



Bullying Prevention Policy



PURPOSE

Footscray West Primary School (FWPS) 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 FWPS community
- make clear that all forms of bullying at FWPS will not be tolerated
- 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 targeted students, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at FWPS.

When responding to bullying behaviour, FWPS 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.

FWPS 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 FWPS aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. FWPS 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 school's policies, including Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Duty of Care, Child Safety and Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

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

POLICY

Definitions

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, and
- 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 mobile phones, tablets, computers, chat rooms, emails, 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. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

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. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at FWPS and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. FWPS 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.

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.

The Wellbeing Team at FWPS consists of Assistant Principal (Wellbeing Coordinator), two senior staff representing junior and senior school, Primary Welfare Officer and Department School Support Officer.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Bullying prevention at FWPS 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: Tribes values, principles and processes support a positive and caring culture within the school community and is the primary prevention strategy of the 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 schools, 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.
- 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.

All grades use the core Tribes agreements to create a positive classroom environment and to encourage the development of each child's knowledge, skills and resilience.

Staff will:

- Provide supportive and safe learning environments, including the playground
- Ensure that Tribes agreements, work performance and relationships are clearly understood
- Proactively deal with issues as they arise and take appropriate action in accordance with the school's wellbeing protocols.

Students will:

- Model the Tribes agreements at all times
- Demonstrate responsibility for the care of others by speaking out
- Seek help when needed for self or others from a responsible adult

Parents / Carers will:

- Support the school implementing the Tribes agreements
- Notify the school if there are any concerns
- Work cooperatively with the school to solve the problem

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to FWPS

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 reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by FWPS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their 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 FWPS should contact the school by phone on 9687 1535 or by email at directed to Footscray.west.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in writing
and
2. inform the Assistant Principal and Wellbeing Team.

The Wellbeing Coordinator or nominee is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Wellbeing coordinator may:

- speak to 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 participants 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 there is 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 or Primary Welfare Officer.

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, FWPS 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 student engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Wellbeing Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student/s, including referral to the Primary Welfare Officer, SSS, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Primary Welfare Officer, SSS, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the targeted student, including referral to the Primary Welfare Officer, SSS, external provider.
- 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the student/s 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.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare an Individual Management Plan restricting contact between targeted student and the student engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including resilience programs.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.

The Wellbeing Coordinator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

FWPS 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 FWPS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Supporting Policies

Student Wellbeing and Engagement, Student Code of Conduct and Statement of Values

EVALUATION

This will be reviewed on a 2 year basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through: discussion with students, Attitudes to School Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with Policy and Planning sub-committee of school council.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in 2020 and is scheduled for review in 2023

This policy was tabled at School Council in

June 2020