ALTONA PRIMARY SCHOOL
Knowledge & Nurturing by the Bay

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Altona 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 shared understanding amongst all members of the Altona Primary School community;
- make clear that no form of bullying at Altona Primary School will be tolerated;
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Altona Primary School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour;
- ensure our school community is 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 Altona Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour Altona 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;

Altona Primary School acknowledges that school staff have 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 Altona Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Altona 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 Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Inclusion and Diversity policy*.

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

This policy should be read in conjunction with Altona Primary School's related school policies, including *Engagement and Wellbeing Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

DEFINITIONS

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.

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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, and
– It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Types of bullying behaviour
There are some specific types of bullying behaviour:

– **verbal or written abuse** - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
– **violence** - including threats of violence
– **sexual harassment** - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation
– **homophobia** and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality
– **discrimination including racial discrimination** - treating people differently because of their identity
– **cyberbullying -** either online or via mobile phone.

What is not bullying?
There are also some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying:

– **mutual conflict** - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
– **single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying
– **social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Bullying roles
People in a bullying scenario may take on one of the following roles:
– a person who engages in bullying behaviour
– a target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour
– an assistant who assists the bullying behaviour and actively joins in
– a supporter who encourages and gives silent approval to the bullying, by smiling, laughing or making comments
– a silent bystander who sees or knows about someone being bullied but is passive and does nothing, this may be an adult bystander
– a defender who supports the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

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.

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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 consists of direct or indirect psychological bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example, via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, any form of internet forums, websites, or multi-user domains etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio. It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

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 school staff.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Altona 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 is reflective of the school values.

Altona Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Altona Primary School aims:

- to create a culture of inclusion;
- to reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and that it is unacceptable;

- to articulate the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported whether a person is an observer or a victim;
- to ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are responded to consistently and effectively;
- to seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times;
- 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.

Bullying prevention at Altona 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.
- we encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and 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 older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

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

Developing shared understandings:

Students will develop a consistent understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour through the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS). The types of bullying and roles people can play in bullying will also be addressed, as will the process for students to report all incidents of bullying.

Response to incidents:

Reporting

It is the role of all students, parents and staff to report incidents of bullying. Whilst reporting can be difficult, particularly for students who fear reprisal, incidents must be reported to school staff. If parents become aware of a bullying incident, they must report it to their child's teacher and/or the principal. Teachers who become aware of bullying incidents will immediately contact the principal.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the school incident register, and/or Compass
2. inform the relevant staff person, ie Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal

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The principal class is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the school 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 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 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 school 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 Principal Class.

When a bullying incident is reported, it is vital there is a consistent response from the school. Once an incident of bullying has been reported, the matter will be investigated and addressed by the classroom teacher, staff member and/or principal. This will involve mediation and conferencing with both the student targeted and the student engaged in bullying behaviour.

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, Altona 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 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 Principal 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;

- Facilitate a meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective being 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;
- 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;
- 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, including SWPBS strategies;
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary;
- Implement targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example year group strategies.

Altona Primary School staff and the Principal are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Altona Primary School understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Altona Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Procedures for Critical Incidents
The Principal will contact the DET Emergency and Security Management Unit (ESMU). The ESMU provides a single reference point to assist schools in responding to and reporting emergency matters and critical incidents including criminal and unwanted activities.

Critical incidents are determined at the Principal's discretion and include but are not limited to physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats or homophobic bullying. (See also Critical Incidents Policy)

Proactive Bullying Prevention
The Student Engagement and Wellbeing, and Behaviour Management policies outline our School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) framework that explicitly defines, teaches and reinforces positive behaviours at Altona Primary School. The SWPBS data collection system allows for the identification of patterns of bullying in the school. Positive behaviours are reinforced through SWPBS acknowledgement systems. Strategies that promote student resilience are also explicitly taught through SWPBS.

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

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 cyber bullying) and harassment issues.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Related School Policies

- Child Safe Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable use Policy
- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Critical Incident and Accident Reporting Policy

There are additional supports available to students involved in bullying incidents, such as the Kid's Helpline phone counselling service - ph.1800 55 1800

If parents are concerned or have complaints regarding the school's anti-bullying processes, they may contact the principal, then if required the Department of Education and Training

DET Resources
- Bully Stoppers
- Safe Schools
- Respectful Relationships
- Bullying, No Way!
- Evidence gathering and school audits
- STEPS decision making tool
- School Wide Positive Behaviour Support
- Workplace Bullying Policy

Appendices
- Appendix A: Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) 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

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle and/or in response to any critical incident, and/or if circumstances and regulations change.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed and include consultation (where applicable) i.e. student representative groups, parent groups, and/or school council.

Date of Preparation/Update: October 2019
Date Endorsed by School Council: Not required
Date of Next Review: October 2022