

# ANTIBULLYING & HARRASSMENT

## 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 positive self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear anti-bullying (including cyberbullying and harassment) prevention policy will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated at Murchison Primary School, this includes in the MASK program.**

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. Regular Wellbeing meetings will be held with school staff and a member of the School Support Service to discuss individual student concerns on a case by case basis.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Students Engagement and Inclusion Policy.

#### Aims:

- To provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying and 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, including students, parents, caregivers and teachers 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 at all times.

### What are Bullying, Cyberbullying and Harassment?

#### *Definition of Bullying*

**Bullying** is repeated verbal, physical, social or intimidating 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*

There are three broad categories of bullying:

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** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - mimicking
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
  - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress

### *What Bullying is Not*

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

#### *Mutual Conflict*

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

#### *Social Rejection or Dislike*

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

#### *Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation*

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.

Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

### **Cyberbullying**

Consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages

- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.

*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

## **GUIDELINES**

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

All new students and their families and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Incidents of misbehavior will be recorded on the "Blue Form" (see Appendix B) and entered into CASES.

The Student Behaviour Survey will be conducted once a semester. The Referral Form (see Appendix B) will be used to follow-up any relevant issues.

The Parent Behaviour Survey will be conducted in semester 1 and the data will be presented to staff, education sub-committee and school council for any actions or recommendations.

Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.

Staff will be made aware of the Helpline that is available to them. (See posters in staffroom and preparation areas.)

There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Constructive strategies to deal with 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 Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy of the school will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community via the School Website, in the [Handbook](#), and the Learning to Learn Program delivered to students in term 1 and revisited at the beginning of each term. Students who enrol throughout the year will during their orientation be given an induction to the Policy.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

The staff leadership team (including Principal, Wellbeing Officer and one or two members of staff) will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying. Members of the staff leadership team will thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.

If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to a member of the Staff Leadership Team in order to ensure appropriate support for the student/s. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.

Student programs will be organised to raise student awareness about bullying (including cyberbullying) 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 workers. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current Department of Education and Early Childhood Department (DEECD) materials e.g. Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand and 'No Blame Approach to Bullying' programs.

Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff by the Staff Leadership Team and/or outside experts.

The school will provide specialist resources such as books, DVDs, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying and harassment issues.

Disciplinary consequences for bullying and harassment will comply with the school's Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy. The Principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with DEECD guidelines.

## Procedures

### **What do you do if you are concerned your child is being bullied?**

- discuss the matter with a member of the Staff Leadership Team via phone, email, personal contact or letter
- parent concerns will be recorded
- staff member will investigate parent concerns
- staff member to determine outcome of concerns and contact parent
- staff member to provide support for children involved, this may include social skill development, support from SSSO team member, restorative practices conversations
- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

### **• What happens if your child is being bullied?**

**If your child has been bullied they will receive support from school to help them feel safe and secure. Children will have access to support from the SSS team – someone to talk to about what has happened and how they can develop strategies to manage situations at school.**

### **What happens if your child is the bully?**

School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below.

#### ***Level 1***

***Level 1 behaviours are behaviours that are managed in the classroom on a day to day basis. Classroom rules and consequences are set out by the school.***

If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- private conference

#### ***Level 2***

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Staff Leadership Team. If the student does not take control over his/her

behaviour, a Blue Form is completed and the form should be completed and submitted to the student wellbeing coordinator to be recorded on CASES.

Here, a Staff Leadership Team member may:

- Meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract.
- Provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities.
- Conduct a restorative conversation individually with the perpetrator and “target”, and then combined together.
- Parents of perpetrator and victim will be notified.

### **Level 3**

For ‘a student whose bullying or harassing behaviour is resistant to change, an individual ‘strength building’ plan should be developed by a member of the Staff Leadership Team in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student’s inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

### **Level 4**

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. Student Wellbeing Coordinators will need to be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student’s family.

**Note:** The school may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school’s Student Engagement Policy. Furthermore, the principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014’ (DEECD) at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including-cyberbullying) and harassment.

## **LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this policy)**

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- DEECD’s [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014: Student Engagement Policy](#)
- The school’s Acceptable Use Agreement (re: cyber-bullying)
- DEECD’s [Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand](#)
- All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix A: AntiBullying (including cyberbullying) and Harassment Procedures
- Appendix B: Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template

- Appendix C: Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed other to Student Welfare Coordinator – Template

## DEECD Websites

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

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

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

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....	<b>November 2014</b>
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