

**POLICY TITLE:** Bullying Prevention and Response Policy

**DATE RATIFIED:** February 2021

**REVIEW DATE:** February 2024

ENPS MISSION: We maximise the potential of all; empowering independence, excellence, innovation and engagement with the world.

Critical Engagement  
with the World

Academic Excellence

Inclusive Learning  
Environment

Personal and Social  
Wellbeing

### RATIONALE

Essendon North Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated. Every member of the school community has a right to fully participate in an educational environment that is safe, supportive and inclusive and the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Essendon North Primary School acknowledges that all staff working with students have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent students from foreseeable harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable physical or psychological harm occurring as a result of bullying.

This policy addresses how Essendon North Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Essendon North Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Essendon North Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Essendon 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 Essendon North Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Essendon 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.

## 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 or be categorised as bullying. 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 the Essendon North Primary School Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, in conjunction with our Code of Conduct and Stage Management Response.

**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. Essendon North Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, in conjunction with our Code of Conduct and Stage Management Response to address 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 Essendon North Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Essendon 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.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Essendon 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, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Essendon 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.

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 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. We actively promote resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

- 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.
- We participate in the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

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

## INCIDENT RESPONSE

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

We encourage students to speak to their classroom teacher or our Wellbeing Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Essendon North Primary School should contact the school on (03) 9379 3979 and ask to be directed to our Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

### Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass and
2. inform staff involved, including the classroom teacher, the relevant Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator may:

- speak to the 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 Student Wellbeing Coordinator 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 our Student Wellbeing Coordinator 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 the relevant stakeholders, including classroom teacher, Student Support Services, Assistant Principal, Principal and relevant 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, Essendon 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 Student Wellbeing Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including required referrals to Student Support Services.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including required referrals to Student Support Services.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to including required referrals to Student Support Services.
- 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).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safe at School Plan or Individual Education 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.
- 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.
- 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.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator, in conjunction with the Assistant Principal and/or Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour. Essendon 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.

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

The Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic) require Victorian government school principals to develop a Student Engagement Policy which includes student behaviour. Principals must address bullying as part of the Student Engagement Policy, or have a standalone policy specifically addressing bullying.

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
- Equal Opportunity 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 two to three 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
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- Student Wellbeing Trackers and/or [Bully Stoppers Data Collection](#) tool
- 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 and include consultation from students, staff and our School Council.

### DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Effective Date	Owner	Description of change
2	03/02/2021	Kate Barletta	Policy revised to align the Policy and Advisory Library, DET guidelines and contextual information.
1	06/02/2019	Scott Mullen	New policy developed.

\* Information on revisions and new versions to be added to the top of the table, therefore the most recent is always on top.