

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



PURPOSE

Newmark Primary (the school) rejects all forms of bullying. It is not acceptable for any student to experience bullying within the learning and social environment of the school. In rejecting bullying, the school is committed to the development and the reinforcement of a culture of respect and inclusion.

This policy sets out the principles and framework governing the school's approach to support all school staff, students and parents/carers in enacting a zero tolerance of bullying.

PRINCIPLES

- The school rejects all forms of bullying and takes a zero tolerance stance in response to bullying wherever and whenever it occurs within the school community.
- The school believes that, in order to reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour, it is essential to create a culture of respect and inclusion.
- In discharging its duty of care, the school is committed to protecting students from diverse backgrounds, including Aboriginal children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and children who are vulnerable. The school is committed to identifying, confronting and addressing behaviour which targets students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.
- The school is committed to the importance of students both being and feeling safe within the school.
- The school, in discharging its duty of care, understands that it has a responsibility to enable students to flourish in relation to their emotional, social, mental and physical health.

AIMS

- To set out the school's approach to creating an inclusive, respectful and safe environment.
- To define what constitutes bullying behaviour.
- To support staff, parents/carers and students in creating a culture characterised by inclusivity and respect.
- To comply with the requirements of the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.), to implement anti-bullying (including cyberbullying) strategies and procedures as part of the school's responsibility to provide an environment which is safe, where the risks of harm are minimised and where students feel emotionally and physically secure.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY BASIS FOR COMPLIANCE

- Duty of Care
- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017* (Vic)
- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards

- Victorian Government Department of Education and Training's (Vic DET) guidance for government schools, equally applicable to non-government schools, on bullying, cyberbullying and the role of the school.
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth)
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth)
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth)
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic)
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic)

KEY DEFINITIONS

The school has a **duty of care** to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students. In discharging this duty, principals, teachers and other school staff are held to a high standard of care in relation to students. The duty requires principals and teachers to take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of harm to students, including the implementation of strategies to prevent bullying. The duty is non-delegable, meaning that it cannot be assigned to another party.

Bullying takes different forms and is almost always deliberate, repeated and indicative of an imbalance of power. Bullying behaviour seeks to harm, humiliate, dominate, intimidate, embarrass, ostracise, or isolate. Bullying can be verbal, physical or social, and can cause psychological harm.

Verbal bullying can include name calling, insulting, belittling, demeaning, teasing, intimidating.

Physical bullying can include kicking, hitting, punching, slapping, shoving, pinching, tripping, intimidating, damaging belongings, stealing belongings.

Social bullying can include consistently excluding, sharing personal information, humiliating, lying, spreading rumours, using negative facial expressions or physical gestures, playing nasty jokes to embarrass, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance, gossiping.

Cyberbullying is bullying using digital technologies, including mobile phones, email and social media tools. Cyberbullying can include abusive or hurtful texts, emails or posts, images or videos; deliberately excluding others online, nasty gossip or rumours; intimidating others online; using someone else's login information.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. 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.

Isolated incidents of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that isolated incidents of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned as these are harmful behaviours.

Students involved in bullying do so by playing a number of different **roles**, including but not limited to:

- engaging directly in bullying behaviour or assisting and actively joining in;
- encouraging the bullying behaviour by giving, for example, silent approval, by smiling, by laughing or by making comments; and
- standing by silently and passively, doing nothing when knowing or seeing bullying behaviour.

Equal opportunity and **anti-discrimination** practices are part of the school's duty of care to provide a respectful, safe and inclusive school environment which is free of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification, victimisation and otherwise unlawful and unacceptable behaviours. Equal opportunity and anti-discrimination are covered in a range of commonwealth and state laws.

The school will proactively identify and consider the needs of **vulnerable students** who may be more at risk of either engaging in bullying behaviour or being the victim of bullying behaviours. At risk students may include those with additional needs and/or with a disability, racial and minority groups.

SCOPE

The application of the policy is relevant to the school staff, students and parents/carers.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **school board** is responsible for reviewing and endorsing the Bullying Prevention Policy and its implementation.

The **principal** is responsible for:

- ensuring the school has a Bullying Prevention Policy in compliance with the VRQA minimum standards;
- developing strategies that ensure the culture of the school is one in which inclusive and respectful relationships are given high priority;
- developing and implementing strategies and procedures that, as far as possible, reduces bullying to zero;
- ensuring clear procedures are in place for the reporting and monitoring of bullying incidents and behaviour; and
- ensuring staff have access to regular training in the development of respectful relationships and in strategies for reducing all forms of bullying.

The **staff** are responsible for:

- establishing a safe and respectful environment for all students;
- empowering students to be heard and to know their right to be safe and protected;
- ensuring students understand the different types of bullying behaviour, and how to handle situations that may occur;
- working together in collaboration with other staff, students and parents/carers to ensure issues of behaviour and relationships are given high priority; and
- implementing the school's internal procedures in situations where bullying occurs.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BULLYING

The school raises awareness of the nature of respectful relationships, and what constitutes bullying behaviour. The school empowers and equips students to recognise if they are being bullied, and what to do in response. The school also equips the students to recognise when they are a bystander and witness someone else being bullied, and what to do in response.

Student Wellbeing Hub - Survey

School staff will participate in periodic surveying (School Wellbeing Check), to determine what priority the school places on wellbeing. The results of the survey will be analysed and used to inform the schools prevention strategies.

Wellbeing Initiatives

The school implements various wellbeing initiatives to support the development of respectful relationships, as well as a sense of identity and belonging. These are outlined in the school's Wellbeing Policy, and include:

- Morning Huddle
- Campfire Conversations
- Socratic Circles
- Emotion Coaching
- Crews

Raising Awareness

The school uses a variety of resources and programs to raise awareness such as, including but not limited to:

- Me and My relationships (a resource developed by the school in consultation with health professional)
- Student Wellbeing Hub - Respectful Relationships
- Bully Stopper - Vicorian Government
- The Bully Project - Blind Eyes Open

In addition to explicit teaching about bullying, the school incorporates exploration of respectful relationships into the term long units as part of the teaching and learning program.

REPORTING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying behaviour may be identified and reported by the student directly impacted, by another student who is a bystander, or by a staff member.

A student may identify that they are being bullied, by recognising the behaviour of the bully, or by recognising how they are feeling. For example, they may feel:

- ashamed and embarrassed;
- hopeless and stuck in the situation;
- like it is their own fault;
- alone, like there is no one to help;
- like they don't fit in with the other students;
- depressed and rejected;
- unsafe and afraid;
- confused about why this is happening; and/or

- stressed out about what to do.

If a student identifies that they, or another student, are being bullied, they are encouraged to:

- walk away, or remove themselves from the situation (if possible);
- avoid retaliating or fighting back;
- tell a safe and trustworthy friend;
- tell a trusted and safe adult (at school or at home);
- express feelings by talking, journalling, drawing etc;
- find alternate spaces to play to increase feelings of safety and security; and
- continue to build a safe network of trusted friends.

Once informed, the school will first ensure that the student feels safe and supported.

If the student is experiencing and/or displaying high levels of distress, the school may suggest the use of experts such as:

- a professional counsellor
- National Centre Against Bullying: Kids Helpline (1800 551 800)
- National Centre Against Bullying: Parent Helpline (13 22 89)

If the school determines that the claim fits the definition of bullying behaviour, the school will investigate by:

- interviewing all students who have been directly or indirectly involved, as well as any bystanders;
- contacting necessary parents/carers to raise awareness of the claims (this may include parents/carers of students directly and indirectly involved); and
- documenting all conversations and keeping on file in the Student Incident Register.

If the school determines that bullying behaviour has occurred, the school will follow the steps outlined in the Wellbeing Policy.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This policy is to be read in conjunction with other related school policies, procedures and codes. These include our:

- Child Safety Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Wellbeing Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Recordkeeping Policy

POLICY REVIEW

The school board and principal will review the Bullying Prevention Policy every two years, or following a major incident.

ENDORSEMENT

Updated date	March 2023
Endorsed by	School Board
Endorsed on	April 2023