



# SOMERVILLE RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL Approach to Bullying Policy

## Rationale or Purpose

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

## Policy Statement

This Approach to Bullying Policy is intended:

- to reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable
- to alert everyone within the school community of the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported to staff whether a person is an observer or a victim
- to ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately
- to seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times

The effects of harassment or bullying include:

- poor health – anxiety, depression;
- lower self-esteem;
- reduced study performance;
- missed classes, social withdrawal; and
- reduced career prospects

## Implementation

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying may consist of physical harm, harassment, verbal insults or hurtful remarks, or actions designed to hurt somebody's reputation, social standing or to cause humiliation. Bullying may be carried out directly or indirectly, and may include the use of digital technologies such as social network sites, websites or on-line chat rooms.

Our school has adopted a zero tolerance position on bullying.

There are some specific 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.

### **Four Phase Approach to Bullying**

At Somerville Rise Primary School we have adopted a four phase approach to bullying built around relationships and a restorative approach.

#### **A. Primary Prevention:**

- The school will promote and support safe and respectful learning environments where bullying is not tolerated. The Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy outlines the engagement strategies which includes:
  - Implementation of the Resilience Rights & Respectful Relationships curriculum and Positive Education approach.
  - Student Representative Council, Peer Mediators, staff and students to promote the philosophy of the School Values - Respect, Integrity, Service, Empathy (RISE).
  - Clarification with students of the types of bullying, as well as the consequences and impact of bullying.
  - Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
  - A staff supervised designated safe and quiet place for children to access at recess and lunch times will be available all year (Library).
  - A bullying survey to be conducted, administered and responded to annually. Bully box or similar anonymous reporting process.
  - Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response, complemented by clear processes for reporting suspected bullying

#### **B. Isolated, Infrequent or Less Serious Incidents:**

- Reporting:
  - All instances of suspected bullying or inappropriate behaviour must be responded to by staff.
  - Parents, teachers and students can report bullying. Parents can contact their child's teacher or the Principal class members; Students can report bullying to their teacher, the Principal class members, through the bully ballot and/or the

- Bully Box.
  - Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect bullying or a behaviour problem.
  - The school will reinforce with children the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others, and the imperative that staff respond appropriately and proportionally to each allegation consistent with the school's Values – Respect, Integrity, Service & Empathy, including the proper reporting and recording of the incident/incidences on the on-line behaviour tracker (Sentral Wellbeing).
- Response
  - A restorative approach to the bullying will be applied where offenders reflect upon their harm to victims:
    - they become remorseful and act restoratively;
    - the focus is on the unacceptable behaviour; and
    - can lead to healthier interpersonal relations.
  - Parents are to be contacted if their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced inappropriate behaviour, or if their child appears to have behaved inappropriately or bullied someone else.
  - Appropriate and proportional consequences may include a verbal apology, writing a letter of regret, completing a Behaviour Incident booklet, attending SSG, loss of privileges, etc.
  - Recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will occur as appropriate.

### **C. Repetitive or Serious Incidents:**

- Serious incidents and/or repetitive incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour must be reported, responded to by staff and documented.
- Serious incidents are those that include physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats or homophobic bullying, etc.
- All such incidents or allegations will be properly investigated and documented. Depending upon the nature of each incident, they may also be reported to and investigated by police, reported to the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit, and/or reported to the Department's Emergency and Security Management Unit.
- Complementary and/or an alternative approach may be used such as: a traditional disciplinary approach; strengthening the target; mediation; support group method; shared concerned (see Bullying. No Way! – Restoring relationships)
- The school may contact support professionals such as Welfare Officers, Welfare Coordinators or Counsellors and/or Student Support Service Officers for assistance and support.
- Students, parents and staff identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations. Parents of students sign a form/letter that they have been contacted.
- Both bullies and victims will be offered counselling and support
- All repetitive or serious incidents must be brought to the attention of the principal class members of the school.
- The most appropriate staff member will contact parents of the targeted child. Principal class members will contact alleged perpetrators unless advised by bodies, such as Police or Child Protection, not to do so.

- Regional office will provide support as appropriate, and the Principal will monitor the investigation and review the situation until matters are appropriately resolved.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include criminal charges, suspension, expulsion, loss of privileges, counselling, conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the school's Values.
- A management strategy for all parties will be developed in consultation with the students and parents involved.
- Parents or community members who bully or harass or abuse staff will be provided with official warnings, and if necessary referred to the police, and/or have Trespass restrictions placed upon them by the principal consistent with the Summary Offences Act.

#### **D. Post Incident:**

- It is important that appropriate strategies are put in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Appropriate strategies may include:-
  - conciliation meetings between all parties
  - ongoing monitoring of students involved
  - identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved
  - follow-up meetings regarding each student's management strategy
  - ongoing communication with parents
  - counselling from appropriate agencies, support officers, etc for both parties
  - reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies
  - use of a restorative approach to rebuild relationships

#### **4. Evaluation and review**

A review of the Approach to Bullying Policy will be undertaken every two years.

The review will be the responsibility of the School's Leadership Team and will be based on feedback from participants and other staff members responsible for the Policy's implementation.

#### **5. References**

DET Bullying Policy

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/bullying.aspx>

Dealing with bullying

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice dealing with bullying.aspx>

Bully Stoppers

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

Advice Sheets – Bullying

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

Bullying. No Way

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Restorative Practice

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

Bullying. No Way! – Restoring relationships

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/RespondingToBullying/HowAustralianSchoolsRespond/RestoringRelationships>

## **6. Definitions**

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

**Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

**Cyberbullying** is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of;
- spreading of rumours online;
- sending unwanted messages; and
- defamation.

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want.

People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

### **Methods of Response**

#### **Restorative practice**

Restorative practice is a strategy that seeks to repair relationships that have been damaged, including those damaged through bullying. It does this 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.

#### **Disciplinary approach**

The disciplinary approach (sometimes referred to as 'traditional') uses direct sanctions as a punishment for students who have bullied someone and also as a general deterrent.

This approach typically involves the development and communication of clear rules about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. These consequences generally involve punishment of the student who is considered responsible for the bullying behaviour.

#### **Strengthening the target**

Strengthening the 'target' involves systematically helping the person being bullied to deal more effectively with the person or persons who seek to bully him or her.

The strategy of strengthening the target seeks to improve the capacity of the intended target to cope more effectively with bullying.

### **Mediation**

Mediation is a process in which students in conflict and bullying are invited to take part in a session with a mediator, a staff member or peer mediator, to help resolve their differences.

### **Support group method**

Support group method is a process in which students who have offended against another attend a meeting together, at which the offender is required to reflect upon the harm that has been done, experience remorse and act restoratively towards the person or persons offended.

### **Method of shared concern**

The Method of Shared Concern is a non-punitive multi-stage strategy used with groups of students who are suspected of bullying someone. It facilitates the emergence of a solution to a bully/target problem through the use of a series of interviews and discussions with the parties involved.

<b>Date Implemented</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2014
<b>Author</b>	
<b>Approved By</b>	School Council
<b>Approval Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	23rd April 2018
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Education Committee
<b>Review Date</b>	June 2020