

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Issued	Status	Review Cycle
2.0	2019	This policy will be reviewed annually and/or immediately after a critical incident	Annually

1. Rationale

Yarra Primary School is committed to providing students a safe, supportive and respectful environment where bullying is not tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying;
- clarify that all forms of bullying will not be tolerated;
- encourage the school community (including parents) to 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 Yarra Primary School

Bullying complaints are 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.

This policy should be read in conjunction with related Yarra Primary School policies, including Engagement and Wellbeing Policy, Behaviour Management Policy, Duty of Care Policy, Work Place Bullying Policy and Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

2. Policy statement

Students should feel and are safe everywhere at school - in the classrooms, library, toilets, YOSH, playground, and while on camp and excursions.

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When responding to bullying behaviour, Yarra Primary School staff aims to:

- stop the bullying from happening again
- create a culture of inclusion (i.e. programs such as Mpower, Berry Street, SWPBS)
- articulate the signs and evidence of bullying
- reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- encourage students to report occurrences of bullying, which are experienced first-hand or observed
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are responded to consistently and effectively.
- seek parental and encourage peer-group support and co-operation at all times.
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

3. Definitions

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, **deliberately and repeatedly** upset, harass, intimidate, embarrass, exclude, isolate, demean, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. Bullying can be direct or indirect, physical or verbal.

Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike. Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant, unkind or disrespectful.

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

Forms of bullying behaviour:

1. **Direct physical bullying** – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing, inappropriate (or threat of) touching, or damaging property.
2. **Direct verbal or written bullying** – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic, racist, or sexist remarks, demeaning comments or notes/pictures.
3. **Indirect bullying (including written)** – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes or pranks to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, making gestures, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance, or displaying offensive posters or drawings.

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4. **Cyberbullying** is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology (mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc). It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Bullying is not likely to involve:

- **Mutual conflict** - 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.
- **Dislike** - 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** - If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. However, they are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Roles involved in a bullying incident include the student who engages in bullying behaviour and the target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour, and may also include:

- an assistant in the bullying behaviour, who actively joins in
- a supporter who encourages and gives silent approval to the bullying, by smiling, laughing or making comments
- a silent bystander/witness who sees or knows about someone being bullied but is passive and does nothing (this may be an adult bystander)
- a defender who supports the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

4. Implementation

Yarra 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.

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Bullying prevention at our 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.

YPS strives to maintain a positive school environment which provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing. This is achieved by building strong partnerships between the staff, students and their families, and incorporating positive behaviour strategies and approaches into the curriculum, including:

- YPS Schoolwide Positive Behaviours (SWPBS) framework which encourages students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way. Students will develop a consistent understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour, the types of bullying and roles people can play in bullying will also be addressed, as will the process for students to report all incidents of bullying;
- classroom management strategies that assist the students in developing resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills;
- social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying, discourage bullying, and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively;
- a range of year level incursions and programs focussed on creating and maintaining a positive culture that is focussed on strengths;
- encouraging students to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed; and.
- The YPS Student Engagement and Wellbeing Team and Behaviour Management policies outline the SWPBS framework which explicitly defines, teaches and reinforces positive behaviours at our school. Strategies that promote positive student behaviour are based on data collection and evidence which are then explicitly taught.

Reporting

It is the role of all students, parents and staff to immediately report incidents of bullying.

Whilst reporting can be difficult, particularly for students who fear reprisal or disbelief, incidents must be reported. If parents become aware of a bullying incident (including in YOSH programs), they must report it to their child's teacher and/or the principal.

Teachers who become aware of bullying incidents will immediately contact the Principal.

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Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the school incident register
2. report the incident to the Principal and Assistant Principal

The Principal and Assistant Principal are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely, confidential and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they will:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above, where appropriate

All communications will be managed sensitively, completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed promptly. A thorough understanding of the incident 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

Once an incident of bullying has been reported, the matter will be investigated and addressed by the classroom teacher, staff member and Principal. When the school has the information required to understand the circumstances, a number of strategies will be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students. This will involve mediation and conferencing with both the student targeted and the student engaged in bullying behaviour and will be treated on a case by case basis.

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, the Principal 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;
- whether the perpetrator/s have displayed similar behaviour before with the victim (or any other students);
- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour; and

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- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Principal may implement all, or some, of the following responses to bullying:

- Offer counselling or other forms of support to the victim, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, School Support Services and/or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator/s, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, School Support Services, and/or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim.
- Facilitate a meeting with all or some of the students involved to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse, responsibility and restorative action on the part of the student who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the student who has been bullied and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator/s (in accordance with DET guidelines), which may include removal of privileges, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policies.
- 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 the victim and perpetrator/s.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning challenges of the students involved, including SWPBS strategies.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours (for example year group strategies).

Yarra Primary School staff are responsible for maintaining up-to-date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Yarra Primary School understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour.

If parents are concerned or have complaints regarding the school's anti-bullying processes, they may contact the principal, then if required the Department of Education and Training

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Critical Incidents

Critical incidents are determined at the Principal's discretion and include, but are not limited, to physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats, or homophobic, racial or sexist bullying. See *Critical Incidents Policy*.

The Principal will contact the DET Emergency and Security Management Unit (ESMU). The ESMU provides a single reference point to assist schools in responding to and reporting emergency matters and critical incidents including criminal and unwanted activities.

5. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or in response to any critical incident, as part of the school's review cycle and/or if circumstances and regulations change.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- regular student surveys (*Attitude to Schools Survey*)
- 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.

6. Further Information and Resources

Related YPS policies:

- Managing Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Work Place Bullying Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable use Policy
- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Critical Incident and Accident Reporting Policy

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There are additional supports available to students involved in bullying incidents, such as the phone counselling service **Kid's Helpline at is 1800 551 800.**

DET Resources

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [Respectful Relationships](#)
- [Bullying, No Way!](#)
- [Evidence gathering and school audits](#)
- [STEPS decision making tool](#)
- [School Wide Positive Behaviour Support](#)