

BULLYING PREVENTION

PURPOSE:

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

SCOPE:

This policy applies to all students at Pakenham Consolidated School.

DEFINITION:

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:

- direct physical bullying - e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- direct verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- 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. *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. Pakenham Consolidated 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 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Pakenham Consolidated School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Pakenham Consolidated 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.

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Pakenham Consolidated 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 Pakenham Consolidated 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:

- 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.
- the 'Bucket Filler' program has been designed to encourage students to use their words and actions in a positive way, to treat others with respect, to be accountable for the choices they make and to take responsibility for their behaviour and attitude.
- students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Pakenham Consolidated 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 Pakenham Consolidated School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Students are encouraged to speak to their class teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, education support staff and members of the principal class.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Pakenham Consolidated School should contact their child's teacher, a member of the wellbeing team or the Wellbeing Assistant Principal by calling (03)59411511 or emailing:

pakenham.cs@education.vic.gov.au

Investigations

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

- record the details of the allegations on Sentral, including the victim, witnesses and perpetrator; and
- inform the class teacher and Assistant Principal.

The teacher/assistant principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the teacher/assistant principal may:

- speak to 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 teacher/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.

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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 teacher/Assistant Principal 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, Assistant Principal, Principal, or any relevant 3rd party including the Department and members of the SSS (Student Support Services) team.

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, Pakenham Consolidated 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 targeted 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 Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS or external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, 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 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 Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- 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, through the 'Bucket Filler' program, social stories and use of the trauma informed practice strategies e.g. looking at how the brain works and may be influenced.

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- 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.

Pakenham Consolidated 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 Wellbeing Assistant Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

MORE 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
- Duty of Care 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 a 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
- Attitudes to School survey
- Staff Opinion survey
- Assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group, through Sentral
- Parent Opinion survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student representative groups and school council.

REVIEW CYCLE AND EVALUATION

This policy was last updated August 2020 and is scheduled for review in August 2022.