**Commitment to Child Safety**

*Avondale Primary School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision making. Avondale Primary School has zero tolerance for child abuse.*

*Avondale Primary School is committed to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention will be paid to the cultural safety of Aboriginal children and children from culturally and / or linguistically diverse backgrounds, vulnerable children as well as the safety of children with a disability.*

*Every person involved in Avondale Primary School has a responsibility to understand the important and specific role he/ she plays individually and collectively to ensure that the wellbeing and safety of all children and young people is at the forefront of all they do and every decision they make.*

## **PURPOSE**

Avondale Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

* explain the definition of bullying
* make clear that all forms of bullying at Avondale Primary School will not be tolerated
* 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 victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
* seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Avondale Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Avondale Primary School aims to:

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

Avondale Primary School 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 Avondale Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Avondale Primary School 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 our Student Wellbeing and Engagement and Behaviour Management policies.

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

## **Policy**

### **Definition**

Bullyingoccurs when a child, or a group of children, **deliberately and repeatedly** upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another child or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. This behaviour is done with the intention of causing physical, social and/or psychological harm.

There is an **imbalance of power, or perceived power,** in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status, siding of other children with the bully, or other reasons.

**Bullying may be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert) physical and/or social, and includes online digital platforms and devices (cyberbullying).**

**Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual /conflict dislike where there is no imbalance of power.**

*Single-episode acts* of harassment, 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. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. *However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and should be reported to school staff immediately.*

*Social rejection or dislike* is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

*In this policy any reference to ‘bullying’ includes all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.*

*Videos related to the national definition of bullying can be viewed at:* [*https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/WhatIsBullying/DefinitionOfBullying*](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/WhatIsBullying/DefinitionOfBullying)

**Bullying can be:**

*Direct physical bullying* ­­– e.g. hitting, tripping, poking, kicking, pushing, or belongings are stolen or damaged.

*Direct verbal bullying* – e.g. name calling, put downs, threats, 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.

*Harassment* can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital platforms and devices. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, online gaming sites etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. **Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should immediately report their concerns to classroom teachers/ school staff in person.**

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**What are the signs?**

Bullying may be very hard to see. Victims may already be having trouble getting on with other children or with teachers and they are often picked on by bullies for this reason.

Bullying usually happens out of sight, away from teachers or other adults. The people who are most likely to know what is going on are other children.

Children who are being bullied often don’t like to tell anyone because they feel weak or ashamed, or are frightened that it will only makes things worse. They also feel it is wrong to ‘dob in’ or tell tales on other children.

If they tell anyone, it is most likely they will tell their parents or their friends before they will tell a teacher.

**Some tell-tale signs may be:**

* bruises, scratches or cuts that your child can’t really explain;
* torn or damaged clothing;
* damaged or missing belongings;
* headaches, stomach aches and other pains that the child can’t put a finger on;
* unexplained tears or depression;
* unusual outbursts of temper;
* not wanting to go to school;
* not wanting to play with friends;
* being unusually quiet or secretive;
* wanting changes in the way he or she travels to and from school;
* school work falls off in quality; and
* wanting extra money without giving a reason.

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Avondale Primary School 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 Avondale Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. It is very important that our students know that bullying is not okay and that they should report it when it does occur.

**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 are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
* We promote inclusion, diversity and acceptance of all community members irrespective of gender, age, race, religious beliefs, sexual orientation or disability, including individuals with allergies and/or anaphylaxis
* A range of year level incursions, webinars and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
* In the classroom, our You Can Do It social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying, how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively and how to build positive friendships. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
* 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.
* Development of student action team to meet to discuss bullying prevention strategies, provide feedback and report concerns.
* Year level concerns boxes where students are able to write down issues that they may be having and feel uncomfortable reporting this to a teacher
* Promotion of whole school positive behaviours acronym developed by student action team: Avondale Primary students are FAIR. Friendly, Accepting, Inclusive, Respectful.
* Promotion of whole school strategies acronym for dealing with bullying developed by student action team: STOP. Say stop, Tell an adult, Offer help, Protect others.
* We endeavour to annually participate in the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence with activities led by student representative committees and classroom teachers.

**Preventing cyberbullying at home**

* supervise children’s use of electronic devices
* teach children about ways of keeping safe when using the internet and mobile phones

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy.*

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

**What can parents do if their child is being bullied?**

By the time children tell their parents they are being bullied, they may have tried everything they can to deal with it on their own. Telling parents is often a very hard step to take.

*Children need to:*

* feel believed and listened to;
* develop trust in how parents will handle it;
* talk more openly about what has happened;
* gain some control over what is happening;
* learn things they can do to protect themselves;
* regain self-confidence.

*It helps if parents:*

* listen to what children say and provide support
* tell them they understand
* encourage social skills, like being assertive, telling the bully to stop and seeking help
* support the child to think through different ways they could deal with the problem
* keep talking with the school until the child feels safe

*It does not help if parents:*

* get angry or upset;
* feel guilty or ashamed;
* make the children think it is not important;
* blame the children;
* blame the school;
* accuse people without knowing the facts;
* look for scapegoats;
* demand to know all the details at once; and
* look for easy solutions.

*Many parents do get angry, quite understandably, and want to go to the school and sort it out immediately. This might not be the best first step. For one thing, the child will almost certainly be reluctant to involve the school straight away because something they would rather keep quiet could be spread around. The child might also feel at risk of the bully taking revenge.*

*As a first step, it is usually best to:*

* encourage the child to talk through it as far as he or she wants to, so you get the basic facts straight;
* try to keep an open mind, remembering you are hearing one part of the story only;
* ask questions gently;
* help the child reflect on what has been done so far; and
* help the child work out what might be done.

*It is important to find out:*

* what happened;
* who was involved;
* where;
* when; and
* did anybody else see it, and, if so, who?

It is also a good idea to write down what you find out.

**What can parents do if their child is doing the bullying?**

* make sure your child knows that bullying behaviour is inappropriate and why
* try to understand the reasons why your child has behaved in this way and looks for ways to address the problems
* encourage perspective taking e.g. ‘How would you feel if …’
* help your child think of alternative paths of action

**What can parents do if their child tells them about bullying they have seen or heard at school?**

* encourage your child to stand up for the child who is being bullied
* encourage your child to report what he/she has seen or heard to school staff immediately

**Where to next?**

Never try to sort out the bullies yourself. This rarely works and often makes matters worse.

Once you have a clear picture of the situation, and some idea about how you and the child would prefer to handle it, contact the school.

### **Reporting concerns to Avondale Primary School**

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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their classroom teacher first. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including Carol Broadhurst (Student Wellbeing Coordinator), Joe Scarfo (Assistant Principal), or Paul Mulroyan (principal).

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Avondale Primary School should contact their child’s classroom teacher to arrange a meeting time to present their information, by phone on 9318 1755 or email directed to avondale.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au

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 Avondale Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances. The school and families should be seen as partners in trying to fix any problems. Parents are encouraged to discuss with the school what they and their child would like to do, and arrange a time for a follow up conversation/ meeting.

***Please note:***

*The school will need time to investigate the matter and to talk to teachers, other students and even other parents if that’s the best thing to do. Remember the school staff may not have seen the incident/s and it is not always easy to immediately judge if it constitutes bullying.*

### **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations- what happened, who was involved, where, when, witnesses to the incidents
2. inform relevant staff e.g. other classrooms teachers, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, Assistant Principal/ Principal

School staff responsible for investigating allegations of bullying will do so in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the staff member may:

* speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/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 school 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 school will endeavour to keep all parties informed of the progress of the investigation.

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.](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advicesheetbrodieslaw.aspx) <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advicesheetbrodieslaw.aspx>

### **Responses to bullying behaviours**

**School response**

When the school 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.

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, Avondale Primary School will consider:

* the age and maturity of the students involved
* the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
* whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
* whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
* whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
* the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Avondale Primary School may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

* Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to Department of Education and Training Student Support Services
* Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to Department of Education and Training Student Support Services
* Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to Department of Education and Training Student Support Services
* 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 to 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.
* Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, , 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.
* Implement behaviour management plan to restrict contact between victim and perpetrator students.
* Provide discussion opportunities and activities for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including You Can Do It and BullyStoppers
* Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

Avondale Primary School is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Avondale Primary School 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.

**Parent responses**

* listen to what children say and provide support
* tell them you understand
* talk to your child about some of the things that have happened, and discuss some ways of dealing with them, such as:
* using the STOP acronym: *Say Stop, Tell an adult, Offer help, Protect others.*
* pretending not to hear hurtful comments;
* using silent ‘self-talk’ such as, ‘That’s their problem, not mine’, or, ‘I’m OK’, to reinforce self-confidence;
* developing greater self-assertiveness, so as to be able to face the bully without becoming scared, upset, abusive or violent; and
* believing that it is OK to tell someone when bullying happens – that it is not ‘dobbing’.
* contact the school Student Wellbeing Coordinator for additional support resources
* support the child to think through different ways they could deal with the problem
* keep talking with the school until the child feels safe
* if the bullying is happening on the way to or from school, see if your child can go a different way or join up with other children. This might help while issues are being sorted out.
* it might also be possible for your child to be paired with another more robust child for the time being too. The school can help with this.
* if your child finds it hard to make friends, encourage them to make a special effort. One good friend can make a big difference. Invite school friends home to strengthen the relationships begun at school.

It is important that children understand the difference between ‘dobbing in’ and reporting something that is serious. Bullying is serious. People get hurt, and some are harmed for a long time.

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:

* [Bully Stoppers](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx

* [Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)

https://kidshelpline.com.au/

* [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)

https://www.lifeline.org.au/

* [Bullying. No way!](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx

## **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
* Duty of Care Policy
* Issue Resolution Policy

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:

* [Bully Stoppers](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx

* [Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)

https://kidshelpline.com.au/

* [Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)

https://www.lifeline.org.au/

* [Bullying. No way!](https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx)

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/Planning/Pages/School-policy.aspx

## **Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed on a 1-2 year basis or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

* discussion with students
* student bullying surveys
* staff surveys
* parent surveys
* assessment of school data e.g. Attitudes to School Survey
* assessment of school based data including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the Student Representative Council, Education Subcommittee, School Council, school staff and wider parent community.

## **Review cycle**

This policy was last updated in November 2018 and is scheduled for review in 2020.