



# Bullying Prevention

## Policy

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This policy was last ratified by School Council on 1/6/2020

### Rationale:

Our school is committed to providing a safe and caring environment including a culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff, which encourages self-esteem, co-operation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

### Aims:

Mt Eliza PS is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- define bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Mt Eliza PS 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 at Mt Eliza PS.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Mt Eliza PS aims to:

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

Mt Eliza PS 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.

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and the Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Agreement.

### Implementation:

#### 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, 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**

Mt Eliza PS 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, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Mt Eliza PS 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. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The Classroom Buddies program encourages 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 teachers and older peers 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 Mt Eliza PS**

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 classroom teacher and/or Yard Duty teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including Student Wellbeing Teacher, Education Support staff, First Aide officer, Assistant Principal and/or Principal.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Mt Eliza PS should contact the classroom teacher, the issue may then be referred to the Student Wellbeing Teacher or Assistant Principal.

### **Investigating alleged bullying behaviours**

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the Sentral Wellbeing Behaviour incident database and
2. inform the classroom teacher and a member of the Leadership Team supervising the lunch time 'Re-set Room'.

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

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/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 Teacher/Assistant Principal/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.

### **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When Teacher/Assistant Principal/Principal 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 Assistant Principal, SSSO staff and outside support agencies.

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, Mt Eliza PS will consider:

- developing an individual Behaviour Improvement Plan
- 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.
- re-entry meetings after a significant incident with parent, teacher and Principal rep.
- repeated incidents of bullying (4 or more incidents) will have a before school detention.

The Teacher/Assistant Principal/Principal 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 Student Wellbeing Teacher
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator, including referral to GP for a mental health care plan to access counselling
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim, student, including referral to including referral to GP for a mental health care plan to access counselling
- 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 (including camps and excursions), time out of the yard in the Re-set Room, 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 Behaviour Improvement Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved
- 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 the Respectful Relationships program.

The Assistant Principal is responsible for overseeing up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour are recorded on Sentral.

Mt Eliza PS 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 by Mt Eliza PS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

**References:**

- The school’s ICT Acceptable Use Policy (re cyber-bullying)
- Bully Stoppers <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>

**Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of MEPS two –year review cycle in Term 2, 2022

School Council President: Dean Charge

Signature:

Date: