



BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Mount Dandenong 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 Mount Dandenong Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Mount Dandenong Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Mount Dandenong 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 Mount Dandenong Primary School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Mount Dandenong 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.

Mount Dandenong 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 Mount Dandenong Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Mount Dandenong 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 and Inclusion policy.

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

POLICY

Definitions

Bullying

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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:

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 Wellbeing and Engagement 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



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

BULLYING PREVENTION

Mount Dandenong 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 Mount Dandenong Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying.

The school will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying prevention:

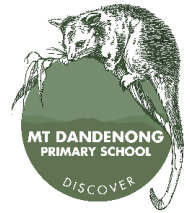
A. Primary Prevention:

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response.
- To provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- A bullying survey and yard survey will be administered and acted upon annually.
- Resilience, Rights, and Respectful Relationships program implemented across the school.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify at the start of each year the school policy on bullying through the Start-up Program.
- The curriculum to include anti-bullying messages and strategies.
- Student Representative Council, peer support delegates, staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'Respect'.
- The Peer Mediation program 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.
- Implementation of a School-wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) Framework

B. Early Intervention:

- Classroom teachers and principal on a regular basis reminding students and staff to report incidents of bullying.

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- Parents are encouraged to contact school if they become aware of a problem.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems, in accordance with the SWPBS approach
- School Representative Council to promote school values.

C. Intervention:

- Once identified each bully, victim and witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented.
- Students and staff identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations.
- Both bullies and victims will be offered counselling and support.
- If student bullying persists parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct.
- If staff bullying persists the principal will commence formal disciplinary action.

D. Post Violation:

- Consequences for students will be individually based and may involve:
 - exclusion from class.
 - exclusion from yard.
 - school suspension.
 - withdrawal of privileges.
 - ongoing counselling from appropriate agency for both victim and bully.
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours.
- Classroom Meetings.
- Support Structures.
- Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies.
- Rewards for positive behaviour.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Mount Dandenong 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 Mount Dandenong 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 any other teacher, education support aide, school chaplain and/or the principal.

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Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Mount Dandenong Primary School should contact the classroom teacher by phone on 9751 1136 in the first instance, who will seek advice from the principal.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass in Chronicle so that it is part of the student's online file; and
2. inform the Principal.

The principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the 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 and include as part of the Compass report
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the 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 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 Wellbeing Team, school counsellor/chaplain, teachers, Student Support Services (SSS), the Department of Education and Training, specialist staff etc.

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, Mount Dandenong 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

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- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrate 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 target student or students, including referral to the school counsellor/chaplain and/or SSS
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to SSS
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the school counsellor/chaplain and/or SSS
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- Engage the Chaplaincy Program to follow up with all students involved as part of counselling support, with parental permission
- 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 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 further learning via the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) program.
- 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.

Mount Dandenong 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 principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

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COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Sent to parents at the beginning of each school year through Compass with information that the students have discussed bullying in their classrooms as part of the 'Start-up Program'
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discuss emotional and social well-being and provide the opportunity to raise concerns about bullying if required.
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions or as part of Parent-Teacher Interviews if appropriate
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

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

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a 1-2 year basis, or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses 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

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- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- 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 Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the School Council.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 15/9/21 and is scheduled for review in August 2023.