



BULLYING PREVENTION and RESPONSE POLICY

PURPOSE

Ballarat North Primary School is committed to providing a safe, caring 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 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

When responding to bullying behaviour, Ballarat North Primary School aims to:

- be consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

The 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.

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 reasons.

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.

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

Ballarat North 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, care and respect.

At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community with all members working together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers utilise classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Explicit teaching of our school values and eSmart practices reinforces that bullying behaviour is not acceptable.
- 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 their peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns

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 class teacher or the yard duty teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff. Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour should contact the class teacher, principal or assistant principal.

Investigations

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

- inform the class teacher and the principal / assistant principal
- record the details of the allegations

The principal and/or assistant principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. This may include:

- speaking to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speaking to the parents of the students involved
- speaking to the teachers of the students involved
- taking detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtaining written statements from all or any of the above as appropriate

All communications 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.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the school 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.

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, the 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 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.

The school may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Regional Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services or an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student.
- 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 a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

The principal and assistant principal are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Ballarat North 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 are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a 2 year 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 and parents
- student, parent and staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of responses implemented.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in March 2019 and is scheduled for review in March 2021.