

## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (ANTI-BULLYING POLICY)**

### **GENERAL STATEMENT**

A situation where a student feels unsafe or not respected at school because of bullying is not tolerated in Victorian state government schools. Every student has the right to feel safe and respected, and to participate in all school activities in an environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, or bullying of any nature, and which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem.

### **DEFINITION**

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may occur because of perceived differences such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, age or economic status. Bullying may be motivated by jealousy, distrust, fear, misunderstanding or lack of knowledge. It can continue over time, is often hidden from adults and will probably continue if no action is taken.

### **There are four broad categories of bullying:**

1. Direct physical bullying: includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.
2. Direct verbal bullying: includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
3. Indirect bullying: is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - mimicking
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.
4. Cyber bullying: is direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

### **What bullying is not:**

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying which are described below.

Mutual conflict - in mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way. THOMASTOWN WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY

Ratified by School Council: 30.07.2012 Review Date: 30.07.2015

Social rejection or dislike - unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying. Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation - single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying. However, the school has a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment and single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will not be ignored or condoned.

### **BROAD GUIDELINES**

Thomastown West Primary School will provide a learning environment where bullying is not accepted and each person has the right to receive respect from others, the right to learn and the right to feel safe and secure.

#### **This policy aims to:**

- reinforce that no form of bullying is acceptable within the school community
- ensure that everyone within the school community is alert to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it, whether as observer or victim, to a staff member
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both the victim and perpetrator
- ensure that parents/carers, teachers and the community are aware of the school's position on bullying
- give confidence to students who report bullying at school that actions will be taken to follow through in accordance with this policy, so that students feel safe and secure in reporting bullying.

#### **The school will:**

- continue with existing structures relating to student behaviour and introduce others as seen to be appropriate
- directly and indirectly teach the School Values – personal best, co-operation, respect, happiness and honesty
- ensure student wellbeing is a priority that underpins effective student learning and behaviour
- support the implementation of the DEECD policy: “Building Respectful and Safe Schools: A resource for school communities.”
- seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times
- ensure that all staff continually reinforce and model the concept of caring for others and reinforce the rights of each person to feel safe
- provide appropriate professional development for staff to enable them to continually reinforce this policy.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### A. Primary Prevention

- Social competency programs will be implemented to develop resilience, conflict resolution, assertiveness and problem-solving as appropriate in each section of the school. These competencies will be embedded in Thomastown West Primary School's behaviour management strategies, pedagogy, expectations and structures.
- The formal teaching will follow the Social Competency school wide document that incorporates Personal Safety and Social Skills,
- The provision of classroom programs such as Circle Time, Protective Behaviours (including assertiveness and bystander training) and Restorative Practices to develop students' understanding of bullying and provide strategies to deal with bullying.
- A high level of playground supervision will be maintained as a way in which to minimise bullying. This may include structured lunchtime activities and peer support (buddy) programs.

### B. Early Intervention

- Students will be empowered to deal with bullying as a victim and/or witness by using appropriate strategies from the Social Competency programs.
- Students will be regularly encouraged to report all bullying incidents.
- Parents/carers will be encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a bullying issue.

### C. Intervention

- Once identified, all bullying incidents will be fully investigated and documented on an Incident Report or file note.
- Bullying will result in parent/carers being contacted and consequences implemented.
- Consequences may involve:
  - ✦ Utilising the Shared Responsibility Model to develop solutions to bullying issues
  - ✦ exclusion from class or the yard/playground
  - ✦ withdrawal of privileges
  - ✦ school suspension
  - ✦ on-going counselling from an appropriate agency for both victim and bully
  - ✦ monitoring the situation and offering ongoing support to all parties concerned

## EVALUATION

The policy will be reviewed as part of the three year policy review cycle.

## RESOURCES

DEECD Building Respectful and Safe Schools: A resource for school communities

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/respectfulsafe/default.htm>

Ian Findlay: *Shared Responsibility. Beating Bullying in Australian Schools.* ACER 2006

Bullying, No Way! (Australia) - [www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au)

Kids Helpline (Australia) - [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

Stop Bullying Now (USA) - [www.stopbullyingnow.com](http://www.stopbullyingnow.com)

Cyber Safe Kids - [cybersafekids.com.au](http://cybersafekids.com.au)

Cyber Smart Kids- <http://www.cybersmartkids.com.au>

Netalert ([http://www.netalert.gov.au/advice/risks/cyberbullying/What\\_is\\_cyber\\_bullying.html](http://www.netalert.gov.au/advice/risks/cyberbullying/What_is_cyber_bullying.html))