

Bullying Prevention and Response Policy



PURPOSE

Kew East Primary School (KEPS) is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

POLICY GUIDELINES

This policy will:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the KEPS community;
- make clear that no form of bullying at KEPS will be tolerated;
- outline the strategies and programs in place at KEPS 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 targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour); and
- seek parental support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at KEPS.
- The scope of this policy addresses how KEPS aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. KEPS 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* and *Inclusion and Diversity policy*.
- This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

When responding to bullying behaviour, KEPS aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive;
- find a constructive solution for everyone;
- stop the bullying from happening again; and
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

KEPS 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

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.
- 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; and
 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 device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

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 the Student Engagement and Wellbeing 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 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. KEPS will use its Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy 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. 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 KEPS and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. KEPS will use its Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention and Response Policy.

Further Information and Resources

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Engagement and Wellbeing 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](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Bullying Prevention

- KEPS has a number of 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 KEPS 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;
 - 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 promote positive behaviour;
 - in the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum (Student Wellbeing Scope and Sequence) teaches students what constitutes bullying (including cyberbullying) and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving;
 - 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 peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed;
 - Classrooms run regular meetings and/or have 'worry boxes' for students to raise concerns about what they have experienced and/or what they have observed and how to address/overcome this;
 - our Year 4 to 6 students undertake the annual Student Attitudes to School survey and all students partake in student surveys which enable them to share their experiences with bullying, including whether they feel that teachers deal fairly with bullying. Follow-up small group or one-to-one forums are conducted with students to address evident issues to make our classrooms and playgrounds more safe and supportive for all students;
 - we participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence and eSmart Week; and
 - students sign an ICT Agreement each year to maintain the appropriate use of digital devices, that is, in a safe manner for themselves and others.
- For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Kew East 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 KEPS 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 the Year Level Leader or the Student Wellbeing Leader.
- Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at KEPS should contact the school via phone or email.

Investigations

- When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
 1. record the details of the allegations; and
 2. inform Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and Principal.
- The student's classroom teacher, Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and/or Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner.
- To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the staff members listed above 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 parents of the students involved;
 - speak to the teachers of the students involved;
 - take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference; and
 - obtain written statements from all or any of the above.
- All communications with the classroom teacher, Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and/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 classroom teacher, Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal and/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 SSS.
- 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, KEPS 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 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; and
 - the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

- KEPS may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:
 - 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.
 - Offer counselling support to the target student/s, the students engaging in bullying behaviour and witnesses and/or friends of the target student. The counselling support may be given by the classroom teacher, Year Level Leader or Student Wellbeing Coordinator. If further expertise is required or requested by the student or parent/carer, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal will suggest external agencies to contact.
 - 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.
 - 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, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- KEPS 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 classroom teacher and Student Wellbeing Leader are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.
- Data will be collected annually to ascertain the effectiveness of strategies implemented in this policy and include:
 - discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers;
 - regular student bullying surveys, including the Attitudes to School Survey; and
 - consideration to information collected, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.
- Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with staff and school council.

EVALUATION

- This policy will be reviewed every 4 years, or earlier as required to reflect any new research or school data relating to bullying.

Area: Student Wellbeing

Reviewed: May 2021

Next Review: May 2025