



SORRENTO PRIMARY SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Ratified: 20th November 2019

Next Review Date: November 2022

Sorrento Primary school emphasises that all members of the school community operate in an environment that is both safe and supportive, free from physical, emotional, cyber and social harassment where individual rights and diversity are respected.

PURPOSE

Sorrento 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:

1. Explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Sorrento Primary school community;
2. Make clear that no form of bullying at Sorrento Primary School will be tolerated
3. Outline the strategies and programs in place at Sorrento Primary School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour;
4. 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;
5. Ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed;
6. Ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour); and
7. Seek parental support and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Sorrento Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Sorrento Primary School aims to:

1. Be impartial/fair, consistent and responsive;
2. Find a constructive solution for everyone;
3. Stop the bullying from happening again; and
4. Restore the relationships between the students involved.

SCOPE

This policy clarifies how Sorrento Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Sorrento 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 Inclusion, Engagement and Wellbeing Policy, Child Safe Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct and eSmart Policy and Procedures. 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:

1. It involves a misuse of power in a relationship;
2. It is ongoing and repeated; and
3. It involves behaviour 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, verbal abuse, insults, homophobic, sexist or racist remarks); and/or
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 bullying even though they are unpleasant. 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 Student Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Child Safe Policy, Procedures and Code of Conduct and eSmart Policy and Procedures.

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. Sorrento Primary School will use its Student Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response 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. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person which could reasonably be expected to make that other person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. A single incident is enough to be considered sexual harassment – it does not have to be repeated behaviour (*Sexual Discrimination Act 1984*). Disability harassment is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of personal characteristics protected by law. This includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic (*Disability Discrimination Act 1992*). Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Sorrento Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Sorrento Primary School will use its Student Inclusion, 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.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Sorrento 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 Sorrento 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 discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour;
- Every year, a range of programs are planned for each year level to raise awareness about bullying and its impact;
- 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. Programs that are incorporated into the curriculum include Bounce Back, Respectful Relationships and Circle Time;
- The School's Values Program, Restorative Practices, Peace Makers, Peer Support Programs and Better Buddies Program 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 older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed;
- We participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence; and
- All students and parents will sign and agree to the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Sorrento Primary 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. Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Our ability to 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 Sorrento Primary School are timely and appropriate to the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff and school chaplain/counsellor.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Sorrento Primary School should contact Sue Wearne, Assistant Principal, or Meg Dallas, Principal, by phone 03 59842130 or email Sorrento.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au at their earliest convenience.

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in Compass, and
2. Inform Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders.
3. The Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders may:
 - a. speak to those involved in the allegations, including the target(s), the student(s) who allegedly engaged in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents;
 - b. speak to the parents of the students involved;
 - c. speak to the teachers of the students involved;
 - d. take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference; and
 - e. obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the Assistant Principal, Principal or Team Leaders 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 is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. [**Brodie's Law**](#) (*section 21A of the Crimes Act 1958*) can apply to all forms of serious bullying, including physical bullying, psychological bullying, verbal bullying and cyberbullying.

Responses to bullying behaviour

When Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders have 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 teachers, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff etc.).

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour, including: :

- 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; and
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including an element of provocation.

Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviour:

- Offer counselling support to the target student(s) (including referral to school chaplain, Student Support Services Officers (SSSO), or external providers);
- Offer counselling support to the student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour (including referral to SSSO or external providers);
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student (including referral to SSSO or external providers);
- 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 student(s) 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 Safety Plan or Individual Behaviour Plan restricting contact between target(s) and student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour;
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including Sorrento Primary School's Values reflection sheet and resilience programs;
- 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, for example, Buddy Program (Foundation to Year Six) and Peace Makers Program (senior students); and
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the student(s) engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Sorrento 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.

Assistant Principal, Principal and Team Leaders are responsible for maintaining up-to-date records of the investigation and responses to bullying behaviour.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Student Inclusion, Wellbeing and Engagement Policy;
- Parent Complaint Policy;
- School Philosophy Policy;
- Duty of Care Policy;
- Child Safe Policy and Procedure;
- Buddy Program Policy; and

- eSmart Policy and Procedure.

The following websites and resources provide useful information on preventing and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- Bully Stoppers: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers
- Kids Helpline: www.kidshelpline.com.au or Tel: 1800 551 800
- Lifeline: www.lifeline.org.au or Tel: 13 11 14
- Bullying, No Way: www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
- Student Wellbeing Hub: www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner: www.esafety.gov.au
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework: www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au
- Brodie's Law: www.education.vic.gov.au
- Restorative Practice: www.restorativepractices.org.au

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a three-year 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, relevant and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- Discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers;
- Regular student bullying surveys;
- Regular staff surveys;
- Bully Stoppers Data Collection tool;
- Compass;
- 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; and
- Staff Opinion Survey

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy ~~was last updated on 23rd October 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2022.~~ will be reviewed every three years.