



SOMERVILLE RISE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Approach to Bullying Policy

1. Rationale or Purpose

It is important for the school to provide a safe and friendly 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.

2. Policy Statement

This Approach to Bullying Policy is intended:

- To reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- To alert everyone within the school community of the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported to staff whether a person is an observer or a victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

The effects of harassment or bullying include

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

3. Implementation

If a student sees another person being harassed or bullied they should 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

Approach to Bullying

Bullying may consist of physical harm, harassment, verbal insults or hurtful remarks, or actions designed to hurt somebody's reputation, social standing or to cause humiliation. Bullying may be carried out directly or indirectly, and may include the use of digital technologies such as social network sites, websites or on-line chat rooms.

Our school has adopted a zero tolerance position on bullying.

Our school will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment based on the Effective School's model.

We have adopted a four-phase approach to bullying.

A. Primary Prevention:

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify with students the types of bullying, as well as the consequences and impact of bullying.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response, complemented by clear processes for reporting suspected bullying.
- The provision of programs that promote inclusiveness, resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving will form an integral part of our curriculum. In particular, assertiveness training and bystander training that builds skills in children to challenge and/or report unacceptable behaviour will be central to our curriculum.
- A bullying survey to be introduced, administered and responded to annually.
- The 'You Can Do It Education' program to be implemented across the school.
- Anti-bullying messages and posters will be displayed around the school.
- Student Representative Council, peer support delegates, staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- A Buddy System will be introduced across the school, complemented by a peer mediation program.
- Electives and structured activities will be available to students at recess and lunch breaks.
- Teachers will be trained in cybersafety. Cybersafety awareness programs will be provided for parents and cybersafety will form part of each child's ICT curriculum.
- A staff supervised designated safe and quiet place for children to access at recess and lunch times will be available all year (Library and Yard Withdrawal Room).

B. Isolated, Infrequent or 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 the 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 tracker.
- 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, attending SSG, loss of privileges etc.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will occur as appropriate.

C. 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 be 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 etc 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.

D. Post Incident:

- It is important that appropriate strategies are put in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Appropriate strategies may include:-
- conciliation meetings between all parties
- ongoing monitoring of students involved.
- identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved.
- follow-up meetings regarding each child's management strategy.
- ongoing communication with parents.
- counselling from appropriate agencies of support officers etc for both parties.
- reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies.

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; and
- offensive name calling.

Explicit: (obvious)

They include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving etc;
- 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; and
- requests for sexual favours.

Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

Bullying can involve such things as:

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

Cyberbullying

Being involved in online spaces – either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:

- the language you use and the things you say;
- how you treat others;
- respecting people's property (eg copyright); and
- visiting appropriate places.

Behaving safely online means:

- protecting your own privacy and personal information (we used to call it 'stranger danger');
- selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute;
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images); and
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something is 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

If you are being harassed or bullied you should:

- tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop; and
- discuss the matter with a student leader or a teacher/coordinator that you feel comfortable with.
- concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

4. Evaluation and review

A review of the Approach to Bullying Policy will be undertaken every two years.

The review will be the responsibility of the School's Leadership Team and will be based on feedback from participants and other staff members responsible for the policy's implementation.

5. References

6. Definitions

Definitions

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Bullying is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group, online social networking, instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS. It may involve text or images (photos, drawings)

Examples of cyberbullying behaviour are:

- teasing and being made fun of;
- spreading of rumours online;
- sending unwanted messages; and
- defamation.

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone and the bully can act anonymously if they want. People can also be bullied online by groups of people such as class groups or collective members of an online community.

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