



“Small School, Big Opportunities”
Kindness, Cooperation, Resilience, Respect

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Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedures

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Tarwin Lower Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear bullying (including cyberbullying and harassment) prevention policy will inform the community that bullying, harassment in any of its forms, and other unacceptable behaviours will not be tolerated.

2. AIMS

- To provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying and harassment
- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment is acceptable.
- To provide clear advice on the roles and responsibilities of the whole school community, including students, parents, caregivers and teachers for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour
- To provide clear procedures for everyone to report incidents of bullying to the school
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to any person who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour
- To seek the support and co-operation of the whole-school community at all times.

3. DEFINITIONS

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 and is on-going. 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 be direct physical, direct verbal, indirect or cyberbullying. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

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.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

4. GUIDELINES

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

All new students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.

There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Bullying (including cyberbullying) and Harassment Prevention Policy, guidelines and procedures (see Appendix A).

4.1 Duty of Care

Tarwin Lower Primary School's Principal and school council take their responsibilities seriously as they can be held vicariously liable for the actions of students and employees, unless it can be shown that all reasonable precautions have been taken to prevent discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation. In addition principals and school councils have responsibility for ensuring that a safe and discrimination free workplace is maintained so the processes of learning and teaching can proceed uninterrupted.

4.2 Vulnerable groups

4.2.1 Special education needs and/or disabilities

Tarwin Lower Primary School recognises that that some individuals or groups of people may be more at risk of either engaging in bullying behaviours or being the victim of bullying behaviours. This includes, but limited to, the acknowledgment of the following to be incorporated into the policy scope:

- young people with special education needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are disproportionately at risk
- young people with mild difficulties and/or hidden disabilities may be more at risk
- marginalisation and isolation lead to victimisation and bullying
- young people affected are in mainstream and special contexts
- young people with SEN and/or disabilities can be both bullies and victims. Autism

It has also been suggested that students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be particularly vulnerable to bullying and social exclusion and may find it difficult to maintain friendships. Contributing factors include difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, narrow interests and rigid behaviours, sensory sensitivities and reduced social skills compared to their peers.

Tarwin Lower Primary School will ensure that people special education needs and/or disabilities are provided with adequate support to protect them from bullying and victimisation.

4.2.2 Homelessness

Violence, harassment and bullying can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness. This means that a person may become homeless as a result of family violence and be exposed to violence, harassment and bullying because they are homeless. Violence, harassment and bullying are unacceptable in any context and violate a range of human rights.

Tarwin Lower Primary School will ensure that people experiencing homelessness are provided with adequate support to protect them from violations of their right to personal safety.

4.2.3 Homophobia

Challenging homophobic language and behaviour is crucial to creating a school environment where every student can learn. This includes derogatory or inappropriate use of the word 'gay' to mean 'rubbish' or 'stupid'. In addition, it is important to make sure that sexual diversity is visible across the whole school and included in sexuality education and other areas of teaching and learning. Avoid the assumption that all students, staff and family members are heterosexual. Tarwin Lower Primary School will provide support for same sex attracted students and offer staff training on how to challenge homophobia and create more inclusive classrooms.

4.2.4 Racial and minority groups

Visible minority groups, be those groups racial (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders), ethnic or religious, and invisible minority groups, people with different sexual orientations or gender identifications, are more frequently targeted for bullying.

Racist violence, harassment and abuse are closely related to, and sometimes difficult to distinguish from, bullying. Racist bullying in schools can range from ill-considered remarks, which are not intended to be hurtful, to deliberate physical attacks causing serious injury.

Racist bullying can be identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used and by the fact that victims are singled out because of the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their ethnic grouping or by their religious or cultural practices.

Racism can directly or indirectly exclude people from accessing services or participating in employment, education, sport and social activities. It can also occur at a systemic or institutional level through policies, conditions or practices that disadvantage certain groups.

5. PROGRAM

Constructive strategies to deal with harassment will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills; counselling and behaviour modification. These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.

The Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy of the school will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

The school leadership team and the teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment, by thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.

If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to an appropriate person in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.

Student programs will be organised to raise student awareness about bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in peer support programs, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by outside experts and workers. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current DEECD materials e.g. Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand and 'No Blame Approach to Bullying' programs.

Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff.

The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment issues.

Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment will comply with the school's Student Engagement & Inclusion Policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines.

6. LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this policy)

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- DEECD's [Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014: Student Engagement Policy](#)
- The school's Acceptable Use Agreement (re: cyber-bullying)
- DEECD's [Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand](#)
- DEECD's [Vulnerable Students](#)

Supporting links:

- [Bully Free World: Special Needs Anti-bullying Toolkit](#)
- Australian Human Rights Commission - [Human rights in the school classroom](#)
- [Safe Schools Coalition Victoria](#)
- [Racism. No way!](#) anti-racism education for Australian schools

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix A: Anti-Bullying (including cyberbullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures
- Appendix B: Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template
- Appendix C: Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed other to Student Welfare Coordinator – Template

7. EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Appendix A

Anti-Bullying (including cyberbullying) & Anti-Harassment Procedures

What are Bullying, Cyberbullying and Harassment?

Bullying

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion and is on-going.

Types of Bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying:

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** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student'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 and social acceptance
 - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress

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:

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.

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.

Cyberbullying

Consists of covert and non-covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.

Why do we have a Policy on these?

To provide a safe and friendly college environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

What are the potential consequences of Bullying and Harassment?

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

Am I bullying or harassing someone?

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

What are some of the feelings targets of bullying or harassment may experience?

- *"I will ignore it and it will go away."*

At times, when a person is ignored they often lose interest in continuing the bullying. If this doesn't work or it is getting worse - tell someone and ask for their help.

- *"I don't want to cause trouble."*

Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.

- *"Am I to blame?"*

Targets of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Targets are made to feel guilty by the perpetrator and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

- “*Am I imagining things?*”

Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

If you feel safe when you see the bullying happening, you could encourage the target to walk away and support them to find a teacher to help stop the bullying.

However, if it is your friend who is harassing another person, let him or her know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

Bullying can involve

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching, kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

Cyberbullying can involve

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes

- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?

- tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
- discuss the matter with a Coordinator, Student Welfare Coordinator or peer mediator, peer support leader or a teacher that you feel comfortable with
- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

How will your complaint be dealt with?

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below.

Level 1

If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- think time detention
- private conference
- shared control discussion

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, an Incident Report Form should be completed and submitted to the student welfare coordinator or principal/assistant principal.

Level 2

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Student Welfare Coordinator.

Here, the Student Welfare Coordinator (or another who has responsibility for student welfare) may:

- meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
- conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and "target"

Level 3

For 'at risk' students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual 'strength building' plan should be developed by the student welfare coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

Level 4

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. Student Welfare Coordinators will need to be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family.

Note: The school may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Engagement Policy. Furthermore, the principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with Student Engagement and Inclusion Guidance 2014' (DEECD) at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including-cyberbullying) and harassment.

Appendix B

Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template

Staff member recording incident: _____

Date: / ___ /

Name of student(s) who appears to have instigated bullying

Year/Class: _____

Name(s) of target(s)

Name(s) of witnesses

Did you observe the incident? YES NO

If 'NO' who reported the incident to you? _____

Brief description of incident (what was allegedly said or done to the student who appears to have been bullied?)

What form(s) of bullying took place? Verbal Physical Indirect _____ Cyber

Other Please detail: _____

Was the incident of bullying: Mild Severe

Describe how you responded (Did you use a school anti-bullying practice?)

Describe how student responded to your intervention

Where / when / time incident took place:

Location: _____

When: before school recess lunch in class _____ after school

Time: ____ : ____ am/pm

Date incident took place: __ / __ / _____

Additional comments:

Appendix C

Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed other to Student Welfare Coordinator – Template

(This form may be completed by a classroom teacher, year level coordinator, school administrator or Student Welfare/Wellbeing Coordinator)

Staff member recording incident: _____

Date: /___/

Position: _____

Name of student being referred: _____

Year/Class: _____

History of incident(s) of bullying (dates, description)

Have parents/guardian been notified?

YES

NO

If 'NO' why not? _____

Have they attended a conference?

YES

NO

If 'NO' why not? _____

Are they willing to participate?

YES

NO

If 'NO' why not? _____

What appears to be the reason for the student's bullying behaviour (family, peer, school, personal, other)?

What practices have been tried?

Impact

What has been the student's attitude towards student(s) who have been targets? (e.g., any concern or remorse expressed)?

A brief description of academic performance of student over past year or more.

Distinguishing 'at risk' factors of student (e.g. limited English: economic disadvantage of family; ADHD)
