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## Bullying Prevention Policy

June 2020

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### PURPOSE

Heathmont East Primary School provides a safe and respectful school environment and positive culture where bullying, cyber-bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated. Students and staff will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the HEPS community
- make clear that no form of bullying at HEPS will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at HEPS to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at HEPS.

When responding to bullying behaviour, HEPS aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

HEPS acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

### SCOPE

This policy addresses how HEPS aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. HEPS 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 other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with the schools Behaviour Management Flow Chart.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

### POLICY

#### Definition of Bullying

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:

*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 conflicts 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, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct* physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct* verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *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.

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

### **Other Distressing and Inappropriate Behaviours**

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witnessed any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Behaviour Management Flowchart and/or the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

*Mutual conflict* involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, 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. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. HEPS will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

*Harassment* is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at HEPS and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. HEPS will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

## **Bullying Prevention**

HEPS has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at HEPS is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- we have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing
- we strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students
- teachers incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour
- at the start of every year, each class will develop classroom expectations, in line with the school values. Class members are encouraged to follow expectations and support one another to meet these
- in the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum, mainly through the Respectful Relationship Program, teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- our programs encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way
- students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed
- for further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives and management, see HEPS Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy/Behaviour Management Flow Chart.

## **Incident Response**

### **Reporting Concerns to HEPS**

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 school staff as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by HEPS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at HEPS should contact the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, (Assistant Principal – Student Wellbeing) by phone on (03) 9729 5439 or by email directed to [heathmont.east.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:heathmont.east.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au).

## **Investigations**

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass; and
2. inform relevant staff

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator, (Assistant Principal – Student Wellbeing) and/or relevant staff are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator, and/or relevant staff 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
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the Student Wellbeing Coordinator or all relevant staff, in 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 objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

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

### **Responses to Bullying Behaviours**

When the Student Wellbeing Coordinator or all relevant staff have 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 the Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, Education Support staff (ES), Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training Wellbeing and Student Engagement staff.

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

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of bullying, and the impact it has had on the target 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.

The HEPS Behaviour Flowchart is displayed in every classroom across the school and is referred to by all teachers when required for a consistent response to behaviours. Teachers will remind all students of the steps in the flowchart each term to support their knowledge and understanding of responses when they are actioned.

The Student Wellbeing Coordinator and/or all relevant staff may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer support to the target student/s and/or bystander/s, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services (SSS) social worker, SSS psychologist or refer to an external agency. A support group may be developed, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Offer support to the student/s and/or bystander/s engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS social worker, SSS psychologist or external agency. A support group may be developed, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).

- 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. Restorative discussions between some or all of the students involved help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Behaviour Support Plan in collaboration with families/relevant staff and the student where possible, that restricts contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Establish an Individual Learning Plan for the perpetrator, with the student (where possible), staff, parents and therapists involved, to set goals and strategies to educate and develop the concerned anti-social behaviours.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours. Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including proactive programs such as: Respectful Relationships, Positive Education in the HEPS SWPBS framework.
- 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, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

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

### **Adult Behaviour**

At HEPS we continually work towards creating a safe and respectful community. It is a collected responsibility for all staff, parents and students to display safe and respectful behaviours at all times at HEPS. Staff and parents play an important role to model and teach expected behaviours.

HEPS employees are obligated to behave in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector employees, which sets the high standards that the community expects.

The HEPS Statement of Values and School Philosophy Policy highlights community responsibilities and the HEPS management of unreasonable behaviours.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

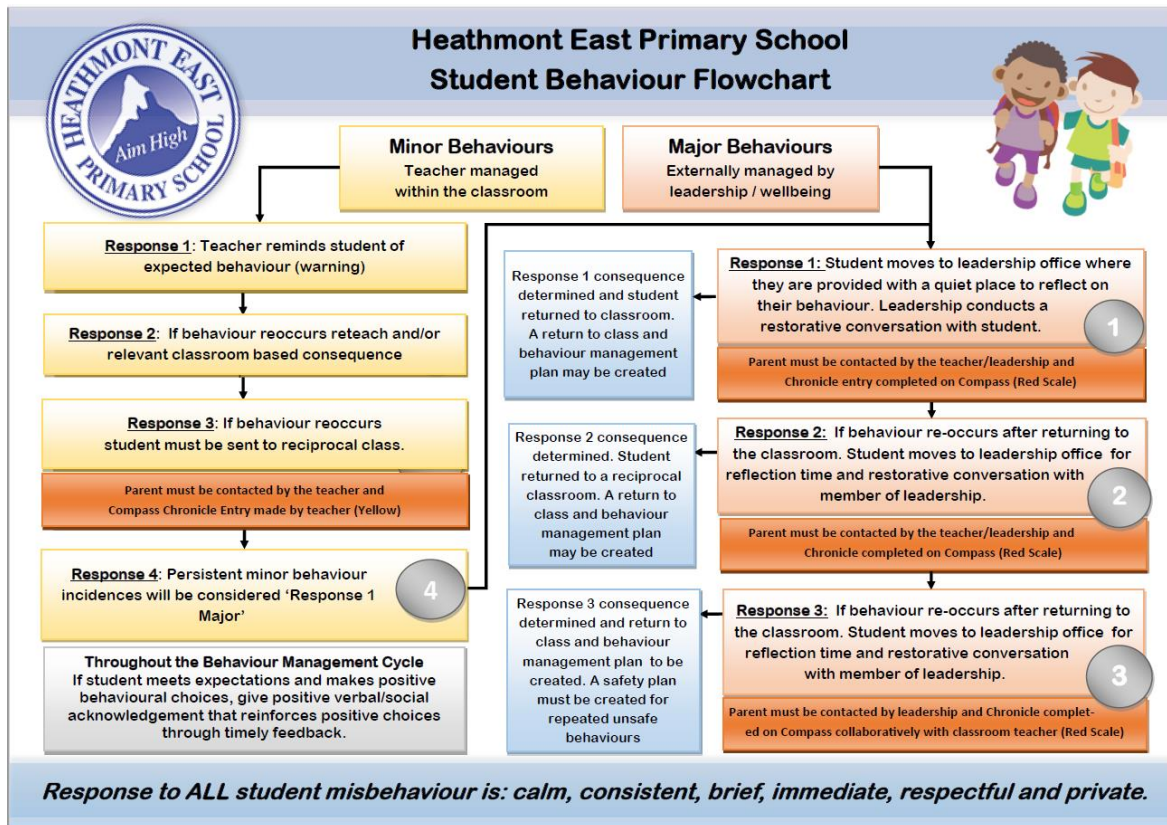
This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

School Policy and Advisory Guide:

- [Bullying](#)

HEPS Behaviour Flowchart:



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

- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework
- Beyond Blue
- R U Ok? Suicide Prevention
- Headspace

Behaviour in DET schools:

- [Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees](#)
- [Preventing unacceptable parent behaviour](#)
- [Creating Respectful School Communities](#)
- [Responding to Conflict with Parents](#)

## REVIEW CYCLE

This policy is scheduled for review every 3 years.