



Thomastown West Bullying Prevention Policy 2024 - 2026

Thomastown West Primary School motto is **Together Working on Pathways to Success**. At our school we aim to create a safe and respectful environment for all our students. We work hard on teaching students how to interact in a safe and respectful way through promoting the school values of Respect, Responsibility, Empathy, Resilience and Striving to be your Best. In line with these values, Thomastown West Primary School adopts a zero-tolerance policy on Bullying. This means that teachers, staff, families, students and the wider community have a responsibility to notice and report incidences of bullying.



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Thomastown West Primary School on 03 9465 4317 or thomastown.west.ps@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

Thomastown West Primary School 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 so that there is a shared understanding amongst all members of the Thomastown West Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Thomastown West Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Thomastown West Primary School 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 Thomastown West Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Thomastown West Primary School 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.

Thomastown West 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 Thomastown West Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Thomastown West 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 our *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy* and *Student Inclusion and Diversity policy*.

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



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

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated
- 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.

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 *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion 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 behaviours at our school and may have



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serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Thomastown West Primary School will use its *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy* 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 *Student Inclusion and Diversity Policy*. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Thomastown West Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Thomastown West Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy 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.

POLICY

Thomastown West Primary School 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 Thomastown West 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. 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 incursions and programs are planned for each year 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 promotes 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.
- A Wellbeing team who are available to support individual students and small groups
- Several psychologists who are available through the Medicare supported Mental Health Care Plans.
- We have several Wellbeing Programs available to eligible students. These sessions provide students to address their own bullying behaviours and to manage conflict with peers.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Thomastown West Primary School

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



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reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Thomastown West Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances. We encourage students to speak to their classroom teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff, including teachers and wellbeing staff. Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Thomastown West Primary School should contact the school Principal, by phone on 9465 4317.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass, under the Behaviour Support Log template in the student's file
2. inform both the classroom teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal

The Assistant Principal and Principal are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Assistant Principal or Principal 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 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 Assistant Principal or Principal 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 Assistant Principal or Principal 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 wellbeing team, teachers, 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, Thomastown West 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 target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or 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.



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TWPS INCIDENT RESPONSE

At Thomastown West we have a formal process of notifying families and students when or if incidences of bullying have occurred.

First incident

- Incident reported to a teacher or member of staff
- Incident to be recorded on Compass using a Behaviour Support Log template
- Incidents investigated by a Classroom Teacher, SEWI Team Member, Assistant Principal or Principal, including a search on Compass to ascertain whether this is an isolated incident or there is a pattern of bullying behaviour. If this is the first incident, there is most likely no recorded evidence.
- Students involved can be referred to the one or more following supports:
 - Wellbeing Team
 - Wellbeing Programs
 - Keeping Calm Program
 - MAT
 - Aspire
 - Social Skills Groups
 - Friendship Groups
 - Kids Hope Mentoring
 - Classroom teacher
 - Restorative Conversation
 - Attendance at Make it Right Club
 - Parent Correspondence
 - Assistant Principal
 - Principal

Second Incident

- Incident reported to a teacher or member of staff
- Incident to be recorded on Compass using a Behaviour Support Log template. Incident log will be updated to include Bullying specific incidences and patterns
- Incidents investigated by a Classroom Teacher, SEWI Team Member, Assistant Principal or Principal, including a search on Compass to ascertain whether this is an isolated incident or there is a pattern of bullying behaviour.
- Contact with parents will be made by an Assistant Principal or Principal detailing the incident and notifying parents or carers of the bullying incident.
- Student Consequences at this point may include but are not limited to:
 - Parent Correspondence via Bullying Notification Letter (*See Appendix A*)
 - Restorative Practices
 - Mediation Sessions
 - Wellbeing Programs
 - Psychologists
 - Keeping Calm Program
 - Social Skills Groups
 - Friendship Groups
 - Kids Hope Mentoring
 - Attendance at Make it Right Club
 - Withdrawal or exclusion from yard to support victim

Third Incident



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- Incident reported to a teacher or member of staff
- Incident to be recorded on Compass using a Behaviour Support Log template. Incident log will be updated to include Bullying
- Incidents investigated by a Classroom Teacher, SEWI Team Member, Assistant Principal or Principal, including a search on Compass to ascertain whether this is an isolated incident or there is a pattern of bullying behaviour.
- Contact with parents will be made by an Assistant Principal or Principal detailing the incident and notifying the parent or carer of bullying.
- Student Consequences at this point may include but are not limited to:
 - Parent Correspondence via Bullying Notification Letter (See Appendix B)
 - Restorative Practices
 - Mediation Sessions
 - Wellbeing Programs
 - Psychologists
 - Keeping Calm Program
 - Social Skills Groups
 - Friendship Groups
 - Kids Hope Mentoring
 - Student Support Groups
 - Behaviour Support Plans
 - Attendance at Make it Right Club
 - Withdrawal or exclusion from yard to support victim

At each level of incidences, consideration will be given to the risk and safety of students, particularly those perpetrating the offending behaviour. At Thomastown West Primary we believe that students are to be treated as individuals and an individual response is appropriate to ensure students are safe.

Ongoing Incidences

The consequences for ongoing bullying are at the discretion of the principal and may include, but are not limited to suspensions, restricting the offending student's movement around our school, initiating a change of class or seriously considering the future enrolment status of the offending student. These breaches will be considered to be extremely serious. All ongoing incidents will be dealt with by the principal. Parents of the offending student will be contacted, and the student who has been harassed or bullied will be referred to the Student Services team and his/her parents or carers notified of the outcome of any action taken.

A Student Support Group will be organised with the offending student and his/her parents or carers and the Principal Class Team. The offending student will be required to undertake a counselling program organised through the Student Wellbeing team.

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

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Thomastown West Primary School Wellbeing team, onsite school psychologists and the Department of Education Student Support Services.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to Thomastown West Primary School Wellbeing team, onsite school psychologists and the Department of Education Student Support Services.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to Thomastown West Primary School Wellbeing team, onsite school psychologists and the Department of Education Student Support Services.



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- 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 the Support Group Method, 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 Behaviour Support 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 Wellbeing Programs, Psychologists, Keeping Calm Program, Social Skills Groups, Friendship Groups, Kids Hope Mentoring, Anxiety Groups, Canine Support Groups, Seasons for Change
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, 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.

Thomastown West 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 Assistant Principal or Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*
- *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion 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](#)



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EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating 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 student leadership groups, school council and the Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Curriculum Committee.

Date Implemented	2016; 2020; 2024
Author	Principal Assistant Principal TWPS Leadership Team
Approved By	School Council
Date Reviewed	October 2016; December 2020; August 2024
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal Principal
Review Date	12/07/2026
References	Victorian Government Schools Policy Advisory Guide



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Appendix A

Bullying Prevention Policy Notification Letter: Second Incidence

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Thomastown West Primary School our school motto is **Together Working on Pathways to Success**. We believe that students are able to reach their full potential when they are happy, healthy and safe. When there is a positive school culture that is fair and respectful, children are engaged and their learning is supported. Teachers at Thomastown West Primary School are experienced in utilising School Wide Positive Behaviour Support systems, as well as implementing strategies from the Berry Street Educational Model. These programs are endorsed by the Department of Education and will continue to be implemented this year.

At Thomastown West Primary School, we believe the following:

- At our school, everyone has the right to work and learn.

- At our school, everyone has the right to feel safe and comfortable.

On the (date) _____ Thomastown West Primary staff have been made aware that your child _____ was involved in a bullying and harassment incident. Records indicate that your child:

The following strategies have been put into place in response to this incident:

- *Restorative Conversation with all students involved*
- *Modified recess/lunch timetable*
- *Referral to Wellbeing for support*
- *Parent contact*

If the bullying continues then the following consequences may need to be discussed with you:

- *Attendance at Make it Right Club*
- *Parent/teacher meeting*
- *Student Support Group Meetings*
- *Internal Suspension*
- *External Suspension*

Please find attached copies of the Thomastown West Bullying Prevention Policy for you to read. This policy will provide additional information for your assistance and understanding of our processes around bullying and harassment at school. We would like you to discuss the information enclosed in this letter with your child and support them in dealing with this significant incident at school. Thank you for your support.

Kind Regards,

Sandi Young
Principal

Please return the signed and dated acknowledgement slip below and return to the office on the next day of school.

I _____ have read and discussed the Thomastown West Bullying Prevention Policy with my child. I understand the information and support outlined in the document.

Signed: _____ Date: ____/____/____



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Appendix B

Bullying Prevention Policy Notification Letter: Third Incidence

Dear Parents and Carers,

At Thomastown West Primary School our school motto is **Together Working on Pathways to Success**. We believe that students are able to reach their full potential when they are happy, healthy and safe. When there is a positive school culture that is fair and respectful, children are engaged and their learning is supported. Teachers at Thomastown West Primary School are experienced in utilising School Wide Positive Behaviour Support systems, as well as implementing strategies from the Berry Street Educational Model. These programs are endorsed by the Department of Education and will continue to be implemented this year.

At Thomastown West Primary School, we believe the following:

- At our school, everyone has the right to work and learn.
- At our school, everyone has the right to feel safe and comfortable.

On the (date) _____ Thomastown West Primary staff have been made aware that your child _____ was involved in the **third recorded incidence of bullying**. Records indicate that your child:

The following strategies have been put into place in response to this incident:

- *Restorative Conversation with all students involved*
- *Modified recess/lunch timetable*
- *Referral to Wellbeing for support*
- *Parent contact*

As a result of this third recorded incident the following consequences will be discussed with you and your child:

- *Attendance at Make it Right Club*
- *Parent/teacher meeting*
- *Student Support Group Meetings*
- *Internal Suspension*
- *External Suspension*

We would like to discuss this incident further and the ongoing concerns we have for the safety and wellbeing of your child in a meeting.

A meeting has been scheduled for _____.

If you are unable to attend at this time, please contact the school as soon as possible to schedule an appropriate time.

Kind Regards,

Sandi Young
Principal