

Merimbula Public School

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Anti-Bullying Plan



RATIONALE:

Bullying: Bullying is repeated **verbal, physical, social or psychological** behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

Bullying can be defined as having three key features. It:

1. involves a misuse of power in a relationship;
2. is ongoing and repeated; *and*
3. involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying involves a misuse of power towards one or more people. Conflict or fights between equals, or single incidents, are not defined as bullying.

For example, bullying occurs when a person:

- is threatened, victimised, dominated, intimidated, stalked or given dirty looks;
- is called names, teased, abused or putdown (to their face or via the Internet);
- is harassed (about gender, race, disability, sexuality or gender preferences);
- has property hidden, damaged, stolen or destroyed;
- is physically hurt (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, spitting, tripping, having things thrown at them);
- sent hurtful notes or online messages;
- is singled out for treatment or left out, excluded ostracised, or alienated;
- is picked on or ridiculed (verbally or through inappropriate gestures); and/or
- has rumours spread about them.

Cyberbullying: Bullying can also occur online. This is known as **cyberbullying**, which is using technology such as the internet or mobile devices to bully someone.

For example, cyberbullying occurs when a person:

- is threatened or teased via technology, the internet or a mobile device;
- receives abusive texts and/or emails, posting hurtful messages;
- has inappropriate comments or pictures posted about them;
- has inappropriate pictures taken of them, using a device/camera phone;
- has their photos, work or messages forwarded without their permission and teased; and/or
- receives malicious SMS and/or email messages.

If someone is bullied...

- they may be confused and not know what to do;
- they may feel sad, frightened, unsafe, sick, embarrassed, angry, unfairly treated, may be withdrawn or not wanting to attend school; and/or
- it can affect their school work and it can affect their family and friends.

Bullies: Bullies are defined, for the purpose of this policy and in accord with the school's Discipline Procedures, as a person/people who bully a child, group of children or others on repeated occasions.

At times, students may face disciplinary procedures after exhibiting one of the above behaviours. In the first two instances, their behaviour will be recorded in the school's 'Behaviour Register' as "harassment".

Students who are recognised as displaying bullying behaviour will have their parents/carers notified. Major Notifications will be issued for subsequent behaviours such as those listed in this plan. Other bullying behaviour (staff, visitors, adults) will be addressed in accord with the Department's *Code of Conduct*.

AIMS:

The aim of this Anti-Bullying Plan is to:

- clearly communicate to our school community our Anti-Bullying Procedures;
- educate the school community about welfare practices and support that applies to student behaviour generally;
- support the prevention and responses to bullying behaviour;
- identify that responding to bullying behaviour in learning and working environments is a shared responsibility of all departmental staff, students, parents, caregivers and members of the community.

PROCESS:

Student Support and Welfare - At Merimbula Public School we are proactive and support students by:

- encouraging them to employ strategies taught during Health/ Personal Development sessions;
- create positive classroom environments;
- implementing classroom-based Personal Development Programs such as the Child Protection and Positive Behaviour for Learning programs;
- having an active Stage 1-Stage 3 Student Representative Council and holding class meetings;
- developing positive Student Leadership roles;
- having an active Learning Support Team;
- being involved in our school and wider community;
- encouraging parents to take an active role in school programs;
- by having in-school anti-bullying mediation, social skills and mindfulness programs/opportunities;
- investigating events or accusations thoroughly;
- having prompt parental communication;
- actively listening to students;
- being observant of signs of distress or suspected cases of teasing, exclusion or bullying;
- reporting incidents of bullying;
- reporting/referring bullying to the school Executive Team and Learning Support Team;
- support bullies through Reflection Room tasks.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES:

School staff have the responsibility to:

- respect and support students;
- model and promote appropriate behaviour;
- have knowledge of school and Departmental policies relating to bullying behaviour; and
- respond in a timely manner to incidents of bullying according to the school's Anti-Bullying Plan;

In addition, teachers have a responsibility to:

- provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact on individuals and the broader community.

When students disclose they feel they have been bullied, we:

1. Investigate the alleged bullying. We do this by:

- follow the alleged bullying investigation procedures, ensuring consistency and fairness;
- questioning the alleged victim;
- questioning the alleged bully/ies;
- questioning any witnesses, or those who were in the direct area / situation;
- holding formal, separate interviews with alleged: victims, bullies, witnesses;
- speaking with parents/caregivers/bus drivers/out of school care employees etc; and/or
- accessing evidence (eg: written / Internet notes).

2. Ask students to use a range of self- assertiveness strategies.

These include:

- ignore the potential bully and walk away;
- ask a friend to stay with you;
- tell the person to "leave me alone";
- first tell the person nicely, and then strongly;
- ask "why are you doing this?";
- tell the teacher on duty;
- walk near the teacher, sit near a bus driver / adult;
- tell your class teacher or a support teacher;
- tell the principal and tell mum and dad, or other caregivers (eg: after school care / sporting team supervisors); and/or
- keep telling (including having parents inform the school).

3. Lead the documentation and follow-up:

- notifying and/or meet with parents and caregivers (both parties);
- holding mediation meetings;
- making resolution plans;
- implementing the school's Discipline Procedures where necessary;
- place names of those exhibiting bullying behaviour in the Anti-Bullying Register, and monitor the register regularly;
- if necessary students attend the Reflection Room and are placed on a Behaviour Monitoring Program or suspended in accord with the school's Discipline Procedures;
- where necessary contact the Department's Security and Response Directorate or the Police.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT:

Students have a responsibility to:

- behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity;
- behave as responsible digital citizens;
- follow the school Anti-Bullying Plan;
- behave as responsible bystanders; and
- report incidents of bullying according to school procedures.

Students will be encouraged and reminded to:

- following anti-bullying strategies taught at school:
 - ignore the bullying,
 - turn their back and walk away,
 - act unimpressed, or pretend they don't care,
 - say 'no' or 'just stop' firmly; and
- tell on others who they observe bullying;
- be honest, truthful and fair at all times.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENT/CAREGIVER:

Parents/caregivers have a responsibility to:

- support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible online behaviour;
- be aware of the school Anti-Bullying Plan and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour;
- support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the School Anti-Bullying Plan;

- report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school; and
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

Parents YOU can help what happens by...

- being aware of this plan and what bullying is;
- watching for signs of distress in your child;
- listening calmly to your child and get the full story;
- reassuring your child that they are not to blame;
- ask your child what they want you to do, and what they want to do;
- discussing anti-bullying strategies with your child;
- advising your child to tell a staff member;
- informing your child's class teacher of, and if needed make an appointment to meet with them to discuss, suspected bullying (this can be done via Class Dojo and can be kept anonymous);
- and working with the school to solve bullying issues.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY:

All members of the school community have a responsibility to:

- model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community;
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur; and
- support the school's Anti-Bullying Plan through words and actions.

MONITORING AND PROCEDURES:

The Department's Policy requires schools to develop protection, prevention, early intervention and response strategies for student bullying in NSW Government Schools.

Protection: Refers to factors that increase the likelihood of positive wellbeing outcomes. Strategies include: developing a shared understanding of bullying behaviours; developing a statement of purpose/plan that outlines individual and shared responsibilities of community members; maintaining a positive school culture of respectful relationships.

Prevention: Builds on the protective factors and refers to strategies, such as: developing and implementing programs for bullying prevention; and embedding anti-bullying messages into each curriculum area.

Early Intervention: Refers to providing support before an issue emerges or escalates, such as supporting: students who are identified as being at risk of developing long-term difficulties with social relationships; and students who are identified at or after enrolment as having experienced bullying or engaged in bullying behaviour.

Response: Refers both to the actions of the school when an incident occurs and to the informed development of future protection, prevention and response strategies such as: empowering the whole school community to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, harassment and victimisation and behave as responsible bystanders; developing and publicising clear procedures for reporting incidents of bullying to the school; responding quickly, with a range of interventions; providing support to those affected, including witnesses; and identifying/monitoring patterns, to evaluate the Anti-Bullying Plans effectiveness annually.

EVALUATION: This policy will be evaluated by the school annually.
Updated – December 16, 2022.



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