POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS & ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Watsonia North PRIMARY SCHOOL

Help for non-English speakers
If you need help understanding this policy, please contact Watsonia North Primary School at 9435 1285 or email the school: http://www.wats-north.edu.au.

Purpose

Our school is committed to providing a safe, respectful and caring environment which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst students, staff and parents. This encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. Watsonia North acknowledges that school staff hold a duty of care for students, taking reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, including the harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

A clear bullying (including cyberbullying and harassment) prevention policy will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any form will not be tolerated.** Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community.

Aims

- To provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying and harassment.
- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment is acceptable.
- To provide clear advice on the roles and responsibilities of the whole school community, including students, parents, caregivers and teachers, for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour.
- To ensure that all reported bullying incidents are followed up, and that support is given to any person who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour.
- To seek the support and cooperation of the whole-school community at all times.
- To develop within all students the skills of resilience.
- To reinforce the positive values, beliefs and attitudes held by the Watsonia North school community.
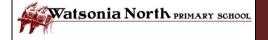
When responding to bullying behaviour, Watsonia North Primary School aims to:
- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Scope

This policy addresses how Watsonia North Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. We recognise that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also

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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.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school.

Definitions

What are bullying, cyberbullying and harassment?

- *Bullying* is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group intended to cause harm, distress or fear.
    - o **Direct verbal bullying-** e.g., name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
    - o **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 bullying (as defined above) that occurs either online, via a mobile phone or electronic device. It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone) or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various electronic mediums available.
- *Harassment* is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome and could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.
- **Direct physical bullying-** e.g., hitting, tripping and punching or damaging property.

Implementation

Watsonia North has a number of programs and strategies in place to enhance our 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 may consist of physical harm, harassment, verbal insults or hurtful remarks, or actions designed to hurt somebody's reputation or social standing or to cause humiliation. Bullying may be carried out directly or indirectly and may include the use of digital technologies such as social network sites, websites or online chat rooms.

- Our school has adopted a zero-tolerance position on bullying.
- Our school will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.

Bullying Prevention

Bullying prevention at Watsonia North Primary is proactive. It is supported by research that indicates that a whole school multi-faceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying.
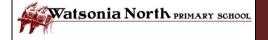
At our school, we have adopted a four-phase approach when dealing with bullying and harassment:

A: Primary Prevention

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven countermeasures.
- Ensuring all staff know and understand the WNPS *Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy*.
- Each classroom teacher should clarify with students the types of bullying and the consequences and impact of bullying.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response, complemented by clear processes for reporting suspected bullying.
- The provision of programs that promote inclusiveness, resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem-solving will form an integral part of our curriculum. In particular, assertiveness training and bystander training that builds skills in children to challenge and/or report unacceptable behaviour will be central to our curriculum.
- Analysis of the Attitudes to School survey, administered and responded to annually.
- Restorative Practices approach to be implemented across the school, with new staff inducted annually.
- Anti-bulling messages and posters will be displayed around the school.
- The Buddy System will be continued in the school.
- Staff and students to be trained in cyber safety. Cyber safety awareness programs will be provided for parents, and cyber safety will form part of each child's ICT curriculum.
- Participation in and involvement with programs which support understandings relating to bullying and harassment.

B: Isolated, Infrequent or Less Serious Incidents

- All suspected bullying or inappropriate behaviour cases will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect a bullying or behaviour problem.
- The school will reinforce with children the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others.
- Parents are to be contacted if their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced inappropriate behaviour or if their child appears to have behaved inappropriately or bullied someone else.

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- Appropriate and proportional consequences may include a verbal apology, writing a letter of regret, completing a Behaviour Incident booklet/information sheet, or loss of privileges. The *Student Code of Conduct* will be referenced in relation to consequences in consultation with the Principal and Assistant Principal.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will occur as appropriate.

C: Repetitive or Serious Incidents

- Serious incidents and/or repetitive incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour must be reported, responded to by staff and documented.
- Serious incidents include physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage to property, serious threats or homophobic bullying etc.
- All such incidents or allegations will be thoroughly investigated and documented by a member of the Principal class. Depending upon the nature of each incident, they may also be reported to and investigated by police, reported to the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit, and/or reported to the School Services Unit.
- The school may contact support professionals from the Department of Education & Training, such as councillors and psychologists. This may involve external providers and/or Student Support Officers for assistance and support.
- Students, staff and parents identified by others as bullies will be informed of the allegations.
- Both offenders and victims will be offered counselling and support, and a Restorative Practices meeting will be held to repair the fractured relationship.
- All repetitive or serious incidents must be brought to the attention of the Principal class members of the school.
- The school may need to prepare and implement a safety management plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator.
- The most appropriate staff member will contact the parents of the targeted child. Principal class members will contact alleged perpetrators unless advised by police or the Department of Human Services not to do so.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include criminal charges, suspension, expulsion, loss of privileges, counselling, conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct.
- Parents or community members who bully or harass, or abuse staff will be provided with official warnings and, if necessary, referred to the police and/or have trespass restrictions placed upon them by the Principal consistent with the Summary Offences Act.

D: Post Incident

It is important that appropriate strategies and support are put in place after an incident has been resolved for all individuals involved. Appropriate strategies may include: -

- Conciliation meetings between all parties and or meetings with parties separately.
- Ongoing monitoring of students involved.

- Identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved.
- Follow-up meetings regarding each child's management strategy.
- Ongoing communication with parents.
- Counselling from appropriate agencies and/or support officers for both parties.
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies.

Parents and carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Watsonia North primary should contact the Assistant Principal, who has responsibility relating to student welfare and wellbeing.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Watsonia North Primary School

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or another trusted adult 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 WNPS 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.
Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at WNPS should contact Jamie Jaquinta, Assistant Principal, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, by phone on 9435 1285 or by email directed to Jamie.jaquinta@education.vic.gov.au.

Investigations

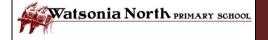When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
1. record the details of the allegations
2. inform the classroom teacher, Jamie Jaquinta Assistant Principal and/or Sarah Pollnitz Acting Principal.

The Year Level Coordinator and Assistant Principal are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Year Level Coordinator or 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 parent/carer(s) 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 Year Level Coordinator or 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.

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 Year Level Coordinator or 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 classroom teacher, Principal and Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

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, WNPS will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances 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 demonstrate insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

The Year Level Coordinator or Assistant Principal may implement all or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to SSS to:
  o the target student or students
  o the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
  o affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- 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 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.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with an older Student Mentor.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow-up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example, the Resilience Project or DET Respectful Relationships.
- Implement proportionate 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.

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

Further Information & Resources

DE&T Links and other school policies which are connected with this policy are:

- DET Effective Schools Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- DET Safe Schools are Effective Schools
- DET Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- DET Respectful Schools
- WNPS *Student Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy*
- WNPS *Statement of School Values and Philosophy*
- WNPS *Digital Technologies Policy*
- WNPS *Duty of Care Policy*

The following websites:

    www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
    www.brodieslaw.org
    www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers
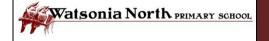   www.kidshelpline.com.au
    www.lifeline.com.au
    Bully Stoppers
    Report racism or religious discrimination in schools
    Kids Helpline

l i t e r a t e   *n u m e r a t e*   *c u r i o u s*

ReachOut Australia
Lifeline
Bullying. No way!
Student Wellbeing Hub
eSafety Commissioner
Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

Communication of School Policies

All Watsonia North Primary School Policies are communicated to the general public and school community via the school website.

Policies - Watsonia North Primary School (wats-north.vic.edu.au)

School Operational and Curriculum Policies are available in classrooms, office spaces and communal areas for convenient access.

Evaluation and Review

Evaluation and review of the *Positive Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy* will occur as stipulated in the *Watsonia North PS Policy Review Cycle* document.

Data to inform this review 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, staff, parent groups, and the school council.

This policy was updated and approved by Watsonia North Primary School's Acting Principal in May 2022 and is scheduled for review in 2024.

Policy last reviewed	SEPTEMBER 2022
Consultation	Staff forum 6.9.2022 School Council October 2022
Approved by	Acting Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2024