



St Mary's Primary School Bullying Prevention (Including Cyberbullying) Procedures

Procedures

Bullying Prevention

St Mary's 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, respect and reflects Gospel values.

Bullying prevention at St Mary's 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 and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We ensure bullying behaviour is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and any instances of bullying are addressed with appropriate consequences.
- 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.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to speak up about harm to others and themselves
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- We participate in the Respectful Relationships program, which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school
- 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 and supports students to build positive peer to peer relationships.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of our school community and teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion
- The Peer Support Program and the 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.
- 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.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Child Safety and Student Wellbeing Policy* and our *Diversity and Equity Policy*.

All members of our school community must be aware of the possibility of bullying and take action to prevent bullying if it is reasonably foreseeable.

Responsibilities: The school

St Mary's will respond to all reported incidents of bullying, perceived or actual, sensitively, fairly and promptly by:

- Using an Anti-Bullying Response Pathway when we become aware of incidents. The Pathway assists with a regulated and thorough response.
- Implementing an Anti-Bullying Action Plan as part of the Response Pathway.
- Keeping a written record of any bullying investigation.
- Encouraging students, staff, parents and carers to report bullying and cyber-bullying to the class teacher or directly to the principal
- Investigating complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved
- Ensuring that complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying are handled in a way that is sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and that recognises the diverse circumstances of students
- Nominating a person or staff to co-ordinate strategies for the resolution of specific bullying incidents reported in this school
- Notifying parents/guardians/carers of bullying incidents involving their children and allowing them to have input into decisions that affect their children, where this is appropriate
- Notifying the relevant Education Consultant of any serious incident
- Contacting the Police/Police Youth Liaison Officer if the bullying situation has involved violence, threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct
- Maintaining records of bullying incidents and related interventions in accordance with relevant recordkeeping requirements (such as the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards)
- Conducting Student Safety Audits at least once a year to promote safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments
- Promoting student voice and empowerment in classrooms and through the use of Student Representative Council (SRC) to discuss matters associated with bullying, cyber bullying, safety and wellbeing
- Reviewing and evaluating the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively
- Engaging with parents/guardians/carers to review and evaluate the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively.

Responsibilities: Staff

Staff at St Mary's aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each student by:

- Implementing the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures by responding promptly and appropriately to reported incidents of bullying, in a way that is sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and circumstances of students
- Supporting the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour
- Engaging in professional learning to support appropriate anti-bullying responses which could include cyber safety, restorative justice practices, mediation and developing social skills in

students. Such opportunities are made available to staff on the same basis as other professional learning.

- Supporting all aspects of related school policies
- Remaining vigilant in how students are using technology through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour
- Embedding critical thinking, values clarification, respectful relationships and developing empathy into our teaching practice
- Responding to bullying and cyber-bullying concerns by providing age-appropriate guidance and boundaries so that students can learn to self-regulate.

Responsibilities: Students

Students at St Mary's have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. The staff at St Mary's will encourage and support students to:

- follow the anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures
- immediately seek help from a trusted adult if they are aware of or involved in a bullying or cyber-bullying incident
- seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident
- understand that any social networking site that identifies the school by name or image or implication is part of the school environment
- in age-appropriate circumstances the student should keep evidence of alleged bullying and produce it on request (for example phone text messages).
- Agree and adhere to St Mary's Acceptable Use and Cyber Safety Agreement

Responsibilities: Parents/Caregivers/Carers

Parents/guardians/carers at St Mary's have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. St Mary's will work in partnership with parents/guardians/carers in responding to incidents of bullying. Staff at St Mary's will:

- Remind parents/guardians/carers about the need to reinforce the school messages in the proper use of technology to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens
- Encourage parents/guardians/carers to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider) and, as relevant, to the school
- Ask parents/guardians/carers to contact the school immediately through the class teacher or directly through the principal if they know of any bullying incident
- Expect that parents/guardians/carers will model behaviour that is indicative of Gospel values and that reflect the school's Vision and Mission statement. Thus parents/guardians/carers are required to act respectfully to all members of the school community at all times
- Encourage parents/guardians/carers to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider). When such bullying concerns the wellbeing of their own child, parents/guardians/carers are to contact the principal.
- Encourage parents/guardians/carers to be involved in decisions regarding incidents of bullying that affect their child, where this is appropriate.
- Agree to adhere to St Mary's Acceptable Use and Cyber Safety Agreement
- Agree and adhere to the St Mary's Code of Conduct – Expectations of Parent/Carer's

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to St Mary's Primary 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 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 St Mary's are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, school counsellor.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed, bullying behaviour at St Mary's should contact the Schools Wellbeing Leader, the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in [insert relevant location i.e., incident register, student file]; and
2. Inform the Student Wellbeing Leader, Deputy Principal and Principal

The Deputy Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Deputy Principal will consult with the Principal in all matters and subsequently may:

- Speak to the 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 directly involved
- Take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- Obtain written statements from any of the above.

All communications with the Deputy 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.\[DET Link\]](#)

All documentation relating to the bullying incident to be retained in accordance with the DOBCEL Recordkeeping Policy.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Deputy 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, relevant teachers, the Principal, DOBCEL Education Consultants, DOBCEL Student Services 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, St Mary's will consider:

- the age, maturity, and the 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 demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour

After consultation, the Principal or delegated leader may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support to the target student or students, including referral to [insert i.e., the Student Wellbeing Team, external provider]
- Offer wellbeing support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to [insert i.e., the Student Wellbeing Team, external provider]
- Offer wellbeing support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to [insert i.e., the Student Wellbeing Team, external provider]
- 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 involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s)
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- 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 [insert specific examples, i.e., connect affected students with an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, etc.]
- 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 [insert details]
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Positive Behaviours Policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant policy.

St Mary's 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 and Deputy Principal are 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:

- 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 in transition and enrolment packs
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

Approving authority	DOBCEL Board
Approval Date	December 2025
Review Date	December 2028