



If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school on 9547 1224

## **PURPOSE**

Athol Road 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Athol Road Primary School will not be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Athol Road 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 victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Athol Road Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Athol Road Primary School 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.

Athol Road 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 Athol Road Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Athol Road 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, Student Engagement and Wellbeing and Inclusion and Diversity policies.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions and should be read in conjunction with our school's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Duty of Care Policy and Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

## **GUIDELINES**

Definition of Bullying as endorsed by the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments

*Bullying is an ongoing, 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.*

*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 phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, 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. 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.

*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 Athol Road Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Athol Road 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.

## **IMPLEMENTATION: BULLYING PREVENTION**

Athol Road 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 Athol Road 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:

- There is 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 learning space 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 learning spaces, 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.
- The Peer Mediation program encourages 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.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

Reporting concerns to Athol Road 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 Athol Road Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Staff encourage students to speak to one of their learning space teachers. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including principal class, wellbeing worker or school social worker.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Athol Road Primary School should contact the Principal or Assistant Principal by phone on 9547 1224 or by email directed to [athol.road.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:athol.road.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

## Investigations

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

- record the details of the allegations on Sentral and
- inform the relevant Team Leader, Principal and Assistant Principal

The Team Leader and/or Principal or Assistant Principal are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they 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 with the Team Leader, Principal and/or Assistant 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 person investigating 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 the Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, SSSO, Assistant Principal and Principal.

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, Athol Road 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.

All, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours may be implemented:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, 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 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 resilience programs, etc.
- 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 Assistant Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Athol Road 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 Athol Road Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

## COMMUNICATION

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

- School's website
- Sentral Parent Portal
- Staff induction processes
- Staff handbook/manual
- Staff briefings/meetings as required
- Parent Information sessions
- Newsletters
- Student Forums
- 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 Beliefs](#)
- [Student Engagement and Wellbeing 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](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	August 2020
Consultation	Student representative groups, parent groups, school council
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	August 2022