



## TRARALGON SOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

### PURPOSE:

Traralgon South 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:

- Provide a definition of bullying to promote a shared understanding amongst all members of the Traralgon South Primary School community;
- Make clear that no form of bullying at Traralgon South Primary School will be tolerated;
- Outline the strategies and programs in place at Traralgon South 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); and
- Seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Traralgon South Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Traralgon South Primary School aims to:

- Be proportionate, consistent and responsive;
- Find a constructive solution for all involved;
- Stop the bullying from happening again;
- Restore the relationships between the students involved; and
- Ensure that process learnings inform future policy revisions.

Traralgon South 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 Traralgon South Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Traralgon South 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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

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

## **POLICY:**

### **1. 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, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:

- *Direct* physical bullying (e.g.) hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property; or
- *Direct* verbal bullying (e.g.) name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse; or
- *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***

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, and/or written, and include images, video and/or audio.

## 2. 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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy as necessary.

The following are examples of inappropriate behaviours that may be outside the application of this policy but may be the subject of the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy. However, if inappropriate behaviour of this nature is not addressed appropriately, bullying behaviour may develop:

- a. *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.
  - b. *Social rejection or dislike* is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
  - c. *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 serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Traralgon South Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.
  - d. *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 Traralgon South Primary School and may have serious consequences for students found to be engaging in this behaviour. Traralgon South 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.
3. Traralgon South 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.
  4. Bullying prevention at Traralgon South Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole of 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 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.

Further information regarding our engagement and wellbeing initiatives can be sourced in our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

## 5. Incident Response:

The following outlines the steps taken by our school in responding to incidents of bullying.

### a. Reporting concerns to Traralgon South 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 reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Traralgon South Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Traralgon South Primary School should contact the Principal by phone on (03) 5195 5244, or by sending an email to [traralgon.south.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:traralgon.south.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au).

### b. Investigations:

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

- i. Record the details of the allegations in their student file; and
- ii. Inform the Principal.

The classroom teacher, with the support from the Principal as required, is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the classroom teacher 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 any other teachers involved;
- Take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference; and/or
- Obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with school staff 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](#).

## 6. Responses to Bullying Behaviours:

When school staff have 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 other teachers and support staff, the Principal, and/or specialist staff from the Department of Education and Training (DET).

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, Traralgon South 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; and
- The alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

School staff may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to specialist staff from the DET or external providers;
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to specialist staff from the DET or external providers;
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to specialist staff from the DET or external providers;
- 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 <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/methodsupportgroup.aspx> (Appendix A), 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 Individual Management 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 connecting affected students with an older Student Mentor, or other resilience development programs;
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary;
- Implement year group and/or class targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours; and/or
- 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 DET policy.

Traralgon South 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 classroom teacher, with the support from the Principal as required, is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

7. 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](#)

## REVIEW CYCLE:

This policy was last ratified by School Council on 18 May 2020 and is scheduled for review in 2023.

## APPENDIX A



## The 6 Methods of Intervention



The **Support Group Method** is a non-punitive intervention strategy that gathers assistance for the victimised student.

It does this by sharing knowledge of his or her distress at a meeting with the perpetrators, together with peers who would offer support to the victim.

### Rationale

The rationale behind using the Support Group Method is as follows:

- Victims of school bullying will describe to a practitioner the distress they have experienced by those who have bullied them, especially when they are convinced that the perpetrators will not be punished. They will also disclose the names of the perpetrators.
- Perpetrators will empathise with what has been happening to their victim when they are told about their distress especially if they attend a meeting convened by the practitioner in the company of some other students who are supportive of the victim.
- In these circumstances the perpetrators will accept responsibility for helping to alleviate the victim's distress and act accordingly.

### Application

The Support Group Method can be appropriately and most successfully implemented as follows:

1. The target is approached by a teacher for a one-on-one meeting, and encouraged to talk about what has been happening and how he or she has been affected. The target may be asked to write about it or draw a picture describing their experience. After being told that no-one is to be punished the target is asked to name the bullies.
2. The named bullies are invited to a meeting with the practitioner, together with several other students whom the practitioner expects to be supportive of the victim, and the distress of the target is graphically described. It is made clear that no-one is to be punished. At the same time it is emphasised that everyone present has a responsibility to help.
3. Each group member is asked to state publicly what they are prepared to do to improve the situation.
4. Subsequently, the situation is monitored and further meetings may take place to assess progress.

# The 6 Methods of Intervention

## Limitations

- It is generally thought to be unsuitable for extreme or criminal forms of bullying.
- Punishment or the threat of punishment cannot play a part in the process.
- The method was designed for use with bullying by groups rather than one-on-one bullying.
- Although members of the bullying group may experience remorse they are not required to apologise (and this is sometimes thought necessary) but rather to act helpfully.
- It requires that some students who are known to be sympathetic to the target are ready to become part of the support group.
- It presupposes a high level of skill in sympathetically interviewing the target and subsequently working with the group.
- Unlike Restorative Practice and The Method of Shared Concern, the bullies and the target do NOT meet together with the practitioner to resolve the issue. There is no opportunity therefore for both parties to work things out together.

## Conclusion

Although this method does not seek to bring bullies and victims together to reach a mediated solution, it has proved to be highly effective in preventing bullying from continuing without the use of punishment and with the active cooperation of peers.

## References

- Rigby, K. (2010). *Bullying interventions in schools: Six basic methods* (See Chapter 8: 'The Support Group Method.'): Camberwell, ACER. Republished (2012): Boston/Wiley (American edition).
- Robinson, G., & Maines, B. (2008). *Bullying: A complete guide to the support group method*. London: Sage.
- Smith, P. K., Howard, S., & Thompson, F. (2007). Use of the Support Group Method to tackle bullying, and evaluation from schools and local authorities in England. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 25, 4–13.
- Thompson, F., & Smith, P. K. (2011). *The use and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools*. Research Report DFE-RR098. London: HMSO  
[www.education.gov.uk/publication/Ordering-Download/DFE-RR098.pdf](http://www.education.gov.uk/publication/Ordering-Download/DFE-RR098.pdf)

