



RATIONALE

Solway Primary School is committed to providing a safe and caring school environment that fosters respect for others and does not tolerate bullying.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Solway Primary School will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in the 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 Solway Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Solway Primary School 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

Solway 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 Solway Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Solway 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 *Student Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Equal Opportunity 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 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 their class teacher or a trusted teacher.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Solway Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. The school strives to foster a culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Solway 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.

Solway has a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.

Teachers continually incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.

The social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution, problem solving and seeks to empower students to be confident communicators, 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 peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Solway Primary School

Bullying incidents will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

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.

In most circumstances, students are encouraged to speak to the class teacher, however, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Solway Primary School should contact the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, staff will:

1. record the details of the allegations; and
2. inform the a member of the Principal team

The allegation of bullying will be investigated in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, it may be necessary to:

- 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

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 cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

Responses to bullying behaviours

When sufficient information has been gathered, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with the relevant 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, Solway 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 victim
- whether the perpetrator or others involved 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
- the alleged motive, including any element of provocation.

The Principal/Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- offer counselling support to affected students, which may include referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- facilitate a Restorative Practice meeting with all involved
- implement consequences for the perpetrator, which may include removal of privileges, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant guidelines.
- prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students
- monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary

The staff member involved in the resolution of the issue is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour. These records may take the form of handwritten notes or digital notes.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's:

- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*
- *Duty of Care Policy*
- *Equal Opportunity Policy*
- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*

EVALUATION

This will be reviewed as part of the Policy Review Cycle or in response to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- regular student bullying surveys
- 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 was last updated on August 2018 and is scheduled for review in 2021.