



# BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY-PROCEDURES



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Bell Primary School on 03 9480 5622 or [bell.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:bell.ps@education.vic.gov.au).

## PURPOSE

Bell 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 Bell Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Bell Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Bell 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 in a consistent manner by following school procedures
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour including students experiencing bullying, bystanders who witness bullying, upstanders who acts to make it right and students engaging in bullying behaviour
- seek parent/carers support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Bell Primary School.

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

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- support all those involved in the incident/s
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Bell 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 Bell Primary School aims to prevent, identify and respond to student bullying behaviour. The school recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and in line with our school values and expectations.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school.

## 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; 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.*

Put simply, if a child unintentionally upsets someone, they are being rude. If they intentionally upset someone in a one-off event, it is being mean. However, if the words/actions are intended to hurt someone and the behaviour is repeated over time, at the lower level it's a pattern of meanness, at worst it is 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.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- Cyberbullying – any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://education.vic.gov.au) and the Department's [Bullying Prevention and Response](#) policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

### 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 will be managed in accordance with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and in line with our school

values and expectations.

**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 attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have appropriate responses to such incidents.

**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 appropriate responses for students engaging in this behaviour. Bell Primary School 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.

*Discrimination* is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our school and there may be serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Actions and consequences for the above behaviours not deemed bullying but still unacceptable, are addressed in our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy which clearly outlines Minor, Major and Severe behaviour and the procedure to follow using the Wellbeing and Behaviour Flowchart.

### **Roles students may play in bullying**

Students can take on different roles in different circumstances. The range of roles students take in bullying include:

**Student experiencing bullying:** is someone who is the **target** of bullying.

**Student engaged in bullying:** is someone who engages in behaviour involving a misuse of power in a relationship in an ongoing and repeated way, causing harm to the student/s experiencing bullying.

**Bystander:** is someone who witnesses bullying happening or knows about someone being bullied and does not intervene, interrupt or speak up about the bullying.

**Upstander:** is someone who recognises when something is wrong and acts to make it right. When an upstander sees or hears about someone being bullied, they speak up.

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Bell 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 Bell 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:

- Teachers will be reminded of their duty of care regarding protection of students from all forms of bullying.
- Parents/ carers, teachers, students and the community to be made aware what constitutes bullying and the of types

of bullying, and its legal and hurtful ramifications.

- Our school will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment based on our values.
- Students will be explicitly taught what bullying is and is not, as well as what to do when it is happening.

The school adopts a three-phase approach to dealing with bullying:

#### 1. Primary Prevention:

- 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 throughout the year. Specific initiatives include:- Start-up, Berry Street Educational Model (BSEM), School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS), Respectful Relationships Curriculum all incorporated within the School's Social and Emotional Scope and Sequence, as well as, eSmart and DigiTech Curriculums
- During Start-up each classroom teacher will run lessons with students in the first weeks of school and refer to key aspects of the school Bullying Prevention policy, including definitions, roles and cyber-bullying in child friendly terms.
- Throughout the year the curriculum will include bullying prevention messages, strategies and special events including, National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.
- Teachers are expected to incorporate consistent classroom management strategies with daily references to our school values using the School Wide Positive Behaviour Matrix. This aims to address inappropriate behaviours promptly (including distressing and aggressive actions) and promote positive behaviour.
- Frequent recognition of positive behaviour and a focus on examples of students living the values will be part of a whole school approach using SWPBS and BSEM.
- Teachers and students celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal History, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion. Berry Street strategies such as morning circle time and class meetings at least fortnightly provide children with opportunities to express how they are feeling and discuss bullying behaviour when appropriate.
- 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 i.e the upstander approach
- Grade level teams use the Social and Emotional Scope and Sequence to plan units of work within health education and personal and social capability for teachers to deliver emotional learning and respectful relationships education which is consistent with the Victorian Curriculum.
- Delivery of eSmart cyber safety lessons throughout the year will form a part of each child's DigiTech curriculum.
- All students to be provided with individual and confidential network passwords in years 3-6. Processes are in place to ensure tracking of student activity on the school's devices and network. Firewalls are installed and upgrades maintained to filter outside traffic into the school's network and intranet.
- Community awareness of the school's programs and approach relating to bullying and its characteristics and the school's programs and response. This will be communicated through newsletters, parent information nights and website.

#### 2. Intervention:

- Once an incident of potential bullying is identified, each student responsible for the behaviour, target and any witnesses will be spoken with (usually separately). All incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented. (See Appendix A)
- The school will reinforce with children the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others, and the imperative that staff responds appropriately and proportionally to each allegation, consistent with the school's values and policies.
- The school will contact parents/ carers if:
  - Their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced behaviour that is deemed to have the potential to evolve into bullying, or –
  - Their child bullied someone else or has behaved in a manner that is deemed to have the potential to evolve into bullying
  - Their child is a significant witness who may have condoned the bullying type behaviour or been a bystander

who did not seek assistance during the incident.

- Their child was an upstander who acted in a proactive way to speak up in an attempt to stop the harmful behaviour.
- Appropriate and proportional responses to behaviour may include a verbal apology, writing a letter of regret, loss of privileges and access, internal or external suspensions.
- Targets of bullying, students responsible for the behaviour, or bystanders/upstanders will be offered counseling and support when deemed appropriate. This may be with Bell Primary staff or referred to educational support services/external agencies.
- A Support Plan which may include a Behaviour Plan and/ or Safety Plan with specific goals to be implemented when appropriate.
- Students engaging in cyber bullying behaviours will be denied access to the school's network and devices for a period of time as outline in the DigiTech Acceptable Use Policy.
- If student bullying persists parents/carers will be contacted again and more significant actions implemented consistent with the school's values and Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include loss of privileges, counselling, conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the school's values and policies. It may also include external suspension, expulsion and/or criminal charges.

### 3. Post Incident/s:

It is important that appropriate strategies be in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Appropriate strategies may include:

- Ongoing monitoring of students' behaviour including use of ICT when appropriate.
- Identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved.
- Follow-up meetings will be scheduled regarding each support plan.
- Ongoing communication with parents/carers. Counselling from Student Support Services Officers (SSSO) etc. for some or all parties.
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies.
- Incidents to be recorded electronically using Compass to enable accurate tracking over time. (See Appendix B)

## INCIDENT RESPONSE

### Reporting concerns

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, students upstanding and supporting those who may be experiencing bullying 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/carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Bell Primary School are timely, appropriate and consistent in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to the class teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers (classroom and specialists), Wellbeing or Learning Specialists, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Parents/carers who are concerned that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Bell Primary School should contact their classroom teacher initially who start the investigation with support from the grade level leader if necessary.

### Investigations

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

- record the details of the allegations in Compass Chronicle and inform the relevant grade level leader and members of the leadership team (See Appendix B)
- investigate the alleged bullying in a timely, consistent and sensitive manner. The class teacher with the support of the grade level leader is responsible for the initial questioning. A member of the leadership team will be involved to support next steps
- appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the staff member/s:
  - will speak to the those involved in the allegations (usually separately), including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
  - will speak to the parents/ carers of the students who are involved at a significant level
  - speak to the teachers of the students involved if from other grades
  - take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference with summaries uploaded to Compass Chronicles
  - Liaise with a member of the leadership team when an allegation has been investigated to determine next steps if bullying behaviour is confirmed (See Appendix A)
  - If the allegation is not deemed bullying, appropriate actions and consequences will be determined in line with the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

All communications 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 and potential impacts for the target/s to be considered 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 deep understanding of all circumstances 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 grade teacher and leadership member have sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a range of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected student/s. 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, Bell 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 target student/s
- 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 school may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours consistent with the Bell Primary School Bullying Response Procedure (refer to Appendix A):

- Offer counselling support to the student experiencing bullying, including referral to the Wellbeing Leader, DoE Student Support Service Officer or liaise with the parent/carers to seek assistance from an external agency
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Wellbeing Leader, DoE Student Support Service Officer or liaise with the parent/carers to seek assistance from an external agency
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the student experiencing bullying, including referral to the Wellbeing Leader, DoE Student Support Service Officer or liaise with the parent/carers to seek assistance from an external agency
- 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

- 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 Student Support Group meeting for the target/s and a Behaviour Support meeting for the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Prepare a Safety Plan for the target/s and Behaviour Support Plan for the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour. This is aimed to change attitudes and behaviours to create a safer environment for the target/s.
- Provide discussions and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved which are linked to BSEM strategies and Respectful Relationships Curriculum
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary actions for the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include proportional periods of time out, removal of privileges, internal or external suspension, expulsion and/or criminal charges. consistent with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Bell 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/ carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The staff conducting the investigation are responsible for the initial recording on Compass via a Chronicle entry. Responses to bullying behaviour will be included as part of the recording by the initial investigator or added to the Chronicle entry by a member of the leadership team at a later date, where they have become involved in determining support and consequences. A final check for accuracy is completed by all staff involved.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes at the start of the year
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Uploaded to the documentation section of Compass for staff access
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

## RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Bell Primary School Policies:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy-Procedures
- Enquiries, Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care and Supervision Policy - Procedures
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- DigiTech Policy including Acceptable Use Agreement and Video Conferencing Guidelines Other relevant links:
- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)



- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a tri-annual 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:

- Analysis of discussion notes and actions captured on Compass Chronicles from specific cases
- Bell PS Learning and Wellbeing Survey (twice per year)
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey
- Bully Stoppers Data Collection Tools (when required)

## DOCUMENT STATUS

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Policy last reviewed       | July 2024     |
| Consultation               | November 2024 |
| Approved by Principal      | February 2025 |
| Next scheduled review date | February 2027 |

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. School procedures for responding to a student who bullies others are set out below.

**Level 1**

If the bullying is considered to be a minor incident (repeated meanness or minor physicality) the grade teacher (in consultation with their grade level leader) will elect to use one or more of the following (highlight appropriate support and/or consequences):

- re-enforcing the expectations for behaviour and consequences using the SWPBS Matrix and behavioural flowchart
- restorative practices and/or letter writing
- proportional periods of time out
- removal of privileges
- parents/carers of target/s and student/s engaging in bullying behaviour informed

(mandatory) Details of the investigation is entered on Compass Chronicles for future tracking.

Other notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**Level 2**

If the bullying behaviour escalates or in instances of serious bullying (misuse of power, repeated and intentionally harmful), the grade teacher (in consultation with a member of the leadership team) will elect to use one or more of the following (highlight appropriate support and/or consequences):

- restorative practices with all students involved (individually or groups depending on the targeted student's wellbeing status)
- proportional periods of time out and removal of privileges for student/s engaging in bullying behaviour
- facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved
- provide discussions and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies
- offer counselling support to all affected students
- internal or external suspension
- a safety plan for the target/s or Individual Behaviour Management Plan the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour in conjunction with parent/carers meetings
- parents/carers of target/s and student/s engaging in bullying behaviour informed (mandatory)
- monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary (mandatory).

Details of the investigation are entered on Compass Chronicles on-going monitoring of the behaviours and future tracking. Suspension documentation completed and filed accordingly.

Other notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Level 3**

If bullying does not subside or is considered to be severe bullying (exerting power in an ongoing manner, with harmful actions repeated over time which are clearly intentional), the following procedures will be implemented, as necessary (highlight appropriate support and/or consequences)::

- facilitate a Student Support Group meeting with parents/carers of the target/s and a Behaviour Support meeting with parents/carers of the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour (mandatory).
- prepare a Safety Plan for the target/s and an Individual Behaviour Management Plan the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour.
- provide ongoing mentoring for different behavioural, social and emotional learning competencies
- internal or external suspension
- expulsion or referral to Victoria Police in extreme and highly dangerous cases
- monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary (mandatory).

Details of the investigation are entered on Compass Chronicles for on-going monitoring of the behaviours and future tracking. All school and DET documentation for suspensions and expulsions will be completed and filed as per guidelines.

Other notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B – REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING ON COMPASS**

**The following information must be recorded in Chronicles at various points of an investigation on the targeted student/s, student/s engaging in bullying behaviour and any key witnesses.**

- Staff members investigating the incident
- Name and grade/s of student/s involved including their role
- Brief description of incident (what was allegedly said or done to the student/s being targeted)
- What forms of bullying took place – verbal, physical, indirect, cyber or other
- Location, date and time of the incident or repeated incidents (or approximates)
- Brief summary of students' responses
- Brief notes on parent notification
- Notes of follow up procedures (including level 1, 2 or 3 actions and consequences).  
This can be a completed copy of Appendix A, scanned and uploaded.