



BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Templestowe Heights 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Templestowe Heights Primary will not be tolerated
- 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 Templestowe Heights Primary.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Templestowe Heights Primary 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.

Templestowe Heights Primary 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 activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy*, *eSmart Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

POLICY

Definitions

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

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.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Templestowe Heights Primary 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 Templestowe Heights Primary 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 promote positive behaviour and discourage bullying.
- In the classroom, 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 School Buddies program, circle time and digital licence course 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 Templestowe Heights Primary

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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, education support staff, Kids Hope Mentor, Templestowe College Tutor or Principal Team.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Templestowe Heights Primary should contact the Principal or Assistant Principal on 9850 1796 or by email directed to templestowe.heights.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 the student's file; and
2. inform all stakeholders (relevant classroom teacher, all specialist teachers, leadership team member, Principal team).

The class teacher, relevant leadership team and Principal team have the responsibility of investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the investigator(s) 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 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 class teacher, leadership team member or Principal team member have 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 year level team, student wellbeing team, School Support Staff Officer (SSSO) or Principal 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, Templestowe Heights 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.

The class teacher, relevant leadership team member, SSSO or Principal team may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to SSSO or an external provider such as beyondblue or kids helpline:
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to SSSO or an external provider such as kids helpline or lifeline:
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to SSSO or an external provider such as kids helpline.
- Offer counselling support for parents/guardians of either the perpetrator, victim or witnesses including referral to SSSO or parent line.
- 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 an education session for the perpetrator using resources from the *Bully Stoppers* initiative.
- 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.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

The Principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Templestowe Heights 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 Templestowe Heights Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Statement of Values*
- BullyStoppers:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>
- Parent Line:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/parentline.aspx>
- Beyond Blue:
<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>
- Kids Helpline:
<https://kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/phone-counselling>
- Life Line:
<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- Restorative practice
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/methodrestorative.aspx>

EVALUATION

This will be reviewed every three years following analysis of school data trends on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with consultation from Templestowe Heights Primary staff, student representative groups and school council.

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 15th August and is scheduled for review in June 2021.