**Help for non-English speakers**

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

**Purpose**

Spring Parks Primary School (SPPS) 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 Spring Parks Primary School community
* make clear that no form of bullying at Spring Parks will be tolerated
* outline the strategies and programs in place at Spring Parks 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 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 Spring Parks.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Spring Parks 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 (Restorative Practices).

Spring Parks 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 Spring Parks Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Spring Parks 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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

## **Policy**

### **Definitions**

**Bullying**

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for the use by all Australian school:

*Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior 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 behavior is repeated, or has 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 relationship
* It is ongoing and repeated, and
* 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.

**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 and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

*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. 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 behavior. Spring Parks Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

*Harassment* is the language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Spring Parks Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behavior. Spring Parks Primary will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behavior, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behavior will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

## **Bullying Prevention**

Spring Parks Primary 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 SPPS is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect 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 (The Resilience Project).
* 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 (school events and regular parent/carer group opportunities).
* Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour (Rights and Responsibilities).
* A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
* 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.
* The Buddy programs and cross-age and cross-campus activities 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 be “upstanders” and to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
* We are in a partnership with The Resilience Project – a whole school program that seeks to build empathy and kindness in all school community members.
* We utilise Restorative Practices to ensure that relationships are mended and that a positive way forward is achieved for all people involved in incidents of bullying or other conflicts.

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

## **Incident Response**

### **Reporting concerns to Spring Parks 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 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 Spring Parks are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to our Student Wellbeing Support Officer, or our Principal or Assistant Principal. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, Education Support staff or Administration staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Spring Parks should contact the Student Wellbeing Support Officer, the Principal or Assistant Principal through the main office of the school.

### **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations in appropriate case notes; and
2. inform the Principal, Assistant Principal or Student Wellbeing Support Officer (Wellbeing Team)

The Wellbeing Team (or individual members) are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the relevant Wellbeing Team member 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 Wellbeing Team member 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.](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advicesheetbrodieslaw.aspx)

### **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When the Wellbeing Team member 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 other Wellbeing Team members, teachers, SSS, Department of Education and Training specialist staff (if appropriate), 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, Spring Parks 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 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 students engaging in bullying behavior demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
* the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Wellbeing Team member 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 Support Officer, SSS or visiting psychologists.
* Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Support Officer, SSS staff or visiting psychologists.
* Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Support Officer, SSS staff or visiting psychologists.
* 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 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.
* Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students – including parents and carers of victims and/or perpetrators if appropriate.
* Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including, but not limited to Resilience Project, Social skills groups, or anger management counselling.
* With the support of classroom teachers and ES staff, 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 for example, Circle Time utilised to teach strategies to the class.
* Implement disciplinary consequences for students engaging in bullying behaviour, 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.

Spring Parks 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.

The Wellbeing Team is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

## **communication**

* Available publicly on our school’s website
* Included in staff induction processes
* Discussed at staff forums as required
* Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

## **Further information and resources**

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

* Statement of Values and School Philosophy
* Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
* Parent Complaints Policy
* Duty of Care 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](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)
* [Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)
* [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)
* [Bullying. No way!](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)

## **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed every 2-3 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 will be collected through:

* discussion with students
* Attitudes to School Survey
* Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student representative groups, parents groups and school council.

## **policy Review and approval**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Consultation | March 7th 2022 - Consultation with student focus groups  April 6th 2022 – Consultation with staff  May 16th 2022 – Draft discussed at school council | | |
| Approved By | **Julie Fisher, Principal** | | |
| Approval Authority  (Signature & Date) |  | | |
| Date Reviewed | June 2022 | Next Review | June 2024 |
| Responsible for Review | **Trish Harry, Assistant Principal** | | |