Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

PURPOSE

Auburn South Primary School (ASPS) is committed to providing a safe, caring and respectful environment which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying behavior will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching. A clear policy regarding bullying behaviour (and other forms of distressing and inappropriate behavior) will convey a clear message to the community that bullying in any form will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:
- explain the definitions of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the ASPS community
- make clear that no form of bullying at ASPS will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at ASPS to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behavior
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behavior, and accept responsibility to report this to school staff – whether as an observer or victim
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying behavior (and other forms of distressing and inappropriate behaviour) 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 ASPS

When responding to bullying behaviour, ASPS aims to:
- ensure that all complaints of bullying be heard in confidence and taken seriously
- utilise a school-wide approach to deal with bullying behaviour (and other forms of distressing and inappropriate behaviour) in a proportionate, consistent and systematic way
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- prevent the bullying from recurring
- restore the relationships between all parties involved

ASPS 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 ASPS aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behavior. ASPS 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 Interim Student Code of Conduct contained within the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

This policy applies when the student is under the care of ASPS either on the school premises and to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

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. 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 Interim Student Code of Conduct contained within the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and the Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

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. ASPS will use its Student 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. 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 ASPS and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. ASPS 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 and Intervention Policy.

BULLYING PREVENTION

ASPS 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 ASPS 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.
- All staff will be informed of the Bullying Prevention and Intervention, Student Engagement and Wellbeing and Inclusion and Diversity Policies and practices at the commencement of their time at ASPS.
- The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy at ASPS will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.
- Teachers are required to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour as contained within the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving, raise awareness about bullying and its impacts (see Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy).
- 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.
- Staff Programs occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.
- The Visible Wellbeing SEARCH Group Initiative encourages 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.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE
Reporting concerns to Auburn South 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 their classroom teacher. However, students are

welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff (A/P), school nurse and the senior leadership team.

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 ASPS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at ASPS should contact their classroom teacher or a member or the Senior Leadership by phone on (03) 9882 2140 or email auburn.south.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Investigations
When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
1. record the details of the allegations on Sentral; and
2. inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Coordinators (Assistant Principals), and Principal.

The Senior Leadership Team in partnership with relevant Classroom and Specialist Teachers are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Senior Leadership Team may:
•   speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the student/s 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 Senior Leadership Team 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 the Senior Leadership Team 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 Student Wellbeing Coordinators (Assistant Principals), teachers, DET Student Support Services (SSS,) Assistant Principal, Principal and 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, ASPS will consider:
•   the age and maturity of the students involved
•   the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had or will continue to have, 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.

The Senior Leadership Team working in partnership with classroom and specialist teachers may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the SSS or external allied health practitioners.
- Offer counselling support to the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to SSS, Senior Leadership Team or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to SSS or external provider.
- 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 (https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/methodconcern.aspx)
- 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 target/s and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved
- Monitor and document 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.

ASPS 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.

Classroom teachers and the Senior Leadership Team is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Constructive strategies to deal with bullying behavior will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills development; counselling and behaviour modification. These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.

Important Note Regarding Suspensions and Cyber Bullying
For incidents between students that occur outside of school hours or in locations other than those listed above, a suspension cannot be used as a response. The impact of cyberbullying (and other behaviours) outside of school hours/off school premises on schools is acknowledged, however, if the behaviour occurs solely outside of school hours/grounds suspension is not an available recourse. If incidents outside of

school hours are connected to behaviour that does meet the grounds and location requirements for suspension, this external behaviour may be considered when determining the response to an in-school incident.

Suspension can only be used as a disciplinary measure when a student is:
- whilst attending school
- or travelling to or from school
- or while engaged in any school activity away from the school
- or travelling to or from any school activity.

FURTHER INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND APPENDICES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies
- Statement of Values
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Complaints and Resolutions 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 every 1-2 years , 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 and consultation with students and parent/carers
- regular student bullying surveys (AWE Student Wellbeing Survey)
- regular staff surveys (staff opinion survey)
- 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 and/or shared with stakeholders (students, staff, parents/carers and school council)

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was ratified by the Principal in December 2019 and is scheduled for review in 2021.