



Bullying Prevention Policy

PURPOSE

Wonga Park 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 Wonga Park Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Wonga Park Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Wonga Park 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
- 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 Wonga Park Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Wonga Park Primary School aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Wonga Park 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 Wonga Park Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Wonga Park 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 Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Inclusion Education policy*.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

DEFINITIONS

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:

- 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, 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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy/Student Engagement Policy/Code of Conduct.

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. Wonga Park 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. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion Education Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Wonga Park Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Wonga Park Primary School 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 Policy.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Wonga Park 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 Wonga Park 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.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- 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.
- The Peer Support Program and the Peer Mediation 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.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Wonga Park 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 school staff as soon as possible.

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 Wonga Park Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to your teacher or Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including *teachers*, wellbeing staff etc.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Wonga Park Primary School should contact the class teacher as the first point of call and/or a member of the leadership team.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Sentral and
2. inform the Assistant Principal/Principal

The Assistant Principal/Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Assistant Principal/Principal may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students 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
- supporting the young person in the process
- The recorded information will state that it is the initial recording and not yet verified

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 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 Assistant Principal/Principal 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, SSS, Assistant Principal, Principal, 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, Wonga Park 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
- 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:

- Plan strategically and pro actively for those students identified through the Early Intervention strategies, ensuring longer term management
- Fully investigate and document all incidents or allegations of bullying and harassment with those involved and witnesses
- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to SSS or an external provider

- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to including referral to SSS or an external provider
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to including referral to SSS or an 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 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)
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved
- 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 – promote safe and friendly behaviours through TRIBES and Student Voice representatives
- Make a range of activities available to students at recess and lunch breaks
- Provide recognition for positive action and appropriate behaviour utilising awards such as; BEAUT awards, Bucket awards etc
- 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.

Wonga Park 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.

The Wonga Park Primary School Leadership team is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion Education Policy

Appendix A: Examples of bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment.

Appendix B: What bullying is **not**/The effects of bullying in all its forms/Student and community actions in response to bullying in all its forms

Appendix C: School actions in response to bullying in all its forms

Appendix D: Cyber-bullying – positive steps students and parents can take

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 2/3 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating 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
- regular staff surveys
- [Bully Stoppers Data Collection](#) tool
- 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 with Education Sub Committee and school council.

REVIEW PERIOD

This policy was last updated September 2021 and is scheduled for review in September 2023/2024.

APPENDIX

Appendix A:

Examples of bullying and harassment:

	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Indirect</i>
<i>Physical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitting, slapping, punching • Physical contact (e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body) • Unwelcome patting, touching, embracing • Kicking • Pushing, strangling, grabbing • Spitting, biting • Pinching, scratching • Throwing things (e.g. stones) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Getting another person to harm someone
<i>Non-Physical</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mean and hurtful name calling • Offensive staring and leering • Offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or emails • Unwanted comments about physical appearance • Racist or smutty comments/jokes • Offensive name calling • Hurtful / "friendly" teasing • Demanding money or possessions • Forcing another to do homework or commit offences such as stealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreading nasty rumours • Trying to get other students to not like someone
<i>Non-Verbal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threatening and/or obscene gestures • Displays of sexually graphic material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliberate exclusion from a group or activity • Removing and hiding and/or damaging others' belongings

Cyber-bullying can involve:

Cyber-stalking:

Flaming: online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages

Harassment: repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages

Outing: sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online

Exclusion: intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an on line group repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Denigration: posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships

Appendix B:

What bullying is not:

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying.

Mutual conflict: Such as an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

Social rejection or dislike: Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others it is not bullying. **Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression:** These are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed **on one occasion** they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

What are the effects of bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment?

- Poor health – anxiety, depression
- Lower self esteem
- Reduced study performance
- Missed classes, social withdrawal
- Reduced career prospects

Bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment can often make people feel:

- Embarrassed or ashamed
- Offended or humiliated
- Intimidated or frightened
- Uncomfortable

Student and community actions in response to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment

Students who are bullied should:

- Tell/inform the person you don't like what they are doing and that you want them to stop
- Tell a teacher, Principal/Assistant Principal and give full details of the event
- Tell their parents/carers and give them full details of the event

Student witnesses to bullying should:

- Model appropriate behaviour using the school's values
- Seek teacher assistance and document the incident if requested

Parents should:

- Listen sympathetically to reports of bullying
- Speak to relevant school personnel (not the alleged student/s concerned); and
- Cooperatively work with the school in seeking an improved solution

Parent witnesses should:

- Limit their responses to the incident they have witnessed to appropriate verbal intervention
- Seek teacher assistance and document the incident if requested

Appendix C:

School actions in response to incidents of bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment

The School will:

- Promptly attend to and report instances of bullying behaviour
- Inform/involve the Principal and Assistant Principal
- Treat all parties with respect and dignity
- Treat information regarding bullying confidentially
- Protect the bullied child from further harm
- Record what happened
- Assure the student bullied that the incident will be dealt with
- Implement the principles of Restorative Practices
- Teachers or the Principal or Assistant Principal to talk individually to bullying students separately
- Follow up meetings with students who have been bullied. The student who was bullied may receive additional support and there may be additional assertiveness training
- Where necessary, speak to class without using names in for example circle time, small group meetings, class meeting time etc.
- Where appropriate and using discretion, work with parents of the bullied child to assist their child to avoid being bullied in the future. Keep them informed about progress and the measures taken
- Inform the parents of the child instigating the bullying, cyber-bullying and/ or harassment, and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification
- Where appropriate/necessary follow the guidelines and procedures contained in the **Behaviour Management Policy** for suspension or expulsion

Challenging incidents – Physical violence or intimidation (e.g. threatening behaviour)

- Move student onlookers away
- Separate students with minimal physical contact
- Seek assistance/support from other staff
- Inform the Principal and/or Assistant Principal
- Apply Student Code of Conduct guidelines
- Report of incident to be recorded
- Follow other relevant procedures in the Bullying and Harassment and Behaviour Management Policies

Challenging Students

- Arrange collaborative case management of students with persistent aggression or continued victimisation
- Develop a student behaviour management plan
- Problem-solving strategies for dealing with disclosures
- Utilize School Support Officers where appropriate
- Follow other relevant procedures in the Bullying and Harassment and Behaviour Management Policies

Schoolyard strategies

- Separate the school play equipment into group areas where necessary
- Promotion of positive social interaction and directed play– lunch time activities and ideas given for games
- Teachers reinforce positives with verbal praise and school values. Listen to grievances and take appropriate action
- Follow the school's Code of Conduct

Appendix D: Cyber Bullying:

Positive steps a student can take in response to cyber bullying:

- Tell an adult – teacher, Principal, Assistant Principal, parent
- Keep a record – include time and date
- Ask parents to contact their phone or internet provider and report what is happening
- If messages are threatening get in touch with the police – cyber bullying is illegal
- **Do not reply** to bullying messages – it will only get worse if you do. Often if you don't reply the bully will leave you alone
- **Change your contact details** – get a new user name for the internet, a new email account, new mobile phone number and only give them to people you trust (e.g. family and close friends)
- **Keep your username and password secret** – keep all personal information private
- Respect other people online and offline
- Don't spread rumours about people or share their secrets, including their phone numbers and passwords
- If someone insults you online or by phone, stay calm and ignore them
- "Do as you would be done by"- think how you would feel if you were bullied. You're responsible for your own behaviour – make sure you don't distress other people or cause them to be bullied by someone else

Positive steps a parent can take to ensure internet and other technology safety for their child:

- Promote and model appropriate Cyber conduct at home
- Familiarise themselves with information and communication technology and websites used by their child
- Be familiar with the eSafety Commissioners website – <https://www.esafety.gov.au>
- Have an appropriate agreement with your child on the acceptable use of technology at home, which includes clearly identified and consistent consequences
- Try to keep computers and other information and communication technology in an open and common area and have filter software installed
- Actively participate in anti cyber bullying activities
- Become familiar with, and be alert for, behaviour that indicates that a child may be involved in cyber bullying
- If their child is a victim of cyber bullying assist them to determining the appropriate response using the **Bullying Prevention Policy** as a guide

