

## BULLYING AND HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY 2022 - 2026



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the office staff.

### **Purpose:**

Morang South Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated. We are committed to providing a culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and 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 community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

Morang South Primary School has a commitment to making sure every member of our school community, regardless of their background or personal attributes, is treated with respect and dignity. This policy should be read alongside the following Department of Education and Training policies:

- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- For staff, the [Respectful Workplaces](#) policies (including Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination, [Sexual Harassment](#) and [Workplace Bullying](#)) as these whole of Department policies apply to all staff at Morang South Primary School.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Morang South Primary School community
- reinforce that at Morang South Primary School and within the school community all forms of bullying will not be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Morang South Primary School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our 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 victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Morang South Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Morang South Primary 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.

Morang South Primary 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.

### **Scope:**

This policy addresses how Morang South Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Morang South Primary School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *Student Code of Conduct* and *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion 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.

### **Policy:**

#### **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.*

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

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, homophobia, transphobia or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://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 and our school will follow our *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy* and/or this *Bullying and Harassment 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 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 nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Morang South Primary School will use its Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

**Discrimination** is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

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. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group.

Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy

### Harassment

Harassment can be defined as language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. A number of personal characteristics are protected by State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. These include: race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or activity, political belief or activity, age, intersex status, physical features, pregnancy, carer and parental status, breastfeeding, marital or relationship status, lawful sexual activity, employment activity, industrial activity, expunged homosexual conviction or personal association with anyone who is identified with reference to any protected attribute. Further definitions related to harassment and discrimination include:

**Direct discrimination:** unfavourable treatment because of a person's protected attribute.

**Indirect discrimination:** imposing an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that disadvantages a person or group of people with a protected attribute.

**Sexual harassment:** unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person which could reasonably be expected to make that other person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It may be physical, verbal, visual or written.

**Disability harassment:** an action taken in relation to the person's disability that is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress the person.

**Vilification:** conduct that incites hatred towards or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people on the basis of their race or religion.

**Victimisation:** subjecting a person or threatening to subject them to detrimental treatment because they (or their associate) has made an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected attribute (or asserted their rights under relevant policies or law).

Bullying, unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification and other forms of inappropriate behaviour targeting individuals or groups because of their personal attributes will not be tolerated at Morang South Primary School. We will take appropriate measures, consistent with our *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy and Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy* to respond to students or staff who demonstrate these behaviours at our school.

Students or staff who may have experienced or witnessed this type of behaviour are encouraged to speak up and to let their teachers, parents or carers, or senior leaders know about those behaviours to ensure that inappropriate behaviour can be addressed.

## **Bullying and Harassment Prevention:**

At Morang South Primary School, we have 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 and harassment behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying and harassment prevention at Morang South Primary 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 identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying and harassment and help us to build a positive and inclusive school climate.
- 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.

- We reinforce a common set of values, rights and responsibilities across the school.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- 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 aim to foster a safe, supportive environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- 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.
- Morang South operates as a Be You school implementing the associated wellbeing and mental health framework and is part of the Mental Health in Primary Schools Initiative (MHiPS).
- Morang South has been a lead school for the Respect Relationships initiative, which promotes and models respect, positive attitudes and behaviours. It teaches our children how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence.
- 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.
- 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 or harassed.
- The school Buddies program 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.
- We model restorative conversation and conflict resolution with our students as a non-aggressive and constructive means for solving conflict.
- We participate in significant days promoting inclusion and diversity such as NAIDOC week and Harmony Day.
- We recognise the importance of mental health awareness and promotion by participating in R U OK day.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously. Constructive strategies to deal with bullying and harassment will include: education; problem solving and social skill building; restorative practices, counselling and behaviour modification strategies. These approaches will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy*.

## **Incident Response:**

### **Reporting Concerns to Morang South Primary School**

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate strategies employed or consequences given. 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. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff at Morang South Primary School.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Morang South Primary School should contact the classroom teacher or the principal.

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 Morang South Primary School are timely and appropriate to the circumstances.

## **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations
2. inform the Assistant Principal or Principal

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 or principal may:

- request any records or details of allegations from school staff
- 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
- record details of allegations, incidents and investigation details on 'Chronicles' on Compass for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the assistant principal or 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 assistant principal or 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 Welfare Co-ordinator, Mental Health and Wellbeing Coordinator (MHWC), teachers, SSS staff, KESO, Assistant Principal/Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff, on-site psychology referral services etc.

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, Morang South 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 target student
- whether the students/s engaging in bullying behaviours have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour

- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The assistant principal or principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to counselling, SSS, Welfare support, MHWC support, external psychological service recommendations, paediatricians or medical services, 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 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 Meeting/or Behaviours Support Plan for affected students.
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the student/s who have engaged in bullying behaviours, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant DET policy.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and student/s 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/Buddy, providing access to social-skills or self-regulation groups, implementing strategies from the school's SEL program or developing an SEL-based Individual Learning Plan.
- 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 through the Morang South SEL program.

Morang South Primary School is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation and any responses to bullying behaviour.

Morang South 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.

### **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
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Included as a reference link in Compass bulletins related to policies

- Discussed in SEL learning where relevant and appropriate
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

### **Related Policies and Resources:**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies which can be located on the school website:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy
- Complaints and Grievances policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Child Safe Policy

For staff, please see the Department's [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy](#), [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and [Workplace Bullying Policy](#) which apply to all staff working at our school.

Other relevant Department policies and resources on the Department's Policy and Advisory Library are:

- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- [Students with Disability](#)
- [Koorie Education](#)
- [Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [Supports and Services](#)
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](#)

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed four-yearly or as required.

<b>Date Implemented</b>	27th Feb, 2019; 1st July, 2022
<b>Approved by</b>	Acting Principal
<b>Consultation</b>	School website, request for feedback from community - Annual Information to parents/carers Compass post (27/2/2023) ,Term 1 school newsletter - Principal's Report (6/4/2023)
<b>Date Reviewed</b>	29/7/2022
<b>Responsible for Review</b>	Acting Principal - Jane Brayshaw
<b>Next Review Date</b>	1/07/2026