POLICY: BULLYING PREVENTION

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact the office on 9702 2022.

PURPOSE:

Brentwood Park 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 so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the community
- make clear that no form of bullying will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at the school to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in the school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting 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 targets, bystanders, witnesses, and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour.

When responding to bullying behaviour, the 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.

Brentwood Park 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.

AIMS:

The school aims to prevent, address, and respond to student bullying behaviour. The school recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying. These are also unacceptable at our school and are incidents, which will be managed in accordance with the school's Student Code of Conduct, and the following policies: Student Wellbeing and Engagement, Student Wellbeing and Discipline, Inclusion and Diversity.

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:

Bullying - 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.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving, or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging, or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality, or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- Cyberbullying – any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos, and/or audio.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group.

For further information about bullying, refer to: Bully Stoppers (education.vic.gov.au) and the Department's Bullying Prevention and Response policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

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 who will follow the Code of Conduct and this Bullying Prevention Policy, where the behaviour constitutes bullying.

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 of 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 exclude, cause distress, 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 and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. The school will use its Code of Conduct 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.

Discrimination is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic, for example race, religious belief, disability, or gender identity.

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our school and there may be serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Bullying Prevention

Brentwood Park has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging, and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness, and respect.

Bullying prevention 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 identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives from the Schools Mental Health Menu that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying and help us to build a positive and inclusive school climate, such as:

- *You Can Do It! (Achievement) Program*-, teaching students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Community Understanding and Safety and Training, Bully Stoppers
- eSafety Commissioner online and safety resources
- eSmart Schools Framework
- *Respectful Relationships Program* which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school
- *Peer Mediation Program* encourage 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.
- Koorie Engagement Support Officers
- *Learning and Growing Together* program, encouraging strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour

- 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.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal History, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- 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:

- 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 are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
- We encourage students to speak to their teacher or principal class officer. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any staff member.
- Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour, should contact Jenny Reid, assistant principal, or Jim Bell, principal on 9702 2022.

INVESTIGATIONS:

- When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
    1) inform an assistant principal or principal: and
    2) the details of the allegations will be recorded in the student's file
- The assistant principal or principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the assistant principal/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/carers 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 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 teachers, assistant principal and 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, the school 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 assistant principal/principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:
- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to DoE Student Support Service, to:
    - the target student or students

- the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
- 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.
- Facilitate 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.
- Prepare a 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges and /or suspension.
- Monitor and follow up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour and provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.
- Maintain up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Brentwood Park 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.
Jenny Reid, assistant principal is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

COMMUNICATION:

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- School Values
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Student Wellbeing and Discipline Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity 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
- Report racism or religious discrimination in schools
- Kids Helpline
- ReachOut Australia
- Lifeline
- Bullying No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub
- eSafety Commissioner

- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.
Data to inform this review will be collected through:

- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with school council

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL:

Policy last reviewed	3/9/2024
Consultation	Consultation with school council and approved by School Council
Approved by	James Bell, principal
Next scheduled review date	October 2028