BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Document Approval

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Version Control

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Note

Policies are reviewed and updated on an annual basis or as required.

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Related Legislation and Policy

1. Legislation

This policy aligns with the following legislation.

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
- The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework
- Children and Community Services Act 2004
- Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2008
- School Education Act 1999
- National Safe School's Framework
- Criminal Code 1913 (WA)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Discrimination Act: Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- State Records Act 2000 (WA)

2. Related Policies/Guidelines/Supporting Documents

This policy links to the following school policies and guidelines.

- Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Counselling Policy
- Welfare Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Emergency Management Plan
- Complaints and Disputes Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Code of Conduct – Student, Staff, and Parent
- Record Keeping and Retention Policy

Overview

1. Policy Statement

The Bullying and Harassment Policy outlines how the school provides a safe, educational environment preventing bullying and harassment by:

- Building positive, respectful relationships in the school community.
- Providing bullying education and resources to students, staff, and parents/guardians.
- Communicating behaviour expectations and standards to everyone in the school community.
- Responding appropriately to any form of bullying and harassment.
- Applying the policy to all aspects of the school.

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Sowilo Community High School – School Council.

2. Bullying and Harassment

We provide an educational environment that promotes academic achievement and personal growth. The school and staff understand the duty of care they owe to the students to reduce the risk of harm, including harm from bullying and harassment. We focus on prevention through education as a school teaching values and behaviours that maintain our community's integrity.

This includes:

- No acceptance of any form of bullying or harassment.
- Educating students, staff, and parents on bullying and harassment.
- Communicating the standards of behaviour expected by the school.
- Having a straightforward process to follow to report bullying and harassment.
- Promoting tolerance in the school community. Each person brings their unique qualities to our school. We accept these differences and treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Having a clear and well-defined process to respond to any concerns or reports of bullying and harassment.
- Investigating all concerns and reports and providing support to student/s involved.

3. Policy Communication

This policy is:

- Available for download on our school website.
- Sent to parents/guardians on request.
- Provided to new staff at the start of their employment.
- Stored in soft copy on our school drive.
- Stored as a hard copy with our administration team.

At Sowilo Community High School, all staff and members of the School Council must understand the policy’s requirements and their responsibilities.

Definitions

The following are definitions of terms used throughout the document:

Term	Definition
Bullying	Bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour or deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical, or social behaviour intended to cause physical, social, or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.
Emotional Bullying	• Being excluded from group conversations and activities (ganging-up). • Making up or spreading rumours to facilitate dislike for someone. • Being ignored repeatedly. • Purposeful misleading or being lied to. • Making stories up to get others into trouble.
Physical Bullying	• Hitting, kicking, pushing, bumping, shoving, scratching, slapping, biting, punching or tripping someone repeatedly. • Unwanted physical or sexual touching, • Throwing objects with the intent to injure or annoy.
Verbal Bullying	• Constant teasing sarcastically and offensively. • Name-calling and offensive nicknames. • Swearing to unsettle or upset others. • Homophobic comments to cause distress. • Racist or sexist comments.
Psychological Bullying	• Stalking, threats, or implied threats. • Manipulation – pressuring others to do things they do not want to do. • Intimidation – forcing students to do demeaning or embarrassing acts. • Extortion – forcing someone to give you money or material items.
Property Abuse	• Stealing money repeatedly. • Interfering with someone's belongings. • Damaging other personal items. • Repeatedly hiding someone's possessions.
Cyber Bullying	Online bullying (also referred to as cyberbullying) can be conducted in many ways, using different media, including: • The sending of abusive texts or emails. • Taking and sharing unflattering or private images, including naked or sexual photos.

Term	Definition
	• Posting unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites. • Excluding individuals from various forms of communication, including online chats. • Assuming the victim's identity online and representing them negatively or in a manner that may damage their relationship with others. • Repeatedly, and for no strategic reason, attacking players in online gaming.
Bystander/Witness	A bystander includes a person who observes someone bullying or harassing another person.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities are referenced in this document:

1. School Council

The School Council must:

- Make sure that they understand the requirements of the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Support the implementation of the Bullying and Harassment Policy in the school.
- Provide subject matter expertise and guidance.
- Promote an inclusive educational environment where all school community members are accepted and treated with dignity and respect.

2. School Coordinator/Principal

The School Coordinator/Principal must:

- Promote an inclusive educational environment where members of the school community treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Be a positive role model by demonstrating expected standards and behaviours.
- Implement the Bullying and Harassment Policy throughout the school.
- Ensure all students, staff, and parents/guardians are aware of the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Make sure all staff understand the Bullying and Harassment Policy and their responsibilities.
- Organise professional development training for staff.
- Make sure that bullying and harassment, including cyberbullying, remain part of the Protective Behaviours curriculum.
- Respond effectively to all instances of bullying and harassment in the school.

3. Staff

All staff must:

- Promote an inclusive educational environment.
- Be a positive role model for students by demonstrating expected standards and behaviours.
- Support the implementation of the Bullying and Harassment Policy in the school.
- Understand the requirements of the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Attend professional development training as required.
- Report any incidents of bullying and harassment in the school community.
- Support students to develop an awareness of how their behaviours can negatively impact or harm others.

4. Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians must:

- Understand and support the requirements of the Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Be a positive role model by demonstrating expected standards of behaviour.
- Report any incidents of bullying and harassment to the School Coordinator/Principal.

- Work with their child to develop an awareness of how their behaviours can negatively impact or harm others.

Our Approach to Bullying and Harassment

At Sowilo Community High School, we are committed to providing an educational environment where students feel safe when they come to school. The school does not tolerate any form of bullying, harassment, or violence.

1. Understanding Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is an **ongoing** and **deliberate misuse of power** in relationships through **repeated verbal, physical, or social behaviour** that intends to cause physical, social, or psychological harm.

It can involve an **individual or a group** misusing their power over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can occur **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. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have **immediate, medium, and long-term effects** on anyone involved, including bystanders.

2. Types of bullying

There are three types of bullying behaviour:

- **Verbal** bullying includes name-calling or insulting someone about physical characteristics such as weight or height or other attributes, including race, sexuality, culture, or religion.
- **Physical** bullying includes hitting or otherwise hurting someone, shoving or intimidating another person, or damaging or stealing their belongings.
- **Social** bullying includes consistently excluding another person or sharing information or images that will harm the other person.

Note

Verbal, physical, and social bullying can occur in person or online, directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly.

About	Description
Setting – in person and online	• Bullying can happen in person or online. • Online bullying is also known as cyberbullying. • Verbal, physical, and social bullying can happen in person or online. • Online settings create additional concern as the audience can sometimes be very large.
Means – direct and indirect	• **Direct bullying** occurs between the people involved (i.e., passing on insults or spreading rumours).

About	Description
	• **Indirect bullying** mostly inflicts harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships, and self-esteem.
Visibility – overt and covert	**Overt bullying** involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or observable verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting. **Covert bullying** can be almost impossible for people outside the interpersonal interaction to identify. Covert bullying can include repeatedly using hand gestures and weird or threatening looks. It also includes whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where they can sit and who they talk with. Covert social or verbal bullying can be subtle and sometimes denied by a person who claims they were joking or 'just having fun.'
Harm – physical and psychological	Bullying has the potential to cause harm. Physical harm is well recognised. Psychological harm includes effects on a person's mental health, well-being, socialisation capacity, reputational damage, and fear.
Context – home, work, and school	Bullying can happen to anyone, anywhere – school, work, or home.

3. Recognising the effects of bullying

A student who is being bullied or is bullying others will respond and act differently. A student's behaviours and moods can also change for a variety of reasons. We understand that the majority of bullying behaviour occurs out of sight of adults.

Staff are well placed to observe behaviour changes in students. We ask that all observed behaviour changes are noted and raised in staff meetings or directed to their reporting manager or School Coordinator/Principal. These may be a sign of bullying behaviour or something else.

Who/what	Signs
Teacher	• Becomes aggressive or unreasonable. • Changes in attendance or engagement. Higher levels of absenteeism. • Starts getting into fights. • Personality changes – withdrawn, sad, angry, anxious. • Unexpected changes in friendship groups.

Who/what	Signs
	• A decline in schoolwork or standards of school work. • Refusing to talk about what is wrong. • Suicidal thoughts. Other less obvious signs may include: • Exclusion from friendship groups at school or often alone. • A frequent target of teasing at school. • The student becomes fearful or reluctant to speak up in class.
Parent	• Student reluctance to attend school. • Changes in sleeping, eating patterns. • Changes in behaviour or mood swings. • Unexplained injuries – bruises, cuts, scratches. • A decline in physical health – often comes home hungry. • Missing or damaged belongings or clothes.

4. Our approach

To create an educational environment that is positive, safe, and secure, we implement the following strategies:

Strategy	Description/examples
Whole-school strategies	• Building positive community relationships among teachers and students. • Effective supervision. • Counselling support for students. • Protective behaviours curriculum – education on bullying and harassment. • Code of Conduct and Sowilo Rules. • Whole school meetings where students and staff can voice their opinions respectfully. • Clear communication on standards of behaviour. • Professional development for staff. • Responding calm and consistently in the event of an incident occurring with a clearly defined process.
Preventative Information	• Building positive teacher-student relationships. • Teach students about school values and positive behaviour. • Integration of social-emotional learning across all levels of the program. • Proactive support and teaching of practical strategies for managing bullying behaviour. • Providing resources to staff, students and parents.

Strategy	Description/examples
	• A multifaceted approach to education and support. • Preparing staff and students with adequate response and resilience.
Community	• Communicating expectations of standards and behaviours. • Following up and reporting concerns. • Using support services/agencies to provide support to students.

5. Responding to a bullying incident at school?

When responding to bullying and harassment in the school, we prioritise:

- The safety and security of the student/s involved.
- Being fair and consistent and finding a positive solution for everyone involved.
- Repairing relationships, educating everyone involved, and preventing a re-occurrence.

When an incident occurs, the school focuses on responding calmly and consistently, focusing on positive education and managing the situation.

The process includes:

- Interviewing the student to determine what has happened.
- Recording the details on an incident management form.
- The Leadership/Welfare Team will determine the most appropriate course of action, including the level of intervention and support required.
- If the problem involves several incidents or other individuals, the school will investigate further and mediate between those involved.
- The school uses a **Restorative Practice** process to develop empathy and resilience while providing students with better ways to deal with the problem.

We ask parents/guardians to support the school by encouraging children to work positively with their class and school peers and encouraging their children to report bullying incidents to a staff member or administrator.

Note

Sowilo Community High School forbids using any forms of child abuse, corporal punishment, or any other degrading punishment.

6. Intervention, Consequences and Restorative Practices

The primary aim of the school's response to bullying and harassment is to restore a positive learning environment for all students.

The school will always prioritise the most appropriate method for the situation and the students to change behaviours, repair relationships, and restore the community. When deciding on the course of action to take, we consider the following:

- The students involved.

- The severity and frequency of the bullying and the impact it has had on the individual/s involved.
- The type of bullying involved.
- Has the bullying behaviour been displayed before?
- How many students were involved?
- Has the student/s involved shown remorse or insight?
- Was there a motive for the behaviour?
- Does the students/student understand the Code of Conduct and the Sowilo Rules?

We consider implementing the following:

- Counselling and support for all students involved.
- Provide mentoring opportunities for students involved.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The aim is to repair damaged relationships by bringing about a sense of remorse from someone who has bullied someone and forgiveness from the bullied student/s.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all the students involved. The aim is to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour while addressing underlying reasons for conflict or grievances with others.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, including removing privileges, suspension, or expulsion consistent with the Behaviour Management, Welfare, and Counselling Policy. Behaviour monitoring and follow up actions.
- Facilitate a Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Implement a Safety Management Plan for identified students.

Note

Records will be kept and maintained according to our Record Keeping and Reporting Policies. Refer to the Behaviour Management Policy for more information.

7. Communication and Confidentiality

Sometimes, parents/guardians and students may not always see these programs or activities being implemented for safety, confidentiality, and privacy reasons.

8. Professional Development

Staff complete professional development training to understand bullying and harassment and the effect it can have on student/s. The training aims to help staff gain the knowledge and skills to engage with students and safely address bullying and harassment issues.

9. Evaluation

We review this policy annually or when required to make sure it remains up to date. When reviewing this policy, we consider the following:

- Feedback from students, parents/guardians, and staff.
- Information from Professional Development workshops.
- Changes in legislation.
- Surveys conducted throughout the year.

- Incident reports
- School reporting data
- Risk Assessments

10. For more Information

The following websites and resources provide useful information on bullying and harassment:

- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Headspace
- Bullying. No way!
- Young People - Beyond Blue
- Be you
- PATHS
- Cyberbullying resources
- ThinkUKnow