BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

At Broadmeadows Valley Primary School (BVPS) we believe everyone has the right to feel safe and be safe and everyone has the right to be treated with respect. BVPS is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to support the promotion of a safe and respectful school environment and to prevent and address all forms of bullying and harassment, cyber bullying and other unacceptable behaviours.

Hence the purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the BVPS community
- make clear that no form of bullying at BVPS will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at BVPS 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 Broadmeadows Valley Primary school.

When responding to bullying behaviour, BVPS 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.

BVPS acknowledges that school staff have 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 BVPS aims to prevent, address 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 at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with Child Safe Standard 3 incorporating the Student Code of Conduct and Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

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 fighting between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. Bullying is a clear form of harassment; unwanted, annoying and intimidating actions.

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.
4. *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 guidance provided in the BVPS Child Safe Standards Policies - Student Code of Conduct and Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

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 nor tolerated behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. BVPS will use its Child Safe Policies which include Student Wellbeing and Engagement 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 and Diversity Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. BVPS will use its Child Safe Policies which include Student Wellbeing and Engagement 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.

Cyber-bullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviour using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory website, deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces, or people who use the internet, email, intranets, short messaging services (SMS) or similar technologies to bully and harass others.

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.

POLICY

Implementation

BVPS will ensure that

- everyone within the school community is alert to the signs and evidence of bullying and cyber bullying and undertakes the responsibility to report any incident to staff, whether as observer or victim
- all reported incidents of bullying and cyber bullying are investigated appropriately, and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators
- parents, students and school staff are made aware of the school's position on bullying and cyber bullying through the Bullying/Cyber Bullying Policy, newsletters and information sessions. The school community will also be made aware of what bullying and cyber bullying are, and that any act of bullying is unacceptable
- teachers receive updated professional learning, and through the Bullying/Cyber Bullying and Student Supervision Policies, be reminded of their duty of care regarding the safety and protection of all students

BULLYING PREVENTION

BVPS 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 BVPS is proactive and is supported by research indicating that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect 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 programs are planned for annually 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 aims to promote resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- 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.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting Concerns

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 the school are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
We encourage students to speak to their teacher/Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, aides, student well-being leader, Assistant Principal or Principal.
Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at school should contact the Principal or Assistant Principal on

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
1. record the details of the allegations in the school incident register and student file; and
2. inform staff involved, i.e., the relevant class teacher, Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal, Principal.

The Student Wellbeing Leader is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Leader 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 alleged 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 Leader 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 has Student Wellbeing Leader 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 teachers, program aides, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff and external providers (as applicable).

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, Broadmeadows Valley Primary Schoolwill 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 previously displayed similar behaviour
- whether the bullying took place in a group or in a 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.

Broadmeadows Valley Primary School may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer appropriate counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to School Support Services and or external providers.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Leader, School Support Service, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Leader, Support Service, 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 using a Support Group Model, 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)
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, etc.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if and when necessary.
- Implement home group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with the Child Safe

Standards and/or Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Broadmeadows Valley 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 Student Wellbeing Leader is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation and responses to bullying behaviour.

Broadmeadows Valley Primary School will adopt a four-phase approach to supporting cyber safety and combating cyber bullying.

1. **Primary Prevention:**
- Professional development for staff relating to all forms of bullying including cyber bullying, harassment and proven counter measures
- Educate the school community about the seriousness of cyber bullying, its impact on those being bullied and how this behaviour is unacceptable
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying (including cyber-bullying), its characteristics and the school's programs and response
- Provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving such as Rock and Water, M-Power and Personal Development Program
- Teachers will clarify with students at the start of each year the school policy on bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- All students to be provided with individual and confidential computer and network log-ins and passwords. Processes to be put in place to ensure tracking of student activity on the school's computer equipment and network. Firewalls to be installed to eliminate outside traffic into the school's network and intranet.
- The use of mobile phones by students will be limited with consequences to be implemented for any students who use mobile phones inappropriately.
- The curriculum to include anti-bullying messages and strategies e.g.: 'The Friendly Schools' and 'No Blame Approach to Bullying' programs.
- Young Leaders, peer supports, staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- A vigilant and accountable yard duty roster for teachers will be put in place.
- Electives and structured activities available to students at recess and lunch breaks

2. **Early Intervention:**
- Encourage children and staff to report bullying incidents involving themselves or others,
- All staff reminding students on a regular basis to report incidents of bullying.
- Regular monitoring of student traffic on school's computer networks to identify potential problems.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.
- A student may voluntarily approach a teacher for assistance if they have become aware of or have engaged in cyber bullying or related behaviours.
- A student may be identified as needing assistance as a result of involvement in an incident requiring disciplinary action.
- School staff to inform the school leadership about concerns relating to students engaging in or being the subject of cyber bullying.
- Make reference to special programs which the school provides, e.g., the School's Anti-Bullying, Cyber safety
- Recognition of positive behaviour and resolution of problems

3. **Intervention**:
- School rules prohibit the inappropriate and threatening use of email, Facebook, Twitter, internet and mobile phone facilities both in the school, at any school function and away from school where the behaviour seriously impacts on other students or staff at the school.
- All incidents or allegations of bullying or cyber bullying and /or inappropriate use of technology will be fully investigated.
- Once identified, the bully, victim and witnesses will be spoken with and information documented.
- Parents of all parties will be contacted.
- Counselling for the victim or bully may be considered or offered.
- A range of consequences for students involved in bullying or cyber bullying may be implemented.

4. **Post Violation:**
   Consequences for students involved in bullying or cyber bullying will be considered on an individual basis and may include:
- Counselling, allied health, external agency supports
- DET and school-based programs
- Exclusion from learning neighbourhood and/or school playground
- Restricted access to specific school technology
- Withdrawal or loss of a range of privileges
- Implementation of specific school support structures; SSG, student contract
- In school or out of school suspension
- Ongoing monitoring of identified cyber bullies.

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 and staff training
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

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 and Diversity Policy

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
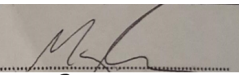- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the four-year review cycle, 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:

- 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 and include consultation with student representative groups, parent groups, school council and staff.

POLICY IDENTIFICATION AND RATIFICATION

Policy	Bullying and Cyberbullying Prevention
Policy last reviewed	August 2021
Consultation	Consultation: School council August 2021 Staff meeting August 2021
Approved by Principal	Signed: C. Bianco
Endorsed by BVPS School Council President	Signed:
Next scheduled review date:	Before August 2023