

Bullying Prevention and Response

Policy last updated

2 June 2021

Scope

- Schools

Date: January 2020

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Policy

Policy

The purpose of this policy is to support schools to create safe and respectful school climates and address all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying.

Summary

- Schools must address bullying as part of their Student Engagement Policy (or have a separate standalone Bullying Prevention Policy) and implement strategies to prevent bullying as part of their duty of care.
- An effective bullying policy clearly outlines the steps the schools will take when staff become aware of bullying behaviour, the strategies that may be utilised to address the behaviour, and the support the school will provide to all students involved.
- The bullying policy must be developed in consultation with the school community, should be clearly communicated, and reviewed every 2 to 3 years.
- [A Bullying Prevention Policy Template](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15>> is available on the [School Policy Templates Portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx)  <<https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx>> (staff login required). Schools can modify the template to suit their local

circumstances.

- Resources for schools to track bullying behaviour and responses, identify issues in the school community, keep clear and accurate documentation and provide required supports are available on the Resources tab.

Details

Legal requirements

All staff working with students have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent students from foreseeable harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable physical or psychological harm occurring as a result of bullying. Refer to the Department's [Duty of Care Policy](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy>> for more information.

The [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/education-and-training-reform-regulations-2017) <<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/education-and-training-reform-regulations-2017>> require Victorian government school principals to develop a Student Engagement Policy which includes student behaviour. Principals must address bullying as part of the Student Engagement Policy, or have a standalone policy specifically addressing bullying.

Principals must develop the policy in consultation with the school community, and have regard to the rights and responsibilities of students, parents, and staff in developing the policy.

Local school bullying prevention policy

Schools are encouraged to ensure their local bullying prevention policy includes the nationally agreed definition of bullying:

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.

An effective bullying policy may also include:

- a clear explanation of what is and what is not bullying
- information on how the school builds a positive school culture and actively works to prevent bullying behaviours
- provision of mediation, counselling and peer support for affected students, including students engaging in bullying behaviour
- clear, staged processes for the implementation of intervention strategies, other consequences and follow-up monitoring
- directions to staff for the maintenance of appropriate records.

A [downloadable policy template](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15)  <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15> for Victorian government schools is available on the [School Policy Templates Portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx)  <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx> (staff login required). Schools can modify the template to suit their local circumstances.

Additional resources for schools to develop and implement their local policy, track bullying behaviour and responses, identify issues in the school community, keep clear and accurate documentation and provide required supports are available on the Resources tab. These include:

- The Bullying response step-by-step guide [\(PDF\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3109)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3109> [\(DOCX\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3107)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3107> is a one-page summary that includes information from [Bully Stoppers](https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers)  <https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers> and the Bullying Prevention and Response policy to support school staff to identify and respond to bullying incidents between students, including online.
- [The Bullying behaviour response template \(DOCX\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-behaviour-response-template-3105)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-behaviour-response-template-3105> is an optional tool for school staff to document bullying behaviour and how it has been addressed. The template can be modified for other behaviours, including racism. Should schools wish to use this template, they can attach it to an eduSafe report.

Communication of policy

Appropriate awareness of the policy is essential. The policy should be incorporated into school culture and discussed with the school community regularly. Communication may include:

- incorporating the policy into staff induction processes and staff handbooks
- circulating the policy regularly amongst staff

- incorporating the policy into enrolment packs and/or student diaries
- making the policy publicly available on the school website.

Policy review

Review of a school's bullying policy is recommended every 2 to 3 years.

Data collection ensures the school has adequate information to address the types of bullying behaviour that may be occurring, and modify the policy to ensure that it remains relevant and effective.

A data capture tool is available under the [Resources tab](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bullying-prevention-response/resources) <<http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bullying-prevention-response/resources>> .

Additional methods of data collection may include:

- student focus groups
- regular student bullying surveys including the attitudes to school survey
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of reported incidents of bullying and the responses implemented.

Definitions

Bullying

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Covert bullying

Covert bullying can be very difficult for someone outside of the interaction to identify. It can include hand gestures and threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with. Social bullying (spreading rumours, manipulation

of relationships, excluding, isolating) is often covert bullying.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying includes any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

Physical bullying

Physical bullying includes hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.

Social bullying

This is sometimes called relational or emotional bullying, and includes deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Verbal and written bullying

Verbal and written bullying includes name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.

Related policies

- [Attendance](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/attendance/policy>
- [Complaint Resolution](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/node/72) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/node/72>
- [Digital Learning](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-learning/policy>
- [Digital Technologies – Responsible Use](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-technologies-responsible-use/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-technologies-responsible-use/policy>
- [Duty of Care](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/duty-of-care/policy>
- [Mental Health in Schools](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/mental-health-schools/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/mental-health-schools/policy>
- [Student Engagement](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-engagement/policy>
- [Student Support Services](http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy) <http://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-services/policy>

Relevant legislation

- [Education and Training Reform Act 2006 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006)  <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/education-and-training-reform-act-2006>

- [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/education-and-training-reform-regulations-2017)  <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/statutory-rules/education-and-training-reform-regulations-2017>
- [Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 \(Vic\)](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006)  <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/charter-human-rights-and-responsibilities-act-2006>

Contacts

For policy advice and information about Bully Stoppers, contact:

bully.stoppers@education.vic.gov.au <mailto:bully.stoppers@education.vic.gov.au>

To raise a concern or report an incident, contact your nearest regional office

– [Office locations: Department of Education](https://www.vic.gov.au/office-locations-department-education)  <https://www.vic.gov.au/office-locations-department-education>

Guidance

Guidance

There is no further guidance for this topic. For more information, refer to the Resources tab.

Resources

Resources

Template policy

A template [Bullying Prevention](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15)  <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/SitePages/SchoolPoliciesDetail.aspx?CId=15> policy is available on the [School Policy Templates Portal](https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx)  <https://edugate.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edrms/keyprocess/cp/Pages/home.aspx> (staff login required). Schools can modify this suit their local context.

Responding to bullying behaviour

These resources can be used to help schools track behaviour and responses, identify issues in the school community, keep clear and accurate documentation and provide required supports:

- [Bullying response step-by-step guide \(PDF\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3109)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3109> – a one-page summary that includes information from [Bully Stoppers](https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers)  <https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers> and the Bullying Prevention and Response policy to support school staff to identify and respond to bullying incidents between students, including online.
- [Bullying response step-by-step guide \(DOCX\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3107)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-response-step-by-step-guide-3107> – accessible version.
- The [Bullying behaviour response template \(DOCX\)](https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-behaviour-response-template-3105)  <https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/bullying-behaviour-response-template-3105> – optional tool for school staff to document bullying behaviour and how it has been addressed. The template can be modified for other behaviours, including racism. Should schools wish to use this template, they can attach it to an eduSafe report.

Survey tool

A [survey tool](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachdata.aspx)  <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachdata.aspx> is available on Bully Stoppers. The survey tool contains a range of survey templates for teachers, students and parents/carers.

Useful websites

- [Bully Stoppers](https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers)  <https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers> – a resource created by the department which contains information and advice for the school community, including students, parents and school staff.

- [Bullying. No Way!](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/)  <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/> – a website for Australian schools, managed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group which has representatives from all states and territories, including the Catholic and independent schooling sectors.
 - [Safe Socials](https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-socials)  <https://www.vic.gov.au/safe-socials> – resources to support students to be safe online.
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