



BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

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

When responding to bullying behaviour, Malvern Valley 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.

Malvern Valley 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 Malvern Valley Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Malvern Valley 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*, the *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, the *Inclusion and Diversity policy* and the *Digital Learning Policy*.

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

POLICY

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:

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, Code of Conduct and other related policies.

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. Malvern Valley 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 Malvern Valley Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Malvern Valley 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

Malvern Valley 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 Malvern Valley 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. 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.
- In the classroom, our Positive Education 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 school staff about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- Each teacher will reflect the school's Bullying Prevention Policy, school values and Positive Wellbeing approaches in their class Essential Agreement.
- Through an explicit whole-school wellbeing program, which incorporates the Personal Social Capabilities area of the Victorian Curriculum, the school will provide students with learning experiences that support them in having positive relationships, being emotionally literate and empathetic.
- Each class will engage in 90 minutes of explicit teaching each week on various aspects of wellbeing as well as daily practice of wellbeing exercises.
- Each student is required to sign the Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Agreement, which promotes safe and responsible online behaviours before they are able to use technology at school.
- All students in Grades 4 - 6 will participate in the DET's Student Attitudes to School Survey. Data from this survey will be analysed to identify priorities for school leadership.
- Staff are required to document any incidences of bullying into the Sentral database. Details of the incident and affected/involved students must also be noted.
- Staff on Yard Duty are required to document any incidences deemed 'serious' or determined to be of a bullying nature into the Sentral database. Such incidences are also to be communicated in person to the classroom teachers of any students involved in incidences that are uploaded to Sentral.
- Should incidences occur on school grounds when no staff are on scheduled yard duty (outside the hours of 8:45am – 3:45pm), parents are encouraged to prevent any imminent danger to any involved students and then to contact a staff member from the school to follow up at an appropriate time.
- All Foundation students will receive a Grade 5/6 Buddy to assist them at the start of the year with finding friends and safe and responsible play and providing them with support throughout the year should they need it.
- We take opportunities to participate in national days that promote diversity and inclusion (e.g. Reconciliation week) We explicitly teach students Restorative Practices for resolving conflict and have Peer Support students on duty in the yard.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Malvern Valley 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 Malvern Valley 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 other teachers, ~~aides~~, the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Malvern Valley Primary School should contact their child's classroom teacher in the first instance and if their concern is not resolved they should raise their concerns with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to begin the investigation in a timely and sensitive manner.

To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying to enable an informed response, the staff member whom it has been reported to 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
- Obtain written statements from all or any of the above
- Record incidents on Sentral

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.

Intervention

When the staff member investigating the incident 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 at times in consultation with the Assistant Principal, Principal or Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Malvern Valley 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
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Intervention will follow the Restorative Practices approach and guiding principles which are:

- Inclusion of all people affected (stakeholders)
- Respect for everyone involved
- Consensus based decision-making focused on how to repair the harm and prevent future harm
- Addresses obligations resulting from those harms
- Using inclusive, collaborative processes
- Expanding the capacity of the community to create a just and fair response
- Seeking to put right the wrongs

The goals of any Restorative Practices intervention will be to:

- Understand the harm and develop empathy
- Listen and respond to the needs of everyone
- Encourage accountability and responsibility through personal reflection
- Reintegrate the wrongdoer into the community
- Create a caring climate where we promote the school values

The process will follow the appropriate Restorative Practices structure (Appendix 1) given the level of the involved students.

- Staff will utilise some or all of the Restorative Practices script (Appendix 1), WARRM conversation structure (What happened, Who was affected, reflecting, repairing and moving on), templates such as the Think Sheet (Appendix 2) and Apology Framework Template (Appendix 3) to facilitate the Restorative Process.
- Consequences for repeated incidents of bullying may involve the Principal or Assistant Principal. They may include exclusion from areas or activities, loss of relevant privileges, or ongoing meetings/counselling.
- For repeat incidences, parents may be requested to attend a meeting with the Principal and other relevant staff (eg. Assistant Principal, classroom teacher) where a Behaviour Management Plan may be implemented, clearly stating the strategies in place to prevent further indiscretions and the related consequences for further indiscretions.
- In incidences of an extreme nature, a student may be suspended in accordance with the DET's 'Grounds for Suspension' conditions.
- Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).
- All communication and intervention strategies implemented throughout dealing with an incidence of bullying will be documented into the Sentral database using the appropriate templates.

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:

- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)

APPENDICES

- Restorative Practices Processes
- Student reflection Template
- Apology Framework Template
- Suspension Process Flowchart

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating 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
- 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 Opinion Survey](#)

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

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in 2020 and is scheduled for review in 2023.

APPENDIX 1 Restorative Practices Processes

STRUCTURE

Foundation – Grade 2

Understand: The teacher gathers information to gain an understanding of the problem.

Teach: The teacher gives a simple telling without judgement, focusing on the one social value or behaviour the child needs to understand.

Fix: Repairing the harm with teacher support, involving a relevant, fair and agreed upon consequence.

Grade 3 – 4: Introducing the Restorative Script, facilitator role and transfer from telling to talking.

Understand: Information gathering and understanding the problem.

Teach: The choices that were made and the affect these choices have on others.

Fix: Outcomes needed for the harm to be repaired including an appropriate, fair and agreed upon consequence and future preventative strategies put in place.

Grade 5 – 6

Understand: Information gathering so that all those involved understand the motivation and background and who has obligations and liabilities.

Teach: The choices that were made and the affect these choices have on the school community and on self.

Fix: Identify what needs to happen for the harm to be repaired including an appropriate, fair and agreed upon consequence, and plan future prevention and support.

SCRIPT

When challenging behaviour:	To help those affected:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What happened? <i>Tell the story</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What were you thinking of at the time? ● What have you thought about since? ● What did you have control over? 2. Who do you think has been affected? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who else has been affected? ● In what ways? ● Was this fair or unfair? ● Was this the right or wrong thing to do? 3. What do you think you need to do to make things right? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What else might need to happen? ● How will this help? ● When can this happen? ● What exactly are you saying sorry for? 4. How can we make sure this doesn't happen again? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What do you need to stop / stay / start doing? ● What are your goals to help move forward? ● What are you going to do to reach the goals? ● What other support do you need? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did you think when you realized what had happened? 2. What impact has this incident had on you and others? 3. What has been the hardest thing for you? 4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?



Think Sheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

What happened?	
What was I thinking?	
Who was affected?	How?
How can I fix it?	

Teacher: _____

Student: _____



My Restorative Apology

To begin to make things right I would like to offer this apology to...
This is what I was responsible for (what I did or said to you)...
This is how it made you feel...
This is how I feel about what I did/said...
This is what I won't do again...
This is what I promise I will do so this doesn't happen again...

Signed: _____

THE SUSPENSION PROCESS

ESTABLISHING THE GROUNDS FOR SUSPENSION

- The principal must first establish whether a suspension is an available option:
 - Did the behaviour occur whilst at school, travelling to or from school or at a school approved activity?
 - Does the behaviour meet one or more of the grounds for suspension?
- The principal must take into account whether a suspension is appropriate to the behaviour, the student's education needs and any other relevant circumstances.
- Before implementing a suspension, the principal must ensure that:
 - The student has had the opportunity to be heard
 - That any information or documentation provided by the student or their relevant person has been taken into account in making the decision regarding the suspension
 - Other forms of action to address the behaviour for which the student is being suspended have been considered and implemented.
- The principal must decide on the duration of the suspension bearing in mind that:
 - A student cannot be suspended for more than five consecutive school days and written approval from the Regional Director is required if the total number of days the student has been suspended in the year is more than 15 days
 - If the period of the suspension is longer than the days left in the term, the principal should consider the likely disruption to the student's learning before imposing a suspension that will continue into the following term.

SUSPENSION WITH AN IMMEDIATE EFFECT

- In some instances, the principal may consider that due to the severity of the situation and the possibility of immediate threat to another person, they may need to implement immediate action.
- Under these circumstances, the school must provide supervision until the student can be collected or until the end of the school day.
- When a suspension with an immediate effect is implemented on school camp or excursion and the student is unable to be collected, then they will need to be supervised until the end of the activity.

NOTIFICATION

- As soon as is practical, the principal must:
 - Give verbal notification to the student and their relevant person of the intention to suspend the student, the reason/s for the suspension, the schools days on which it will occur and where it will occur
 - Provide the student and their relevant person with the *Notice of Suspension* and the *Procedures for Suspension* brochure prior to the day on which the suspension occurs (or on the day a suspension is implemented, if it is a suspension with immediate effect)
 - Provide contact details for additional support services to the student and their relevant person.
- Where appropriate, or if requested, a Student Support Group or another meeting with the student and their relevant person can be convened.

DURING SUSPENSION

- Prior to the day on which the suspension occurs, or on the day a suspension is implemented with immediate effect:
 - If the student is suspended for three days or less, the school must arrange for appropriate school work to be supplied
 - If a student is being suspended for more than three days, a *Student Absence Learning Plan* and a *Return to School Plan* must be developed and provided to the student and their relevant person.

SUPPORT AND FOLLOW-UP

- Following the suspension, it may be appropriate to convene a meeting with the student and their relevant person to discuss the behaviour that led to the suspension. A relevant person can also request a meeting at any time during the suspension process.
- For students that have been suspended for five days or where they have received three or more suspensions in a year, then it is recommended that the school convene a Student Support Group meeting with the student, their relevant person and other personnel to discuss the behaviour that led to the suspension/s and the range of strategies to address the concerns.