



ELTHAM HIGH SCHOOL

POLICY *Bullying Prevention*

INTRODUCTION

The prevention of bullying in a school environment involves the development and maintenance of a culture, which promotes concern and sensitivity for the individual and a sense of belonging for students, staff and parents.

Eltham High School develops, maintains and sustains rigorous and effective bullying prevention practices which aim to maximise the benefits of social, emotional and learning interactions between members of the school community to support student learning and the effective operation of the school, while minimising and managing any risks.

PHILOSOPHY

At Eltham High School each person feels safe to be themselves and challenged to think critically, to work in teams, show leadership and achieve success along many pathways.

Eltham High School maintains a positive and caring environment, which does not foster bullying or violence, so there is a high degree of harmony, and modelling of conflict resolution. The school provides effective leadership which ensures effective whole school behaviour-management systems, based on Restorative practice. There is a whole school culture of building positive relationships between peers, between staff and students and with community members. The school runs programs to raise awareness of bullying, and there are specific preventative strategies and programs to prevent harassment or victimisation of students.

Teachers act as appropriate role models, and are vigilant in identifying and dealing with bullying. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for the well-being of others, to be caring, positive and supportive of one another, and to use the Student Support resources of the school to work through relationship difficulties. The well-being of students is a school priority, and the school is divided into three sub-schools, with level coordinators who monitor the well-being of students.

The school has the dual responsibility to maximise the benefits of social interactions, while at the same time to minimise and manage the risks. In so doing the school thus acknowledges the need to have in place rigorous and effective school bullying prevention practices which are directed and guided by this Bullying Prevention Policy.

POLICY STATEMENT

The school's bullying prevention practices will develop and maintain effective bullying prevention strategies and management processes to provide a safe school environment for students. Essential to this is education for students and other members of the school community about safe and responsible social and learning interactions.

In order to achieve the above goals the school will:

- Sustain a positive culture through appropriate support structures.
- Provide relevant education about bullying prevention practices for the school community.
- Include bullying prevention education in the design and delivery of the curriculum.
- Implement the necessary disciplinary responses appropriate to breaches of the bullying prevention policy.
- Operate this policy in conjunction with the Student Engagement Policy and other relevant school policies.
- Continue to review, evaluate and continually improve strategies that align with this policy.

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY

Approaches taken by the school community

1. Creating, Maintaining and Monitoring a Culture of Bullying Prevention

The school's focus is the support of students, and the development of a trusting environment where issues of bullying can be identified, discussed and addressed. All students are made aware of the importance of reporting bullying to an adult, a teacher they trust, a coordinator, parent or mentor, who will refer the matter as appropriate. The school provides a comprehensive and well-resourced sub-school structure and a Student Services Team to support students. Principal class, Level Coordinators, the Student Services team and staff are trained to deal with incidents of bullying.

Restorative practices are implemented in the school. This puts repairing harm to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment. Key skills that are embedded within restorative practices include: active listening, facilitating dialogue, restorative questioning, problem solving, expressing emotions and empowering others to take ownership of problems.

The school accompanies its policies and practices with well-planned curriculum that make safe and supportive environments and relationships part of students' formal learning. The year seven Transition program includes bullying prevention information, including an annual presentations, with follow up activities in the Inquiry and English curriculum. The year seven to ten curriculum incorporates information on, and awareness of bullying in a range of subjects, including English and Health.

Teaching and support staff receive professional learning regarding bullying, and have the opportunity to be involved in review of the Bullying Prevention Policy. All staff are required to be trained in Protecting Children - Mandatory Reporting and other Obligations. The Induction Program for new staff outlines strategies for identifying and protocols for dealing with bullying.

The Additional Needs Coordinator provides information to staff and classes of students on the Disability and Impairment (D&I) program (with the permission of the parents of the D&I student) on facts about D&I, impacts on individuals and groups, strategies for reporting harassment, for building resilience and for coping with issues, for both the D&I student, and other students.

2. What is Bullying?

Clarifying the nature of the alleged behaviour is essential.

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

There are some specific types of bullying behavior:

- Verbal or written abuse - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
- Violence - including threats of violence
- Sexual harassment - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation
- Homophobia and other hostile behavior towards students relating to gender and sexuality
- Discrimination including racial discrimination - treating people differently because of their identity
- Cyberbullying - either online or via mobile phone.

Racist comments cannot and must not be accepted as terms of endearment amongst friends.

Racist comments are racist, irrespective of who makes them or their intent.

Such comments must always be called out so that a consistent and clear message is communicated about their demeaning and offensive nature.

There are also some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying:

- Mutual conflict - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying.
- Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

3. Prevention and Early Intervention

The school has clearly documented processes for early identification, including use of student and teacher data and school records, to strengthen its capacity to plan effective interventions and provide support to students and families. Surveys of students are undertaken at times, which include information on the nature and spread of bullying in the school. The annual Students Attitudes to School Survey provides additional data to this.

Effective processes for the early identification of students and families who need, or could benefit from additional support. Processes include:

- Identification and central collection of teacher observations, records and recommendations as a basis for identifying 'at-risk' students and families.
- Referral to appropriate agencies where relevant.

Early intervention may be provided by:

- Identifying proactive strategies with students who engage in antisocial behaviour or whose wellbeing is at risk
- Providing opportunities for additional skill development
- Helping a student to establish positive peer relationships
- Provision of parenting sessions and support
- Support in the form of peer mentoring from older students (and training for this purpose).
- Involvement of Student Services team and/ or partnering with other specialist agencies or professionals to ensure early intervention support is made available.

The Student Services team take a proactive approach to the provision of preventative programs to support identified needs; including delivery of programs such as the 'My Friends' program and the training of Peer Mentors.

4. When a report of bullying is made to the school

The school communicates to students, staff and parents expectations that all instances of behaviour which is deemed to be bullying should be reported.

All reports will be investigated and recorded, and reported on to the parties involved.

- Concerns about bullying identified by teachers, parents or students can be reported to any staff member. There are clearly communicated procedures for staff to follow when they become aware of possible incidents. Monitoring is in place to ensure that these procedures are applied consistently, sensitively and confidentially.

- Referrals will then be made to the Year Level Co-ordinators of the appropriate level, who will usually manage individual cases in consultation with the Sub-School Leader, Student Services Leader and Assistant Principal (School Community Wellbeing and Support).
- Ongoing monitoring of the students and the situation will take place, with reporting of this going to staff and parents as appropriate.
- Reporting of re-offending means the student will be subject to further serious consequences.
- Reporting to the police of any incidents of bullying that involve criminal behaviour will occur.
- Reporting of allegations of bullying involving members of staff will be referred to a Principal Class officer.

Helpful advice and support to manage and respond to serious incidents affecting students is available on the DEECD website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachrespond.aspx>.

5. **Responding to Bullying Behaviour**

The management of allegations of bullying will vary, depending on the genesis and nature of the bullying. Students in all cases will be informed that bullying is extremely serious and unacceptable form of behaviour.

The school considers and selects the most appropriate approach for managing bullying situations. Restorative practices may be used to respond to incidents of bullying and unacceptable behaviour in order to repair harm to relationships. A central restorative practice is the conduct of restorative conferences amongst all parties involved in incidents of bullying in order to achieve reconciliation.

An investigation will be conducted by the school, coordinated by a designated level coordinator or principal class officer. The investigation gathers and makes a record of the facts related to the report or incident from all parties involved. The coordinating staff member arrives through a collaborative process of a review of interviews and facts gathered, at a series of recommended actions arising from the investigation. They organise the implementation of consequences, and facilitate the feedback to relevant parties and manage the closure processes.

- **Behavioural Agreements.** The student who has bullied meets with the appropriate staff member to establish behavioural agreements that outlines a plan of positive action that helps student move towards acceptable and responsible behaviour, and implements appropriate consequences, which may include apology, monitoring, internal or external suspension, mediation, or the placement of student into another class to prevent ongoing academic and social problems.
- **Mediation / Problem-Solving Meetings.** Problem-solving meetings are held with the target of bullying, as well as the student who has bullied, to provide support, the opportunity for a facilitated apology, and to develop empathy, resilience and conflict resolution skills for both parties.
- **Parent Conferencing.** Where the instance of bullying is severe, the staff member may elect to conduct more in-depth sessions with parents covering different issues (e.g. parent-child relationship) and topics (e.g. discipline or resilience strategies or counselling).
- **Social and Emotional Education.** Student Support Group (SSG) meetings may be held to support the student who has been bullied as well as the student who has exhibited bullying behaviour. Other supports in this area may be: pairing of students with senior students for mentoring and support; support groups of students in the class for students with disabilities; development of group activities to alter the social dynamics of particular class groups.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

6. **Closure Strategies**

Closure strategies will take place that may include:

- Mediation or other restorative practices
- Feedback to staff, students and parents regarding the actions, consequences and supports arising from the investigation.

7. Communication

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

Available publicly on our school's website – www.elthamhs.vic.edu.au

- Included in our staff handbook
- Discussed at staff meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/forums
- Made available in hard copy from the school upon request.

BASIS OF DISCRETION

The School Council has responsibility for the establishment, evaluation and review of school policies. The School Principal has the responsibility to ensure that school policies are implemented effectively.

Minor changes to the policy (changes that will not affect the spirit of the policy) may be made at the discretion of the Principal.

The Policy Review and Evaluation process will recommend any major changes to the policy to School Council.

RELATED POLICIES

Student Engagement Policy

Student Code of Conduct

Safe Connections Policy

Child Protection Reporting

Child Safe

Bully Stoppers

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>

REVIEW

This policy should be reviewed every 3 years.

Data will be regularly reviewed to ensure strategies for implementing the policy are effective.

Date Endorsed: 15/06/22

Executive Officer

Eltham High School Council

Consultation Process and working Party Information:

This policy was written by:

Darren Squires

Consultation has taken place with the relevant group(s) in the following list:

Group	Consultation ✓
School Operations Committee	
Staff (selected based on role)	
Students (randomly selected group)	
Parents (randomly selected group)	
Members of the Community	
Other (where relevant please specify)	
Planning and Policy Review Team of Council (Mandatory)	✓
School Council (Mandatory)	✓

PROCESS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW

The Policy is developed or reviewed by the Policy Writer or Policy Writing Team using the agreed "Policy Template"

The policy is presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Relevant groups are consulted in relation to the policy by the Policy Writer / Policy Writing Team

Feedback is addresses by the Policy Writer /Policy Writing Team

The policy is re-presented to the Planning and Policy Review Team

Approved

The policy is presented to the School Council for endorsement

The policy is endorsed by the School Council

Further Clarification

Additional Feedback

Re-presented

