YARRAVILLE
Special Developmental School

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

RATIONALE:

Yarraville Special Developmental School (YSDS) is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying and harassment
- make clear that all forms of bullying or harassment at YSDS will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour or harassment and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour or harassment to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying or harassment are appropriately investigated and addressed to ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour or harassment (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at YSDS

When responding to bullying behaviour, YSDS aims to:

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

YSDS 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 or harassment.

SCOPE:

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Safe Schools Program Participation Plan* and *Duty of Care Policy and Procedures.*

DEFINITIONS:

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social

acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

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 phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

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 harassment, 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. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

Harassment

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. 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 and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

BULLYING PREVENTION

YSDS 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 being safe, respectful and responsible.

Bullying prevention at YSDS is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- The *National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence* (March) is celebrated and student work capturing this is displayed at school.
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) program focuses on establishing and maintaining a positive and safe learning environment that enhances our school culture and explicitly teaches appropriate social skills to all students
- Respectful Relationships continuum of learning curriculum, which promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- Our newly appointed Chaplain and Mental Health PR actioner are working with students and families to support their understanding of this policy.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies including implementing Positive Behaviour Plans (PBS) that discourages bullying and promotes positive behaviour.
- In the classroom, our Personal and Social Capabilities Curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The Allied Health Team work with students and staff to provide individual programs to encourage students to be confident communicators and to self-regulate their behaviour so that they may learn to manage their emotions in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Through classroom visual posters and explicit teaching, students are encouraged to talk to teachers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- 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.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE:

REPORTING CONCERNS TO YSDS

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.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at YSDS should contact the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Davina D'Menzie, by phone on 93144919 or by email directed to dmenzie.davina.a@edumail.vic.gov.au

INVESTIGATIONS

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass
2. complete a *Responding to Behaviour Form*.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner.

To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/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 Student Wellbeing Coordinator 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 Student Wellbeing Coordinator 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 Team Leaders or Principal.

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, YSDS will consider:

- any PBS (Positive Behaviour Support) plans in place
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to Allied Health or School Psychologist via SOCCS referral.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to Allied Health or School Psychologist via SOCCS referral

- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student.
- 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, 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.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide a social story for the students involved, focussing on their need
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

The Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

YSDS understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by staff and students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by YSDS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

- Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance

OTHER RESOURCES:

- Bullying. NoWay! – the joint Australian Education Authorities website
- National Safe Schools Framework providing a set of nationally agreed principles for safe and supportive school environments and includes appropriate responses that schools can use to address the issues of bullying, harassment, violence, and child abuse and neglect

EVALUATION:

This will be reviewed on a 2-year basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- CASES21 records
- Responding to Behaviour forms completed
- Parent opinion surveys

REVIEW CYCLE:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council on: 23rd March 2021