

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



PURPOSE

Wandin North Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated. Our school will provide a positive culture where individuals have the right to receive respect from others, the right to learn and teach, and the right to feel safe and secure in their school environment at all times.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- to reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Wandin North Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Wandin North Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Wandin North 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 Wandin North Primary School

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

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

Wandin North 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 Wandin North Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Wandin North 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 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, ICT Usage Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and Communication of School Policies Policy.

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

POLICY

Definitions

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.

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)

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 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, ICT Usage Policy and Behaviour Management Policy.

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. Wandin North Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

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 Wandin North Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Wandin North 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.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Wandin North Primary School has adopted a zero tolerance position on bullying. Our school has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment that models and encourages behaviours that demonstrate acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Wandin North 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. Our approaches to bullying prevention include:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing
- Scheduled reflection of preventive practices and student monitoring by staff and leadership teams
- We provide programs and classroom management strategies that promote inclusiveness, resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- We work to develop community awareness about bullying and its characteristics as well as our school's programs and responses to bullying. This discussion is complemented by our clear processes for reporting suspected bullying
- High expectations of online safety and digital safety awareness As detailed in our ICT Usage Agreements Policy
- Our Kid's Council and Buddies 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 staff about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Wandin North 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 Wandin North Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, support staff, level leaders and principals.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Wandin North Primary School should contact Paul Bailey or Leigh Hallett on 5964 4570 or by email directed to wandin.north.ps@education.vic.gov.au

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass (GradeXpert prior to 2021)
2. inform the relevant Year Level Leader and Assistant Principal/Principal

The informed Year Level Leader and Assistant Principal/Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Year Level Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal may:

- speak to 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

All communications with the Year Level Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal 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 Assistant Principal and/or Principal 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 the Principal and (if required) 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, Wandin North 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

Our Principal or Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student, the students engaging in bullying behaviour, and/or affected students (including witnesses and/or friends of the target student) including referral to OnPsych – School Psychologists
- 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 Individual Management/Safety Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with an older Student Mentor and resilience programs
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate self-regulation strategies
- Identifying of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved
- Follow up meetings regarding each child’s management strategy
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, 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
- Ongoing communication with parents

Our responses will reflect the severity of the bullying incident, according to the below:

A: Infrequent of Less Serious Incidents:

- All instances of suspected bullying or inappropriate behaviour must be responded to by staff
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect a bullying or behaviour problem
- The school will reinforce with children the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others, and it is imperative that staff respond appropriately and proportionally to each allegation consistent with the school’s Student Code of Conduct, including the proper reporting and recording of the incident on our on-line behaviour tracking systems

- 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, loss of privileges etc.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will occur as appropriate

B: 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
- The school may contact support professionals such as Welfare officers, Welfare coordinators or Councillors and/or Student Support Officers for assistance and support
- Students and staff and parents identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations
- 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 police 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 Student Code of Conduct
- 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

Wandin North 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.

Paul Bailey and Leigh Hallett are 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:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

- Parent Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- ICT usage agreement 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 every 3 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating 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
- student surveys
- staff surveys
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Attitudes to School Survey
- [Parent Opinion Survey](#)

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with School Council, Leadership and Principal Teams.

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated in March 2021

This policy is scheduled for review in 2024