BULLYING PREVENTION

Purpose

Elsternwick 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 so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Elsternwick Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Elsternwick Primary School will be left unaddressed
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Elsternwick Primary School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- 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 targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Elsternwick Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Elsternwick Primary School aims to:
- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- prevent the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Elsternwick 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 addresses how Elsternwick Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Elsternwick Primary School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Whole School Wellbeing Framework, *Supporting Positive Behaviour* manual, *Acceptable Use of Digital Technologies Agreement*, *LGBTIQ+ Policy*, *Inclusive Language and Practices Guide*, *Inclusion and Diversity* policy and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy.
This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

Policy

Definitions

All the below definitions are explored with students as part of our education strategy on developing positive relationships and bullying prevention each year.

Bullying

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:

> *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.*
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> *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).*
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> *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.*

Bullying has three main features:
- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

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 device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours
Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the *Supporting Positive Behaviour* approach.

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 nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Elsternwick Primary School will use its *Supporting Positive Behaviour* approach to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.
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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. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Elsternwick Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Elsternwick Primary School will use its *Supporting Positive Behaviour* approach 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.

Bullying Prevention

Elsternwick Primary School has developed programs and initiatives to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

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

- Our learning environments are inclusive, to ensure students feel safe, valued and respected to develop positive relationships and wellbeing.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum is taught explicitly each week. We use resources from *Bullying No Way* and the *E-Safe commission* to help students explore what constitutes bullying, how to be an up stander, and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving, and aligns with our Respectful Relationships and Restorative Practices approach.
    - All students engage in a Bullying Prevention unit as part of the Whole School Wellbeing Framework in Term 1 each year. Students in Years 4-6 experience incursions with the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to establish positive relationships for the beginning of the school year.
    - All student engage in a unit on understanding difference, diversity and Human Rights, using resources from Respectful Relationships, as part of the Whole School Wellbeing Framework in Term 4 each year to promote an understanding of inclusion and diversity.
    - Teachers facilitate regular Class Circles for connection, belonging and community and building trust between peers.
    - Year 5 and 6 students engage in a social media and digital safety unit to encourage responsible use of devices for digital literacy.
    - Problem Solving and Help Seeking lessons as part of the Respectful Relationships program support students to identify trusted adults they can seek s from early before the impact of behaviour becomes more severe.
- Parent and carer workshops on bullying prevention and cyber safety each year develop a cohesive community understanding.
- Regular newsletter articles update our community on our bullying prevention, cyber safety and Respectful Relationships focus in classrooms.
- The Supporting Positive Behaviour approach supports teachers to develop Classroom Agreements to set clear guidelines for expected behaviour, based on our School Values of Respect, Responsibility, Curiosity and Personal Excellence. These strategies discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- The Student Wellbeing Team and the Peer Mediation program build positive relationships between students in different year levels. We empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- Compass incident records are analysed on a regular basis to track patterns of behaviour and any regular incidents between students.
- We celebrate national events such as Harmony Day, National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence as a whole school community to promote our inclusive community.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Whole School Wellbeing Framework, *Supporting Positive Behaviour* manual, *Acceptable Use of Digital Technologies Agreement*, *LGBTIQ+ Policy*, *Inclusive Language and Practices Guide*, *Inclusion and Diversity* policy and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Elsternwick 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.
Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Elsternwick Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
We encourage students to speak to their classroom teacher or the Student Wellbeing Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including Education Support staff, other teachers, members of leadership etc.
Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Elsternwick Primary School should contact Assistant Principal and Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Nicola Smith, by phone on 8534 6100 or by email directed to elsternwickps@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
1. record the details of the allegations in Compass; and
2. inform the Assistant Principal and Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator may:
- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/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
- analyse and track Compass data to look for patterns of behaviour and interaction

All communications with the Student Wellbeing Coordinator 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.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Student Wellbeing Coordinator has 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 teachers, SSS, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff. 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, Elsternwick Primary School will consider:
- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Follow Elsternwick Primary School's whole school *Supporting Positive Behaviour* manual, which outlines Steps 1-4 and includes processes such as restorative conversations and reflection.
- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to Student Support Services or partnering psychology services.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to Student Support Services or partnering psychology services.
- 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 target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Risk Management Plan or Safety Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour in collaboration with school staff and parents/carers.
- 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, for example Friends for Life.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, reflection, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our *Supporting Positive Behaviour* manual, *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy, the *Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions* and any other relevant Department policy.

Elsternwick Primary School understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents. The Assistant Principal – Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Further information and resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:
Supporting Positive Behaviour manual

Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

Parent Complaints policy

Duty of Care Policy

Inclusion and Diversity Policy

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:
- Bully Stoppers
- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.
Data will be collected through:
- Discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- Compass incident data analysis
- Student Attitudes to School Survey
- Staff Opinion Survey
- Regular wellbeing curriculum surveys
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the Education Subcommittee and School Council.

Review cycle
This policy was last updated on October 2020 and is scheduled for review in October 2021.