Valkstone Primary School, No. 4778
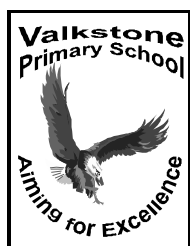
BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

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

When responding to bullying behaviour, Valkstone 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.

Valkstone 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 applies to all school events and activities, including camps and excursions. Valkstone 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 and Diversity policy*.

Definitions

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.

Examples of cyberbullying include:
- Sending comments, photographs or videos of a hateful or threatening nature
- Using modern technologies to engage in the social exclusion of someone
- Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages, photographs or videos on the internet
- Stealing someone's identity, including accessing their user accounts online
- Engaging in cyber-stalking or invasion of your privacy online.

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. Inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *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. Valkstone 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 the schools's *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Valkstone Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Valkstone 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

Valkstone 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.

Staff and students participate in a range of activities to prevent bullying and to promote positive Behaviours, these include:

The School will:
- Regularly review the *Bullying prevention* policy and procedures with staff
- Provide staff with education and training to detect and respond to bullying behaviours
- Adopt a consistent school wide behaviour management approach
- Ensure students understand the school rules and encourage students to abide by them
- Develop the 'Personal and Social Capabilities' of students (as identified in the Victorian Curriculum)
- Publish the school's anti-bullying policy on the website for parent information
- Review the policy (through the Education sub-committee of School Council) on a cyclical basis to ensure it remains relevant and effective
- Encourage staff to be observant and active when on yard supervision so there is a pervasive sense of staff presence when on duty
- Display signage around the school that outlines the school rules and promotes the expected positive behaviours
- Participate in the Action days' against bullying e.g. wear blue day
- Use a 'Restorative Practices' approach in discussions with students.

Students will participate in:
- Class meetings
- Resilience project
- RRRR Program
- Valkstone values term awards
- Classroom agreements (which outline the actions to be displayed to promote a positive classroom learning environment)
- Explicit lessons that review the school rules and how the behaviour management system works

- Age appropriate lessons to understand what bullying is, what it isn't and how to report bullying
- Grade 5 and Foundation year 'buddy program'
- The 'Peer Support' Program (run by year 6 students who work support harmonious relationships in the playground)
- An annual student engagement survey related to student well-being
- Lessons to develop their 'Personal and Social' capabilities
- The Peer Mediation Program.

Please note: the specific programs run by the school will vary from time to time, with new initiatives being introduced when deemed appropriate.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

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

We encourage students to speak to their teacher/Year Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, and the principal.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Valkstone Primary School should contact. the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Julie Kilpatrick, by phone on 9570 3986 or by email directed to valkstone.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au).

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass, and
2. inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal].

The wellbeing coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the wellbeing coordinator 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.

All communications with the wellbeing coordinator 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 wellbeing coordinator 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 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, Valkstone 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.

The wellbeing coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral SSS or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to SSS or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, or 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. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.

- Prepare an 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 resilience programs.
- 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, for example circle time, small group programs.
- 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.

Valkstone 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 assistant principal and student wellbeing coordinator are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- 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 an 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
- regular student bullying surveys

- regular staff surveys
- [Bully Stoppers Data Collection](#) tool
- 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 student representative groups, parent groups, and the Education subcommittee of school council]

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on July 2019 and is scheduled for review in July 2021.