



## Bullying & Harassment Prevention Policy

### RATIONALE:

Maffra Secondary College is committed to providing a safe, respectful environment which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students, staff and parents, as well as one which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear bullying and harassment prevention policy will inform the community that bullying and harassment in any form will not be tolerated. Our School Wide Positive Behavior Support Matrices promote a positive environment in which to learn.

### AIM:

- To provide clear definitions so that there is a shared understanding amongst all members of the school community.
- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment is acceptable.
- To provide an outline of the strategies and programs in place at Maffra Secondary College to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour.
- To provide clear advice on the roles and responsibilities of the whole school community, including students, parents, caregivers and teachers for preventing and responding to bullying behaviour. This includes reporting bullying behaviour to school staff.
- To provide clear procedures for everyone to report incidents of bullying to the school.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed.
- To ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour – including but not limited to: targets, bystanders and students engaging in or affected by bullying behaviour.
- To seek the support and cooperation of the whole school community in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour.

### Definitions:

- **Harassment** - is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.
- **Bullying** – is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in 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 behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. For example through the sharing of digital records.

Bullying in 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
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm

#### **Bullying can be**

- **Direct physical bullying** – e.g. hitting, tripping and pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **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.
- **Cyber-bullying** – Is like other forms of bullying, in that it is a relational problem where communication technologies are used intentionally, repeatedly and antagonistically to harm another person or group. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and or audio.

- **Cyber-harassment** – includes an individual instance of uninvited, unwelcome or offensive forms of communication or activity.
- **Safe Spaces** – A designated safe and quiet space used by students to access at recess and lunch times if and when required.
- **Mutual conflict** involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. 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. These behaviours are not acceptable at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this type of behaviour.
- **Restorative Practices:**
  - Are underpinned by student learning and facilitate an environment of safety, trust and connectedness (*Bond et al. 2001, Fuller 1999*).
  - Promote awareness of others, responsibility and empathy (*Hopkins 2002*).
  - Involve direct and voluntary participation of those affected by misconduct in its resolution (*Braithwaite 2001b*).
  - Promote relationship management rather than behaviour management (*Cameron & Thorsborne 2001*).
  - Are concerned with establishing or re-establishing social equality in relationships; that is, relationships in which each person's rights to equal dignity, concern and respect are satisfied (*Morrison 2002*).
- **Resilience, Rights & Respectful Relationships – RRRR**
- **Building Respectful Relationships - BRR**

### IMPLEMENTATION:

This policy addresses how Maffra Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Maffra Secondary College 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 types of inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Behaviour Management Policy. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

### PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION:

- Maffra Secondary College provides a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, cyberbullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
- Community awareness relating to bullying (including cyberbullying), its characteristics and its effects on victims and the communication of the school's programs and response to bullying.
- Ensure a whole school approach to teaching social, emotional learning using RRRR / BRR resources. These learning tasks will promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Bullying & yard surveys will be administered by the Wellbeing and SWPBS/RR team. Feedback will be provided to students and staff where students will be a part of how areas of concern will be addressed.
- Help seeking is taught and celebrated.
- Year Level Leaders will clarify and implement this policy at the start of each year. This information will be reinforced by 'Learning to Learn' teachers.
- All students are to be provided with individual and confidential computer and network logins and passwords. Processes are in place to ensure tracking of student activity on the school's computer network system. Firewalls are installed to eliminate outside traffic into the school's computer network and internet.
- Regular monitoring of student traffic on the school's computer network to identify potential problems.
- The use of mobile phones by students to cyber-bully will receive consequences as outlined in our Digital Devices / Mobile Phone Policy. Digital devices includes and is not limited to mobile phones, smart watches and computers.
- Curriculum will include bullying prevention messages and strategies delivered in a variety of forums.
- Student Leadership Teams, students and staff will promote our School Values, School Wide Positive Behaviour Support & Respectful Relationships Matrices and Restorative Practices as a way of preventing and discouraging negative behaviours.

- A vigilant and accountable yard duty roster for teachers is in place and is emphasised at the beginning of each term. The staff SWPBS & RR matrix will identify key expected behaviours whilst doing yard duty.
- Structured activities could be made available to students at recess and lunch breaks. Both staff and students have a role in organising and coordinating these.
- Bullying prevention is embedded in **all** of our SWPBS & RR positive behaviour Matrices.
- Tier I behavioural and academic Interventions are used by all staff to ensure that a safe, supportive and inclusive environment is provided for **all** students at Maffra Secondary College.
- Restorative Practices will be used with students, staff and parents. Restorative Practices take a mutual understanding and ownership approach to addressing a problem whether the issue is minor or something more significant.
- Use Restorative Practices as a system to reflect on what negative behaviour has taken place and a way in which we can restore relationships with all relevant parties.
- Explicit teaching, re-teaching, reminding and modelling of our expected behaviours by all members of the school community.
- Explicit learning that promotes social and emotional skills and positive gender norms – including respect for diversity, RRRR / BRR.
- Encourage students and staff to report bullying and cyberbullying incidents involving themselves or others.
- Classroom teachers, Year Level Leaders and Principal Class Officers are to remind staff and students to report any bullying / cyberbullying incidents. All incidents need to be recorded on COMPASS.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a bullying or harassment issue.
- **Safe Spaces** – A designated safe and quiet space will be identified and used by students to access at recess and lunch times if and when required.
- Students are acknowledged for positive behaviours and their ability to resolve problems in a positive way.
- Data will be used to identify areas of concern and target for change.
- Specific educational websites such as: Bully Stoppers.

#### **INCIDENT RESPONSE:**

- 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 a staff member as soon as possible.
- Parents / carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Maffra Secondary College should contact the Year Level Leader or an Assistant Principal.
- Students are encouraged to report an incident of bullying to any member of staff.
- **Once identified, staff are required to:**
  - Listen and acknowledge the seriousness of the report. Deal with any breach of the school discipline code of conduct.
  - The student will write down their account of the incident / details of the allegations.
  - The staff member will record the details of the allegations on Compass – inform the student(s) of this action.
  - Inform the relevant Year Level Leader. The Wellbeing Team and Assistant Principal will be informed of the incident through the Compass Flag system and or via email.
  - The Year Level Leader / Assistant Leader is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying the Year Level Leader /Assistant Year Level Leader may:
    - Speak to those involved in the allegations, including the target(s), the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour(s) and any witnesses to the incidents will be fully investigated. All documentation, written statements and detailed notes of all discussions will be placed on Compass for future reference.
    - Once sufficient information has been gathered 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 the; Wellbeing Team, teachers, Wellington Network Student Support Staff Officers, Principal Class Officers and/or DET Specialist Staff.

- Speak to the parents of the students involved. This should be done in a timely manner.
- Speak to the teachers of the students involved.
- A Parent meeting will be required for a student to return after suspension.
- All communications throughout 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 bully, the target, bystanders and any witnesses will be offered counselling and individual support.
- Ongoing and/or serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria police. For more information see: **Brodie's Law**.
- Should there be further incidents of harassment or bullying, or if the agreement is still not adhered to, then the matter will be dealt with in a punitive way, such as: internal and or a formal suspension.
- If an agreement cannot be reached between parties, students who continue to bully may need to be removed from the grounds until the incident can be resolved.
- The school may assist parents to manage cyber bullying if this happens out of school hours. This may also include encouraging parents to notify the police if the bullying behaviour continues outside of the school.
- Incidents of staff/parent harassment or bullying will be reported directly to the Principal for immediate intervention. The Staff & Parent Positive Behaviour Matrices will be utilised in this process. If the matter remains unresolved the Principal will seek departmental advice.
- If staff bullying persists the Principal will commence formal disciplinary action.

#### **PROCESS FOR PARENTS / CARERS:**

- It is suggested that parents/carers discuss bullying incidents with their child at home. At all times they should endeavour to give them positive strategies to use.
- If your child reports that they are being bullied at school, encourage them to speak to a teacher, a Year Level Leader/Assistant Team Leader or a member of the Wellbeing team.
- Students who feel strongly that bullying should be reported are our best asset in maintaining a climate that discourages this behaviour.
- We encourage parents/carers to contact the school when they become aware of situations involving bullying.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to follow our Parent SWPBS & RR Positive Behaviour Matrix.
- Parents should refrain from using digital devices to communicate their anger in response to their child being harassed and/or bullied.

#### **RESPONSES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOURS**

When Maffra Secondary College 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 Team Leaders, Assistant Team Leaders, Wellbeing team, Teachers, Wellington Student Support Staff Officers, Assistant Principals, Principal, DET specialist staff.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behavior. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behavior, Maffra Secondary College will consider:

- The severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the targeted 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.
- The alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

**Maffra Secondary College may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:**

- Consequences for students will vary depending on the severity of the incident and the number of times a student has exhibited bullying behaviours. Please refer to the steps which are outlined on the Student Management Processes and Procedures flow chart.
- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Wellbeing team, SSSOs and or an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Wellbeing team, SSSOs and/or an external provider.
- 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 a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- 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.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for the different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including; girls/boys groups, resilience programs, older student mentors.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detentions, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Student Management Policy, the Ministerial Order on suspensions and expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Maffra Secondary College understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behavior. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavor to provide parents/carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

#### **COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES:**

Parents and staff are advised to speak directly to the Principal if they have a concern, complaint or grievance. It is the responsibility of the school to respond to and address written (letter and email) and verbal (face-to-face and phone) complaints raised by parents from their school community. Parents could also refer to the DET Parent Complaints Flow Chart or refer to the DET Parents complaints Policy <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

The following websites and resources provide useful information on the prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying

- Bully Stoppers
- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying, No Way!
- MSC - Student Wellbeing Hub
- Office of eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.
- Headspace

#### **RATIFICATION:**

This policy was ratified on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019

This policy will be reviewed as part the school's regular review cycle, or earlier if deemed necessary.