Policy – Identification and Recording

Policy Information

Policy Name:	Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy
Current Version:	3.0 July 2018
Purpose:	Student safety and wellbeing
Scope:	Students
Policy Owner:	Advisory Board
Policy Author:	Simon Fazio, Voula Kengos, Donna Axton, Jo Miller
Related policies and legislation:	All student wellbeing policies
Internal procedures guided by this policy:	Student safety and wellbeing

Revision History

Revision Date:	Status: (Draft/Final)	Summary of Changes	Prepared/Approved By:	Revision #:
07.08.14	Final	New	Bronwyn Stubbs	August 2015
18.12.17	Draft	Revision and updating	Belinda Galloway, Rob Mason	Dec 2017
3.07.18	Final	Review	Malcolm McIver	July 2018

Distribution: Students and Staff

Policy Statement

DECV provides flexible learning opportunities to a diverse and unique cohort of Victorian Foundation - 12 students. DECV fosters a safe, engaging and inclusive learning environment by coupling state of the art technology with innovative teaching practices. Our teachers are trained and experienced in best practice online learning techniques, providing students with regular interaction and individualised support.

DECV utilises the Health Promoting Schools framework to provide a whole school approach to student wellbeing and to ensure child safety practices are in accordance with Child Safe Schools guidelines. We are dedicated to building the confidence and resilience of every student. Our structures, policies and programs support the development of the whole person; academically, socially, emotionally and personally.

Aims
- To reinforce within the whole school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- To ensure that everyone within the school community is aware of their responsibility to report signs and evidence of bullying.
- To ensure that there is a clear and consistent process for addressing reported incidents of bullying.

Implementation
The DECV adopts a school wide approach consistent with Child Safe Standards in order to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

The Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy reflects our intention to actively promote a positive and welcoming environment for all members of the school community. The policy is made available to the entire DECV school community through our website and sits alongside the DECV online acceptable use policy. The school will provide resources to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching. All reports will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

- Observation or disclosure of a bullying or harassment incident can be made at any time to or by any DECV staff member, student or member of the community. The 'Report a Concern' icon embedded in *DECVOnline* student space provides an additional avenue for students to report concerns if they feel bullied or unsafe in any way.

- Details of the incident will be recorded by the DECV staff member that witnesses or first becomes aware of the incident. The relevant Year Level Coordinators and Learning Advisors will be notified of the incident.

- The Year Level Coordinator will guide response to the incident with all impacted students and their families. Appropriate action will be taken to ensure the safety of all students and to engage all those involved in the incident in finding a resolution to the matter.

- The Student Wellbeing Team will be available should the impact of the incident require additional support.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Links

Links which are connected with this policy are:
- DECV Student Engagement Policy
- DET Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- DECV Online Terms of Use
- DECV Online Acceptable Use Policy
- DET Bully Stoppers Guide
- DECV Child Safe Standards Policy
- DECV Student Wellbeing Policy.

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:
- Appendix A: Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Harassment Information
- Appendix B: Bullystoppers Incident response step by step guide.

Appendix A
Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Harassment Information

What are Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying

Definition: Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Types of Bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying:
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** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
    - lying and spreading rumours
    - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
    - mimicking
    - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
    - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
    - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

Mutual Conflict

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

Social Rejection or Dislike

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation
Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.

Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Cyber-bullying

Consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

Harassment

Is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Why do we have a Policy on these?

To provide a safe and friendly school environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

Am I bullying or harassing someone?

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?

- *"I will ignore it and it will go away."*
  If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.
- *"I don't want to cause trouble."*
  Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.
- *"Am I to blame?"*
  Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.
- *"Am I imagining things?"*
  Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable. Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

Bullying can involve
- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching, kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

Cyber-bullying can involve
- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:
- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:
- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc.
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

Step 1

Identify Concerns

Is the student distressed?

A student may feel distressed by events including cyberbullying, sexting, exposure to pornographic images or a breach of the school's **Bully Prevention Policy** or **Student Engagement Policy**.

Has a student been exposed to inappropriate behaviour?

A student may have been exposed to and affected by inappropriate behaviour online. This may put them at risk of suffering significant physical, psychological or emotional harm. They may be in need of immediate protection.

Has a student engaged in inappropriate behaviour affecting ANOTHER student?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that may cause psychological or emotion harm to ANOTHER student(s). All students may be in need of immediate protection.

Has a student engaged in inappropriate behaviour affecting THEMSELVES?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that could be psychologically and/or emotionally damaging to THEMSELVES (e.g. sexting). They may be in need of immediate protection.

Has the student engaged in CRIMINAL behaviour?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that could be deemed as CRIMINAL activity.

*Please note: an incident of concern may include one or more of the above.

Step 2

Take Action

Ensure the student is safe

If you suspect or have identified an incident of concern, it is important to first make sure the student/s are in a safe environment.

Further inquire into the incident

Inquire into the inappropriate incident. This may include discussions with all staff and students who have been directly or indirectly involved the incident and/or its effects.
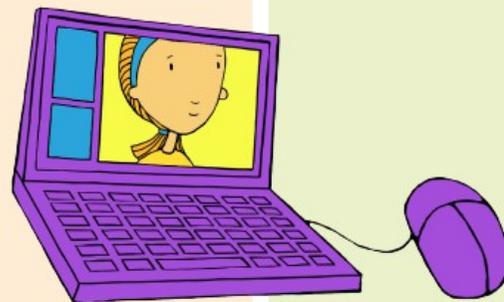
Step 3

Contact the Appropriate Supports

Leadership team

If your inquiry leads you to believe that a concern is real, but it is NOT CRIMINAL then immediately advise and/or consult a member of the school's leadership team to report the incident and plan the appropriate response and support.

The Victoria Police

If your inquiry leads you to believe that a CRIMINAL offence may have occurred, contact the Police.

In such cases seek advice about contacting the parents of all students involved in the incident.

If a school is unsure whether an incident should be reported, the Police will advise the school as to whether they will investigate or whether the school should handle the situation.

Security Services Unit

All reportable incidents should be reported to Security Services Unit. If a school is unsure whether an incident is criminal or not they can also contact the Security Services Unit. This will alert regional staff.

Phone: **(03) 9589 6266**

Step 4

Respond and Provide Support

Support all involved people

Provide reasonable and ongoing wellbeing support to all students and staff who were involved in or witness to the incident.

Refer to the School's Policy

In responding to online incidents of inappropriate behaviour, Principals and teachers should refer to their **Bullying Prevention and/or Student Engagement Policy** and follow the appropriate processes and procedures.

Each Victorian government school has developed a **Bullying Prevention and/or Student Engagement Policy** that sets out the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of everyone in the school community, including students, parents, teachers and school staff. The policy clearly defines the consequences for students who behave inappropriately. (online and offline)

Work with Leadership Team

Work closely with your school's **Leadership and/or Student Wellbeing Team** to discuss strategies that can be used to respond to and support ALL students at risk from the inappropriate behaviour. This may include counselling and support or the development of a **Behaviour Support Plan** to implement targeted strategies.

Keep a record of the **Behaviour Support Plan**, make notes on any relevant observations, and review it as necessary.

For more information, visit **Behaviour Support Plans**:

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachplans.aspx.

Contact Parents

Where appropriate, contact the parents of all students involved. If a school is unsure whether parents should be contacted, the **Department's Legal Division** or **Security Services Unit** can assist to make a decision.

Consult Regional Staff

Contact your student wellbeing or Community Liason Officers in your Regional Office for support.

North Eastern Victoria Region

Benalla: (03) 8392 9500
Glen Waverly: (03) 8392 9300

North Western Victoria Region

Bendigo: (03) 5440 3111
Coburg: (03) 9488 9488

South Eastern Victoria Region

Dandenong: (03) 8765 5600
Moe: (03) 5127 0400

South Western Victoria Region

Ballarat: (03) 5337 8444
West Footscray: (03) 8397 0300
Geelong: (03) 5225 1000

Further Information

Remember to Record

At all times remember to:

- Record the incident. (e.g. screen shots of the incident, notes from the interviews)
- Record the process taken to resolve the incident (e.g. steps taken to remove content, mediation attempts).

Bully Stoppers

For more information visit DET's Bully Stoppers website:

www.education.vic.gov. au/bullystoppers

Security Services Unit

A 24 hour/7 day a week single reference point to report emergency matters and critical incidents including criminal and unwanted activities.

Phone: **(03) 9589 6266**