

POLICY

Bullying and Harassment

Purpose:

Sunshine Special Developmental School (SDS) 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Sunshine SDS will not be tolerated
- 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 victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Sunshine SDS

When responding to bullying behaviour, Sunshine SDS 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.

Sunshine SDS 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 Sunshine SDS aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Sunshine SDS 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 Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Positive Learning Support Policy*.

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

POLICY

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 and Harassment

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. In this policy any reference to 'bullying' includes all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.

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.

Harassment can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

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.

Other distressing behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and Positive Learning Support 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 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.

Bullying Prevention:

Sunshine SDS 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 Sunshine SDS 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.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Bullying and Harassment

- We participate in the Harmony Day

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 Sunshine SDS

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. Due to the complex communication needs of our students, staff, parents/guardians will monitor non verbal cues and changes in student presentation.

Parents/guardians who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Sunshine SDS should contact the Student Engagement Leader, by phone on 9311 4804 or by email directed to sunshine.sds@edumail.vic.gov.au

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and guardians reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Sunshine SDS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations
2. inform the relevant leadership representative, Leading Teacher, Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal.

The Leadership representative is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Leadership representative 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/guardians 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 Leadership representative 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 Leadership representative 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 the 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, Sunshine SDS 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 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 Leadership representative may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, 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.
- 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 victim and perpetrator students.
- 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.

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

Sunshine SDS 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- Complaint Resolution policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Equal Opportunity 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!](#)

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- DET's [Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#)
- DET's [Safe Schools are Effective School's](#)
- The school's Internet Use Policy (re cyber-bullying)
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/bullying.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/health/Pages/bully.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinstrat.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Pages/wholeschoolengage.aspx>
- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/segministerorder.pdf>

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years 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:

- regular staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be evaluated as part of a 2 year cycle of policy review

This policy was approved by School Council on 21st May 2019, last updated on 15th April 2019 and is scheduled for review in May 2021

Version: Final

Review Date: May 2022

'Sunshine SDS is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe, and their voices heard about decisions that affect their lives'.

