
- have nightmares
- feel wary or suspicious of others
- have an increased risk of depression and substance abuse
- in extreme cases, have a higher risk of suicide, however, the reasons why a person may be at risk of suicide are extremely complicated.

Contributing factors to being bullied may include:

- depression
- family problems
- history of trauma
- belonging to a minority group, where isolation or lack of community support is an issue.

Impact on bullies

Students who frequently bully others are more likely to:

- feel disconnected from school and dislike school
- get into fights, vandalise property and leave school early.

In addition, recent Victorian research has shown that bullying perpetration in Year 10 is associated with an increased likelihood of theft, violent behaviour and binge drinking.

Impact on bystanders

Students who witness bullying may:

- be reluctant to attend school
- feel fearful or powerless to act and guilty for not acting
- have increased mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- have increased use of tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs.

Impact on schools

When bullying continues and a school does not take action, the entire school climate and culture can be negatively affected. This impacts on student learning and engagement, staff retention and satisfaction and parental confidence in the school, which can lead to:

- the school developing an environment of fear and disrespect
- students experiencing difficulty learning
- students feeling insecure
- students disliking school
- students perceiving that teachers and staff have little control and don't care about them.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person. Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be 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.

Roles and Responsibilities of students, parents, caregivers and teachers in responding to and/or reporting bullying & harassment behaviours

- *The Student Engagement Policy outlines in 'Section 3 – Rights and Responsibilities' the expectations of Students, Parents/Carers and Teachers with regard to behaviour.*

Strategies for developing and implementing whole school bullying prevention programs

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way. The school is well underway with the process of accreditation as an eSmart School, which entails comprehensive student/parent and staff cybersafety and bullying education programs. Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving. All new students, parents/carers and staff will be informed of the Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

- *The Student Engagement Policy outlines the Section 2 - Whole School Prevention Statement regarding the extensive range of strategies being used to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive school setting.*

References

Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines	https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/segpolicy.pdf
School Accountability and Improvement Framework	https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/account/operate/saif2011/aifguidelines3.pdf
Bullying	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/what.aspx (Bullying definitions) http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/roles.aspx (Bullying Roles) http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/impact.aspx (Impact of Bullying)
Cyberbullying	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/cyberbullying.aspx
Charter of Human Rights	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/multirightchart.aspx http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/cohrara2006433/
Equal Opportunity Act	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/diversity/Pages/legislativerequirements.aspx
Disability Standards for Education	http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/wellbeing/disability/handbook/legislation.htm

Responsibility: Principal, Assistant Principal, Student Well-being PLT

Ratified at School Council: 12th August 2014

Due for Review: August 2015