

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



PURPOSE

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

When responding to bullying behaviour, Balwyn 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.

Balwyn 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 Balwyn Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Balwyn 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*, *Student Code of Conduct*, and *Equal Opportunity 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 behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Student Code of Conduct, Statement of Values.

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. Balwyn Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, including facilitated restorative dialogue or 'talk', to guide responses 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 Balwyn Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Balwyn Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, including facilitated restorative dialogue or 'talk', 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

Balwyn 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 Balwyn 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 committed to incorporating wellbeing strategies that promote positive behaviour through programs such as and not exclusive to the You Can Do It program and Respectful Relationships
- 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, problem solving, and restorative practise with conflict resolution
- Student leadership roles, multi-age learning and whole school transition sessions 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 teachers and 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 Balwyn 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 Balwyn Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their teacher or the teacher on duty. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including the Year Level Leaders, teachers, Student Wellbeing Officer, School Psychologist and or Assistant Principal.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Balwyn Primary School should contact their child's classroom teacher and if required, the Student Wellbeing Officer, including by phone 98367121 or by email balwyn.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au (including the relevant names and dates, as well as the word 'wellbeing' in the subject line of the email).

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in the student file (COMPASS);
2. Inform relevant Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Officer, Assistant Principals, or Principal.

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

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, and the victim's advocate, should they request (e.g. a member of staff)
- speak to the alleged perpetrator/s, their advocate should they request one (e.g. a member of staff) 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/leader 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 a teacher or leader 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 school personnel, including the Student Wellbeing Officer, Assistant Principal and Principal and / or relevant Department of Education and Training (DET) personnel including Student Support Specialist (SSS) such as Psychologists, Social Workers, Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists and staff from OPTIONS – Capacity Building: Outreach and Professional Learning.

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, Balwyn 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 Student Wellbeing Officer may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of the restorative practice meeting is to engage in dialogue that contributes to the repair of the 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 suitable resolution for any students that have 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
- Refer any student that has been harmed (victim) to the SSS for further support and/or counselling
- Refer any student that has caused harm (perpetrator) to the SSS for further support and/or counselling
- Offer referral to a SSS for support/counselling to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the student that has been harmed (victim)
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students
- Implement disciplinary consequences and / or restorative processes for any students that have caused harm (perpetrators) 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 DET policies
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between any student that has been harmed (victim) and any students that have caused harm (perpetrators)
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including resilience and social skills programs (e.g. You Can Do It
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary

- Implement multi- age and year group and targeted strategies and behavioural frameworks to reinforce positive behaviours including the Student Code of Conduct, School Values, Classroom Norms Respectful Relationships, You Can Do It and School Wide Positive Behaviour Support

The Principal and Student Wellbeing Officer is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour. Teachers are to inform leaders and provide their own evident and records for to leaders.

Balwyn 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

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Equal Opportunity Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Parent Concerns Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity 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 on a three yearly basis, or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with student representative groups
- student surveys
- 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 staff consultation, student representative groups/leaders, Education-Sub Committee and School Council.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in May 2021 and is scheduled for review in May 2023.