Introduction

Wodonga Federation of Government Schools (The Federation) and its member schools: Wodonga Primary School, Wodonga South Primary School, Wodonga West Primary School, Melrose Primary School, Baranduda Primary School, Wodonga Middle Years College, Wodonga Senior Secondary College and Belvoir Special School are committed to providing a safe and caring environment where everyone can learn or teach in a safe and secure environment. The Federation and its member schools believe that everyone has the right to feel valued and respected in a positive culture where bullying is not accepted.

This policy is to read in conjunction with each school's Student Engagement Policy and the Education and Training Reform Act 2006.

Purpose

1. To promote and support safe and respectful learning environments where bullying is not tolerated

2. Reinforce within the school communities what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.

3. Everyone within the school communities to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to have a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.

4. To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators.

5. To seek parental and peer-group support and cooperation at all times.

Policy

Definitions

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status and other reasons.

The following table summarises the different categories of bullying:

Category	Includes
Physical	Persistent pushing, hitting, bumping, kicking, obstructing, confining, practical jokes, stealing, damaging or interfering with personal property.
Verbal	Persistent threats of violence, name-calling, teasing, picking on, mocking, taunting, making putdown comments, belittling, insulting, constant criticism, sexual comments of a demeaning nature, cultural and religious slurs, shouting at and swearing at.
Indirect	This is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes: • Lying and spreading rumours • Playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate • Mimicking • Encouraging others to socially exclude someone • Damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.
Cyber bullying	Direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces. Cyber bullying can be perpetrated at any time of the day of the week. Under regulations 40 and 41 of the Education Regulation 1997, principals can suspend or exclude a student who acts in a manner that threatens the safety or wellbeing of a student or member of staff, or another person associated with the school. These regulations do not preclude an event that occurs outside of school hours or off site.
Written	Cyber bullying: Episodes of writing abusive emails, SMS, creation of sites with a deleterious impact on individual or organisation, creating a demeaning alias to target individual, social networking site or notes.
Social Psychological	Persistent episodes of excluding from activities, ignoring, threatening looks, "keeping-off", threatening and aggressive staring.
Racism, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Orientation	Wodonga Federation of Government Schools acknowledges that racism, sexual harassment and harassment due to a person's sexual orientation are examples of bullying behaviour that warrant special mention. They may take the form of any of the types of bullying behaviour described above.

Bullying is not.......
Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.
- Mutual conflict: involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. 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. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should by ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviour.

Procedures
The Federation has a four-phase approach to Anti-Bullying – Primary Prevention, Education, Intervention and Post Incident Review

1. Primary Prevention – Community education
- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and the strategies that counter-act them.
- Community awareness about the seriousness of bullying, its impact on those being bullied, how bullying occurs, consequences of bullying and the school's programs and response.
- The delivery of the Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships curriculum and other programs like SafeSchools, Bully Stoppers and eSmart.
- Feedback from students will be sought regularly in order to monitor the school's culture with regard to bullying.
- School leaders, staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- Structured activities available to students at recess and lunch breaks.

2. Early Intervention
- Encourage children to report bullying incidents involving themselves or others.
- Classroom teachers regularly reminding students to report incidents, and that reporting is not dobbing.
- Parents/carers encouraged to contact school if they become aware of a problem.
- Safe lunchtime and recess venues are regularly publicised and supervised.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems.
- School Leadership informed of all bullying incidents.
- All instances of suspected bullying or inappropriate behaviour must be responded to by staff.
- Parents/carers are to be contacted if their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced inappropriate behaviour, or if their child appears to have behaved inappropriately or bullied someone else.

3. Intervention

- Serious incidents are those that include physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats, racial, religious or homophobic bullying etc.
- All such incidents or allegations will be properly investigated and documented. Depending upon the nature of each incident, they may also be reported to police, reported to the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit, and/or reported to the Department's Emergency and Security Management Unit by following the DET guidelines for managing complaints and misconduct.
- The school may contact support professionals such as Welfare officers, Welfare coordinators or Councillors and/or Student Support Officers for assistance and support.
- Students, staff and parents/carers alleged as bullies will be informed of allegations where appropriate.
- Both bullies and victims may be offered counselling and support.
- All repetitive or serious incidents must be brought to the attention of the principal class members of the school.
- The most appropriate staff member will contact parents/carers of the targeted student and alleged bullies unless advised by police or other relevant authority not to do so.
- Regional Office will provide support as appropriate, and the Principal will monitor the investigation and review the situation until matters are appropriately resolved.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include criminal charges, suspension, expulsion, loss of privileges, counselling, conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct.
- A management strategy will be developed in consultation with the students and parents/carers involved.
- Parents/carers or community members who bully or harass or abuse staff will be provided with official warnings, and if necessary referred to the police, and/or have trespass restrictions placed upon them by the Principal consistent with the Summary Offences Act.

Post Incident Review

It is important that appropriate strategies are put in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Appropriate strategies may include:-

- Conciliation meetings between all parties.
- Ongoing monitoring of students involved.
- Identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved.
- Follow-up meetings regarding each child's plan of management.
- Ongoing communication with parents.
- Counselling from appropriate agencies of support officers etc for both parties.
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies.
- Support and counselling offered in the event of malicious or fictitious claims.

References

- http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/Pages/spag.aspx

Related Policy

- Student Engagement Policy Evaluation

Review

This policy will be reviewed as part of a three-year cycle.

This policy was last ratified by School Council : April 2021