Student Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy

POLICY CATEGORY: STUDENT DUTY OF CARE

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1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Woodleigh School values highly the social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of all students and staff and does not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying designed to jeopardise the safety or security of any student, staff member or parent.

This policy aims to outline the types of bullying and harassment that can sometimes occur in a school community and the guidelines and procedures to respond to this type of behaviour. In rejecting bullying and harassment, the School is committed to the development and reinforcement of a culture of positive behaviour, respect and inclusion.

1.1. Scope

This policy applies to all Woodleigh School staff, students, visitors, volunteers, contractors and Board Directors.

This policy applies to all School activities during and outside of school hours. This includes School activities that are occurring on school campus, offsite, online, extracurricular, sport activities and programs, excursions, camps, interstate and overseas travel.

2. POLICY SECTION

The National definition of bullying for Australian Schools (https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/understanding-bullying) states "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."

2.1 Types of Bullying and Harassment

The critical feature that distinguishes bullying from violence, harassment and discrimination is that bullying happens within social relationships, featuring repeated and harmful behaviours that stem from a misuse of power. Violence, harassment and discrimination can occur as part of bullying, but also can occur in one-off conflicts or between strangers.

The definition of bullying has three critical aspects: a repeated pattern; the misuse of power within relationships; and behaviour which causes harm. All three aspects need to be present in order for behaviour to be described as bullying. Bullying can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying can take place in person or online. Bullying - verbal or social - that happens online or via a mobile phone is often referred to as cyberbullying.

In essence, 'bullying' describes any repeated behaviours by one or more persons against another that may hurt, injure, embarrass, upset or cause discomfort for that person. The behaviour is intentional, selective and uninvited.

Bullying behaviour can be:

Physical: where fighting, pushing and shoving happens, spitting, invasion of personal space, gestures, exclusionary behaviour, forcing people against their will, intimidation or similar.

Verbal: with someone being called names, being put down, talked about behind their back, or being picked on because of the way they look, or the things they do or are good at, insults, belittling comments. It includes hurtful comments made to or about a person in regard to physical appearance, size, cultural or religious background, gender, or sexual orientation.

Visual: where offensive notes, drawings or photos are passed around about someone or posted on the internet, or where graffiti or damage is done to someone's books, bag, artwork, locker, etc.

Psychological: victimisation, stand over tactics, extortion, threatening others, damage to other's property, theft, destroying or interfering with other's property, deliberate exclusion from activities, the setting-up of humiliating experiences.

Sexual: where someone is touched in a way that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or when rude names, or jokes or comments are made about the way a person looks or lives their life.

Body language: where others turn their backs on someone, or use inappropriate gestures to someone.

Rumours: where untrue stories are made up and told to others about someone, or when stories are exaggerated about someone and spread around to others.

Technology: via telephone calls, computers, mobile phones, email, websites, social media, where verbal or written messages are sent which are insulting, untrue, intimidating, frightening or exclusionary. This can include publishing photos of members of the Woodleigh School community without their permission.

2.2 Policy Principles

It is a foundational right of every person to be treated with respect. Bullying is deemed by the School to be a serious breach of expected behaviour.

The following are the key principles of our Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy:

- Because of the insidious nature of bullying, the key factor in combating it is the preparedness of those bullied to reveal the fact to a trusted adult who can initiate an appropriate response.

- Students at Woodleigh School have the right to a healthy, happy and supportive environment. Woodleigh School students do not have to tolerate bullying behaviour from other members of the community.

- Bullying is judged by its effects on the person being bullied, which can be significantly more serious than the offender may believe in doing the bullying. Psychological bullying is usually far more destructive than physical bullying and may have long term and very serious consequences.

- Every student plays a part in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of others – parents, staff, students and community members. The reaction of bystanders can either support or discourage bullying from happening. If bystanders do nothing, this can be seen as a form of silent approval. The actions of a supportive bystander can stop or diminish a specific bullying incident or help the bullied student to recover from it. A considered response to bullying can involve a long term process and success is not always immediate. We believe that the most successful outcomes are achieved by adopting a 'whole of community approach', involving the students, staff and parents/carers collaboratively.

- While deploring bullying in all its forms, the School will attempt to assist those who bully to change their behaviour by offering appropriate counselling and support.

- Best-practice bullying prevention strategies will be implemented within the school on a continuous basis. This will focus on the explicit teaching of age appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and respond appropriately, thereby maintaining Woodleigh School's respectful and inclusive culture.

Our staged process for responding to bullying is outlined in our Behaviour Management Guidelines (Senior & Junior Campuses), using a blend of restorative processes and consequences for actions.

2.3 Guidelines to Support this Policy

A key element of Woodleigh School's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage the reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the school community;
- Their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- The school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Students who experience bullying are encouraged to:

- Inform a trusted adult at home, or a trusted adult at school eg Homestead Tutor or Coordinator; Subject Teacher; or a member of the Wellbeing or Counselling Teams.
- Communicate in an open, honest and on-going way.
- Work collaboratively with their trusted adult(s) in order to articulate their required outcome and have input into the devising of strategies that will bring this about.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Be vigilant for signs of distress; changes in mood or patterns of behavior; bruising or other injuries; asking regularly for extra money; or damage to clothes or property.
- Be role models themselves in avoiding bullying behaviour of their children, other parents and their children, or staff members.
- Advise School staff (eg Homestead Tutor or Coordinator; Subject Teacher; or a member of the Wellbeing or Counselling Teams) if they suspect their child is being targeted.
- Communicate to their child that they need to work with the School in supporting them.
- Be willing to attend meetings with Senior Staff at the School, as part of the resolution process.
- Be willing to actively support the School's processes.

Observers/bystanders should support the bullied student by:

- Desisting from joining in or encouraging the bullying behaviour, or recording the bullying behaviour and posting the recorded incident on any form of social media. Students who assemble to watch or remain in a position to watch any act of bullying or harassment may be deemed to condone the behaviour.
- Walking away from the bully and taking the target of the bullying behaviour with them.
- Calling on the bully to stop their actions, without putting themselves in harm's way, and without causing further aggravation to the situation.
- Reporting the matter to a staff member or adult with whom they feel comfortable.

The offender should:

- Discontinue the bullying behaviour immediately the request is made to stop.
- Be helped to understand how their words and/or actions have been harmful, and to learn from the experience, as per the School's Behaviour Management Policy & Guidelines.
- Work collaboratively with staff in devising strategies to address and amend their behaviour.
- Where appropriate, be prepared to participate in a Restorative Meeting, with appropriate adult support and supervision, to repair the relationship between themselves and the target of their bullying behaviour.

The School will:

- Conduct regular surveys where students will be asked to respond to questions about bullying or harassment. The results will be used by the School to identify any potential problem times, places or age groups in an effort to ensure appropriate anti-bullying measures.
- Clearly communicate and enforce the Behaviour Management Policy & Guidelines.
- Offer on-site counselling and/or psychology services where appropriate.

2.4 Implementation of This Policy

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

In all circumstances the School will follow the principles of procedural fairness by:
- Taking bullying incidents seriously;
- Providing assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;
- Taking time to fully investigate the situation, including discussions with the target of the bullying behaviour, the offending student and any bystanders;
- Communicate regularly and openly with parents/carers.
- Maintaining thorough and objective records of reported bullying incidents; and
- Escalating its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or serious incidents.

Woodleigh's approach is founded upon the principles of restorative practice and the Compassionate Systems Framework, which is articulated in the Student Wellbeing Policy. Our staged response to bullying is outlined in our Behaviour Management Guidelines (Senior & Junior Campuses).

3. POLICY COMPLIANCE

3.1 Policy Breach

Woodleigh enforces this policy and its procedures. In the event of any non-compliance, we will instigate a review that may result in a range of measures including (depending on the severity of the breach):
- remedial education
- counselling
- increased supervision
- the restriction of duties
- suspension
- in the case of serious breaches, termination of employment, contract or engagement.

All breaches, near misses and risks related to this policy should be reported to relevant Head of Campus or Principal.

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Principal and SLTand this may include independent audits and reviews.

4. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION

4.1 Woodleigh School policy and procedure linkage

- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Child Protection and Safety Reporting
- Child Protection: Mandatory Reporting Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Behaviour Management Guidelines (Senior & Junior Campuses)
- ICT Policy & Procedures
- ICT Use of Technology & Social Media Policy & Guidelines
- Student Duty of Care
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing Policy

4.2   Related Legislative Instruments

The following legislation, standards and regulations apply and this policy aligns with these mandated requirements:
- Ministerial Order 870;
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic);
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic);
- Child, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- VRQA Guidelines to the minimum standards and requirements for School registration

Further information on this policy can be obtained from our Heads of Campus, the Director of Wellbeing or the Principal.

POLICY APPROVAL STATUS

REVIEW CYCLE	POLICY REFERENCE	OWNER	APPROVED BY
Triennial	SDC - 02	Deputy Principal: Head of Campus	Policy and Risk Commitee

VERSION	LOCATION	DATE APPROVED	NEXT REVIEW DATE
Version 1-1	WS Policy and Procedure TEAM > Policies > Student Duty of Care	21/11/2024	Term 4 2027