

St. Mary's Primary School

Anti-Bullying

Policy



Purpose

Leadership, staff and community members acknowledge the importance of providing an environment that values, promotes and protects the dignity and safety all persons who belong to or visit our school community. This is essential for establishing optimum conditions for social-emotional wellbeing, and positive mental health.

This policy confirms our commitment to:

- increasing the safety of students and adults by encouraging respectful, healthy relationships between all members of the school community
- monitoring and acting upon all reports of bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying, according to agreed processes
- ensuring that our social-emotional learning curriculum addresses core values and key competencies that promote dignity and respect

As a 'Restorative Practices' school, we will support the establishment, maintenance, repair and restoration of positive relationships amongst students, staff and families.

Policy Statement

At St. Mary's Primary School, we believe that in order for all members of our school community to contribute to the best of their ability, they must have a safe and friendly environment in which to spend their time. At St. Mary's Primary School, we acknowledge the importance of providing a positive culture where bullying, harassment and violence are not accepted. All members of our school community have the right to expect respect and fair treatment from others, and a right to feel safe and secure in our school environment.

Whole school engagement

It is recognised that every member of the St. Mary's Primary School community has an impact on student's social-emotional wellbeing, and can contribute to creating an environment that promotes dignity, safety and respect. All members of our school community including staff, students, families and volunteers will be supported to meet this policy.

Definitions

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour amongst children and adults. It is a form of harassment that has been repeated over time. The harmful behaviour is intentional, and designed to humiliate, hurt and disempower the recipient.

This behaviour includes:

- An imbalance of power where others use their 'power' eg. physical strength, access to information, influence or popularity to control or harm others

- Repetition, where bullying happens more than once, or has the potential to happen more than once
- Actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physical or verbally, deliberately excluding someone from a group

The three main types of bullying are:

- Verbal bullying, which is saying or writing mean things. This includes teasing, name calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting and threatening to cause harm.
- Social bullying, which includes refusing to associate with the target and encouraging others to do the same, telling others not to be friends with someone, spreading rumours about someone, and embarrassing someone in public.
- Physical bullying which involves hurting a person's body or possessions. This includes, hitting/kicking/punching, spitting, tripping/pushing, taking or breaking someone's things and making mean or rude hand gestures.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology, mobile phones, computers, tablets, iPods as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of personal characteristic. This includes bullying someone because of a personal characteristic, including age, race, disability, physical features and political beliefs.

Sexual Harassment is bullying that occurs when a person is subjected to unwanted, aggressive behaviour, teasing, taunting, put downs or discrimination because of their gender, or sexual orientation.

Signs and Indications of Bullying

There are many warning signs that may indicate that someone is affected by bullying—either being bullied or bullying others. Recognizing the warning signs is an important first step in taking action against bullying. Not all people who are bullied or are bullying others ask for help.

Some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- Injuries such as unexplained bruises and scratches
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewellery
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or faking illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Children may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch.
- Difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork or work, or not wanting to go to school or work
- Sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations
- Feelings of helplessness or decreased self esteem
- Self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home, harming themselves, getting into trouble and acting out, or talking about suicide, excessive drinking or drug taking

Prevention strategies:

At St. Mary's Primary School, we are committed to creating an inclusive environment that connects all students, staff and families to this community, and actively promote the following:

- The philosophy and strategies of the 'Restorative Practices' model of justice, as our primary means of promoting a safe, respectful community of learners who build, maintain and restore relationships
- Social-emotional learning curriculum, Foundation - 6
- Circle time
- House groups
- Celebrations of House Feast Days
- Annual data collection through wellbeing and bullying surveys
- Rigorous yard-duty roster that includes an expectation of constant vigilance from staff members.
- Participation in the National Day of Bullying against Bullying and Violence
- Buddy strategies
- Cross-age curriculum partnerships
- Cybersafety and cyber-bullying presentations from Vic. Police and ACMA
- Student agreements for use of technology
- Open communication with parents and caregivers
- Co-constructed individual behaviour management plans (where necessary)
- Staff and families recognise they are role models, and are encouraged and supported to promote a restorative approach to developing and maintaining relationships and discipline.

Intervention strategies

When bullying issues arise, these are addressed via:

- Class meetings
- Circle time
- Restorative circles
- No blame conferences
- Notification process (including formal interviews)

Postvention/Restoration strategies

There is a focus on repairing and restoring relationships:

- Circle time
- Agreed consequences
- Counselling if needed
- Individual behaviour agreements

Procedures

Response to Notifications

- All students are encouraged to speak up about concerns and/or incidents of harassment or bullying to a trusted adult, ie. family member or teacher
- All staff, students and family members are encouraged to raise concerns about possible harassment, and report incidents of bullying to members of the leadership team

- Complaints involving bullying at St Mary's will be responded to and investigated in a manner that is timely, and respectful of the privacy and dignity of all individuals concerned
- In line with accepted practices for 'Restorative Practices' schools, we will listen to all involved in the incident, following the 'Restorative Practices Focus Areas' and using the affective questions, to collect relevant information
- We will ensure that appropriate people within the school (teachers, support staff, leadership) are aware of the bullying incidents, so that students can be properly supported
- Where the evidence suggests that an incident of bullying has taken place, parents or caregivers of students involved will be notified
- Where appropriate, the school will follow 'Restorative Practices' strategies, to collect all relevant information, allow all parties a fair voice, set fair consequences for actions, and work collaboratively to restore relationships
- A record of the incident/s will be recorded on the appropriate document and stored.
- Where any bullying incidents constitute a breach of the law, the school will notify all relevant authorities

Documentation Expectations

At St. Mary's Primary School, the following types of documentation may be used when recording bullying incidents. These can be used in isolation or in conjunction with each other, depending on the nature and location of the incident:

- Original notes, both formal and informal, documenting: the report or disclosure of a bullying incident, steps taken to communicate this to relevant members of the leadership team, conversations with students, discussions with parents or caregivers
- Any and all relevant evidence, e.g hard copies of e-mails, photos, online postings, handwritten notes/threats/etc.
- Initial incident notification form, detailing concerns, sent home to parents or caregivers
- Minutes of restorative practices strategies undertaken with students involved
- Minutes of support meetings held with parents or caregivers, including summary of recommended actions to be taken to resolve the incident and restore wellbeing
- Minutes of any conversations of meetings held with representatives from CEM, legal advisors, Victoria Police, etc.
- A copy of relevant documentation will be kept for all students involved in a bullying incident.

Annual Wellbeing Surveys

- The school will continue to conduct surveys on an annual basis, to collect data from students, staff and parents about perceptions of safety, wellbeing and engagement
- Data collected from surveys will be analysed as an annual 'check-up' on perceptions of wellbeing, and to determine long-term trends in wellbeing

Learning and skills

- St. Mary's Primary School complies with the appropriate sector requirements for social-emotional learning, including a comprehensive, Foundation to Year 6 curriculum that includes: core values, key competencies, drug education, and personal development. It is an expectation that the SEL program will be explicitly delivered for approximately 40-60 minutes per week, and implicitly consolidated and reinforced throughout the curricula.

- Members of staff are supported to access resources, tools and professional learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote physical activity across the curriculum
- The school's 'Student Awards' are presented on a fortnightly basis to students who demonstrate 'core values' outlined in our Social-Emotional Learning Program in their daily interactions with peers and adults.

Curriculum Links

Issues surrounding bullying are implicitly and explicitly addressed in the following curriculum areas

- Cybersafety strategies are explicitly embedded into the ICT program, F-6
- F-6 SEL curriculum addresses the 5 key competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making
- F-6 School Drug Education Plan
- Religious Education program and Values Education component of SEL

Partnerships: engaging students, staff, families and community

- Students are consulted about mental health and wellbeing initiatives via assemblies, junior school council, student action teams or other representative structures
- Families and staff are, on a regular basis, provided with information, ideas and practical strategies to promote and support mental health and wellbeing at home
- Families and students from culturally diverse backgrounds are engaged to ensure cultural values and expectations about mental health and wellbeing are respected.
- The school will work with local health professionals, services and organisations to increase capacity to deliver and promote physical activity initiatives.
- Students are actively encouraged to take part in after school physical activity programs.
- Links are established with local community sports and recreation services to create and strengthen opportunities for students to participate in physical activity outside of school hours.

Monitoring and Review

The Anti-Bullying Policy will be monitored and reviewed by the staff, at least once every four years.

Created: 2019

Review: 2023