



## PURPOSE

Sherbourne 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Sherbourne Primary School 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 Sherbourne Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Sherbourne Primary School 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.

Sherbourne 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 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, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Duty of Care Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

## 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

Sherbourne 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, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Sherbourne 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. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- Our school values are respect, responsibility, teamwork and learning. These values underpin all our relationships between students, teachers and families.
- 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.
- Teachers will participate in Professional learning to keep their knowledge up to date.
- 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 Respectful Relationships 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 Sherbourne 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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to your class teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, aides and the Principal.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Sherbourne Primary School should contact their class teacher or the Principal, Maree Seymour on 9434 7142 or via email.

### Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations and
2. inform their Team leader and when required, the Principal.

The Class teacher, Team Leader or Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the investigating personnel 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 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 sufficient information has been obtained 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.

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, Sherbourne 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 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 Team leader or 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 SSS
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to SSS
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral SSS.
- 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.
- 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.
- Team leader and Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Sherbourne 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 by Sherbourne Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

*SPS Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and  
*SPS Statement of Values.*

#### EVALUATION

This 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
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with education sub committee and School Council.

#### REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was endorsed by School Council	June 2018
Due for review:	June 2019

## APPENDIX

### **Why do we have a Bullying Policy?**

To provide a safe and friendly school 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.

### **What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?**

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

Am I bullying or harassing someone?

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

### **What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?**

- “I will ignore it and it will go away.”

If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.

- “I don’t want to cause trouble.”

Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.

- “Am I to blame?”

Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

- “Am I imagining things?”

Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

#### **Bullying can involve :**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- knocking a person’s books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

#### **Cyber-bullying can involve**

- Flaming – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- Harassment – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- Denigration – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- Outing – sharing someone’s secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- Exclusion – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- Cyber-stalking – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

#### **HARASSMENT**

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

### **What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?**

- tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
- discuss the matter with a teacher that you feel comfortable with
- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

### **How will your complaint be dealt with?**

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially. School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below.

#### **LEVEL 1**

If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- think time detention
- private conference

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, then the incident should be recorded and shared with staff.

## **LEVEL 2**

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, the Principal/Assistant Principal must be informed.

Here, Principal/Assistant Principal may:

- meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
- inform the parents and organise a meeting with both the target and the perpetrator's family.

## **LEVEL 3**

For 'at risk' students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual plan should be developed by the Principal/Assistant Principal in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

## **LEVEL 4**

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. The Principal/Assistant Principal will need to be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family.

Note: The school may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the Principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with 'Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy Guidelines' (DET) at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment.

This Policy works in conjunction with:

1. SPS Child Safety Policy
2. SPS Child Safe Code of Conduct
3. SPS Engagement Policy
4. SPS Digital Technologies Policy