



ASCOT VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL
No.2608

ASCOT VALE PRIMARY SCHOOL BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Reviewed November 2014.
Passed by SC December 2014

POLICY STATEMENT

Ascot Vale Primary School (AVPS) is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all community members and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. ***A clear bullying prevention policy will inform the community that bullying, harassment in any of its forms, will not be tolerated.*** This policy is part of AVPS's Student Engagement Policy 2014. Please also refer to the AVPS:

- Cyber Bullying Policy 2014
- Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy 2012

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.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying is ***repeated*** verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards another person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

BULLYING IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Most people don't want bullying to occur but often don't know what to do about it. It's important that all forms of bullying are taken seriously and that all members of our school community work together to ensure that everyone understands that bullying is not acceptable at AVPS or anywhere - ever.

All adults, including teachers, school staff and parents, should model positive bystander behaviour and intervene if they observe bullying behaviour occurring between students. Standing by and doing nothing, or leaving students to 'sort it out' themselves, sends the message to the whole school community that the bullying behaviour is being condoned.

Young people are still learning and practising social skills. Everyone has the capacity to change their behaviour but being given a label can stick and make these changes much harder.

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 others relating to gender and sexuality
- **discrimination including racial discrimination** - treating people differently because of their identity
- **cyberbullying** - either online or via mobile phone
- **social rejection** – deliberate or repeated

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.

AVPS APPROACH TO BULLYING

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way. All new families and staff will be informed of school policies and practices at the commencement of their time at the school. All updated school policies can always be found online at: <http://www.avps.vic.edu.au/avps-policies.html> All complaints of bullying harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Our school will organise and integrate 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.

DUTY OF CARE

AVPS's Principal team 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 the Principal team and school council have the responsibility for ensuring that a safe and discrimination free workplace is maintained so the processes of learning and teaching can proceed uninterrupted.

PLANNING & PROCEDURES

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 AVPS Bullying Prevention Policy, Equal Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policy, Cyber Bullying Policy and Student Engagement 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 person.

STUDENTS

It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with students 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 (including the peer mediator program), 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 our Student Engagement Policy. The Principal team or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension (AVPS Suspension Policy 2014) in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines.

RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS

AVPS's step by step guide – supporting students

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
- private conference
- shared control discussion

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, a formal written concern should be completed and submitted to the student welfare coordinator/ Principal team.

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 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 ‘behaviour’ 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). A pre-suspension student support group (SSG) meeting may also be recommended.

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 AVPS Student Suspension Policy (2014) and the AVPS Student Engagement Policy (2014). Furthermore, the Principal team 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.*

ADULTS – Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is characterised by persistent and repeated negative behaviour directed at an employee that creates a risk to health and safety (Victorian WorkCover Authority). The definition of bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours. Some common examples include:

- verbal abuse, yelling, screaming;
- abusive language or intimidation;
- excluding or isolating employees;
- assigning meaningless tasks or giving employees impossible assignments;
- continually criticising someone;
- sabotaging someone’s work or their ability to do their job by withholding vital information and resources;
- belittling someone’s opinions;
- unexplained job changes;
- failure to give credit where it is due or taking credit for someone else’s work.

Research studies show that workplace bullying is a major contributing factor to high stress and low morale in the workplace. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, workplaces are

required to put in place strategies designed to prevent psychological injuries. Therefore, identifying bullying risk factors and putting in place appropriate preventative measures through collaboration and consultation should form an important part of the workplaces OHS risk management system.

What should staff do?

- Identify, assess and implement controls measures for bullying risk factors in your school/workplace and document on the OHS Risk Register
- Consult with Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) and employees when:
- Bullying risks are being identified and assessed;
- Making decisions about developing and implementing procedures for resolving bullying complaints;
- Making decisions about providing information and training to prevent bullying;
- Reviewing existing prevention of bullying policy and/or procedures;
- Proposing changes to the way work is performed;
- Provide appropriate information, instruction and training for employees so they have the awareness, knowledge and skills to identify risk factors associated with bullying in the workplace and the appropriate prevention measures to control these kinds of risks.
- Record incidents into eduSafe as soon as possible after the incident

RESPONDING to workplace bullying

Informal

An employee may choose to deal with a problem initially by informally speaking to the workplace manager (AVPS Principal). All reports of bullying should be taken seriously. After discussing the concerns with the employee the following strategies could be considered:

- Aim to gain a commitment from the employee displaying the alleged bullying behaviour to cease the behaviour. This can sometimes be achieved by:
 - the complainant (after careful consideration) choosing to approach the person responsible for the alleged inappropriate behaviour
 - a management representative counselling the employee displaying the alleged behaviour
- Discuss the option of involving an independent third party or mediator. Participation by all parties must be voluntary. (Contact the Employee Safety and Wellbeing Branch on 9637 2414)
- Conduct a workplace bullying awareness session for all employees, outlining responsibilities in relation to appropriate behaviour in the workplace
- Provide the option for employees to access independent counselling support if they require it from the Department's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1300 361 008

Formal

Usually, the progression to a formal complaint is the choice of the complainant. However, in some cases the workplace manager may decide that it is in the interest of the organisation to proceed to the next level. If:

- informal approaches appear to be having little impact;
- the behaviour may constitute misconduct;
- a criminal act may have occurred;
- where there has been or is likely to be significant disruption in the workplace;

- where there may be a safety issue;

For further information on the Department's complaints process refer to Workforce Management.
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/workm/Pages/default.aspx>

Records of every complaint, the findings and resolutions, including actions taken need to be documented and kept on file. For further information Managers should contact the Department's Conduct and Ethics Branch on 03 9637 2594 or via email at conduct.ethics@edumail.vic.gov.au

What should other community members do? Contact the school Principal team.

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every three years (due December 2017) or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

References & Resources

- DEECD Bullying Prevention Policy
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinprevent.aspx>
- Safe Schools are Effective Schools booklet
www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters
- <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Young%20Kids/Hectors%20World.aspx>
- DEECD advice sheets (These documents provide helpful advice regarding safe and appropriate behaviour) <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advice.aspx>
- DEECD – Cyberbullying
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/cyberbullying.aspx>