

**POLICY STATEMENT**

Southern Autistic School is committed to providing a safe, caring and inclusive environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff, including LGBTI students and staff. One which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the School community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.

Southern Autistic School is an inclusive school which does not discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, race, religion, age, parental status, disability/impairment, race, lawful sexual activity, marital status, carer status, political belief or activity, pregnancy, industrial activity, breastfeeding, physical features, religious belief/activity.

**PURPOSE**

Southern Autistic School 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 no forms of bullying at Southern Autistic School 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 Southern Autistic School.

**AIMS**

- To provide a positive, supportive and respectful environment for all students and staff.
- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- Everyone within the school community is alerted to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.
- To engage in continuing education in relation to bullying and harassment.
- To respect privacy and confidentiality in relation to all students and staff.
- To challenge all forms of homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and intersexism to prevent discrimination and bullying.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Southern Autistic School 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.

Southern Autistic 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.

## DEFINITIONS

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:

1. It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
2. It is ongoing and repeated, and
3. 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 phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Cyber-bullying can be:

1. **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).
2. **verbal** - over the telephone or mobile phone.
3. **written** - enflaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment using the various mediums available.

**Harassment** can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

Harassment can be any verbal, physical or sexual conduct, (including gesture), which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

**Discrimination** is unfavourable treatment of a person in an area of public life due to one of their personal attributes for example their sex, age, race or disability.

## **Other distressing behaviours**

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff.

**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.

Southern Autistic School will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

## **GUIDELINES**

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying), and harassment in a consistent and systematic way. As an ASD specific school it is recognised that the support needs to be provided to the perpetrator and the victim. Restorative practices should be a key strategy linked to the whole school Positive Behaviour Support Policy.

All new students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices within the induction and orientation program.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

All complaints of harassment will be heard and investigated in confidence and taken seriously.

Southern Autistic School will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.

There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Bullying (including cyber bullying) and Harassment Policy, guidelines and procedures (see Appendix A).

## **BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAM**

Southern Autistic 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 Southern Autistic 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.

- In the classroom, our SWPBS curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- 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.
- We participate in the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.
- The Bullying and Harassment Policy of the school will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **Reporting concerns to Southern Autistic 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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their classroom teacher or school leader. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, teaching assistants and school administration.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Southern Autistic School should contact their relevant school leader.

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 Southern Autistic School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

### **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass and
2. inform the relevant School Leader, Assistant Principal or Principal.

The School Leader or Assistant Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the School Leader 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 with the School Leader 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 School Leader 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, SSS, Assistant Principal or 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, Southern Autistic 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 School Leader or Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team.
- 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 victim student(s), the perpetrator students and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the victim(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- 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 an Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

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

Southern Autistic 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.

If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying, including cyber bullying, and harassment then it is their professional duty to report this immediately to the principal and the relevant School Leader. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken. The reporter, School Leader and the principal will ensure adequate supports for the student.

Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying, including cyber bullying, and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff. The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying, including cyber bullying, and harassment issues.

## LINKS AND APPENDICES (including processes related to this 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!](#)

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on an annual 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 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.

## REVIEW CYCLE

<b>Date Implemented</b>	March 2020
<b>Author</b>	Bruce McPhate
<b>Approved By</b>	School Council
<b>Approval Authority (Signature &amp; Date)</b>	
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Principal
<b>Review Date Due</b>	March 2021

# Appendix A

## REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING / HARASSMENT - TEMPLATE

Staff member recording incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

Name of student(s) who appears to have instigated bullying

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Year/Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of target(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of witnesses

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Did you observe the incident? YES  No

If 'No' who reported the incident to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of incident (what was allegedly said or done to the student who appears to have been bullied?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What form(s) of bullying took place? Verbal  Physical  Indirect  Cyber

Other  Please detail: \_\_\_\_\_

Was the incident of bullying: Mild  Severe



Describe how you responded (Did you use a school anti-bullying practice?)

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Describe how student responded to your intervention

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**Where / when / time incident took place:**

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

When: before school  recess  lunch  in class  after school

Time: \_\_:\_\_\_ am/pm

Date incident took place: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_

**Additional comments:**

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**Reporter sign** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Leader sign** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal sign** \_\_\_\_\_