

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Mitcham Primary School

PURPOSE

Mitcham Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explain the definition of bullying.
- Make clear that all forms of bullying at Mitcham Primary School will not be tolerated.
- 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.
- Ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed.
- Ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators).
- Seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Mitcham Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Mitcham Primary School aims to:

- Be proportionate, consistent and responsive.
- Find a constructive and positive solution for everyone.
- Stop the bullying from happening again.
- Restore the relationships between the students involved.

Mitcham Primary School acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Duty of Care Policy, Statement of Values and School Philosophy, reporting obligations (including Mandatory Reporting), Behaviour Management and Equal Opportunities.*

POLICY

DEFINITIONS

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or

social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reason

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

1. *Direct physical bullying* – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *Direct verbal bullying* – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *Indirect bullying* – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. 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 harassment, 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. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Mitcham Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Mitcham Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Mitcham Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying

behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Mitcham Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour and are observant of signs of distress or suspected incidences of bullying.
- Teachers take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk, including confiscating U.M.P.C.s and Chromebooks belonging to students involved in cyberbullying and banning these students from access to the internet, email and other electronic communications.
- Teachers report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member such as Class teacher, Student Welfare Coordinator, Assistant Principal, or Principal, who will follow the designated procedures as outlined in Mitcham Primary School's Behaviour Management Program.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The Peer Support Program and the Peer Mediation program encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed and refuse to be involved in any form of bullying.
- If students are present when bullying occurs; if appropriate, take some form of preventative action. Report the incident or suspected incident to Class Teacher or Yard Duty Teacher and help break down the code of secrecy.
- Parents are required to watch for signs of distress in their child, take an active interest in their child's social life and friends, inform the school if bullying is suspected, not encourage their child to retaliate and be willing to attend meetings at the school if their child is involved in any bullying incident.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

REPORTING CONCERNS TO MITCHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their classroom teachers. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including Teacher Aides, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Mitcham Primary School should contact either the Principal, Assistant Principal or Classroom Teacher in person, by phone on 9873 1551 or by email directed to mitcham.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au.

INVESTIGATIONS

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations in the staff diary in a written format; and
2. Inform relevant Coordinator, Assistant Principal and/or Principal.

The Teacher who is dealing with the allegation (unless instructed otherwise by the Leadership Team) is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Teacher or Leadership team member may:

- Speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents.
- Speak to the parents of the students involved.
- Speak to the teachers of the students involved.
- Take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference.
- Obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the Teacher or Leadership team member in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: Brodie's Law

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advicesheetbrodie_slaw.aspx).

RESPONSES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOURS

When Classroom Teachers have sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with other staff members, including other Classroom Teachers, Assistant Principal and Principal.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Mitcham Primary School will consider:

- The students' cultural background and home life.
- The age and maturity of the students involved.
- The severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student.
- Whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before.
- Whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context.
- Whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour.
- The alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Classroom Teachers may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to an external provider.
- 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare an Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.

- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including resilience programs.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.

Classroom teachers and relevant staff members are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour, these records are kept in Compass, our digital student management program and in our Wellbeing Tracker.

Mitcham Primary School understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Mitcham Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- See *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Statement of Values*.
- *Bully Stoppers* (<https://www.vic.gov.au/news/bully-stoppers.html>)
- *Bullying No Way!* (<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>)
- National Centre Against Bullying (<https://www.ncab.org.au/get-help/>)

EVALUATION

This will be reviewed on a two yearly basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- Discussion with students.
- Discussions with parents and parent surveys.
- Annual student bullying surveys (Attitudes to School Survey).
- Regular staff discussions.
- Assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with Staff and school council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2022
Consultation	Students, parents and staff were consulted regarding this policy on 'Bullying, No Way Day', Friday 18th March. Responses to the student 'Attitudes to School Survey' (2021) have also informed the writing of this policy. Parent feedback to surveys, including the Parent Opinion Survey (2021), have also informed the writing of this policy.
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	March 2025