BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

Rationale

Abbotsford Primary School values Respect, Inclusiveness, High expectations and Success. Abbotsford Primary School will provide a safe, inclusive, supportive and ordered learning environment free from bullying, harassment and violence. Bullying, including cyber bullying, harassment and violence, is not acceptable in this school, and will be dealt with seriously and expediently. School has a zero tolerance approach to child abuse. This covers all who work at Abbotsford Primary School and have contact with the students at our school. Any abuse towards any child will be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities and dealt with accordingly.

Purpose

Abbotsford Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful teaching and learning environment where bullying and harassment is not tolerated. Abbotsford Primary School believes that all students have the right to learn in a school environment in which they feel safe and secure.

This Bullying and Harassment Policy should be read in conjunction with the *Abbotsford Primary School Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy* and the *Child Safety Code of Conduct.*

Aims

- To explain what bullying and harassment are, and the fact that they are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- To ask that everyone in the school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and have a responsibility to report it to staff, whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

Definitions

Bullying is when a person, or a group of people, repeatedly upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. Bullying may be direct physical, direct verbal, indirect or cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

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, transphobic/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, damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance, or cyberbullying.

Cyber-bullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, chat rooms, social media, etc. It could involve setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces. It can be verbal or written.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome and which is reasonably likely to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress a person. For example, teasing a student because of their speech impediment.

Guidelines

Abbotsford Primary School will not tolerate bullying (including cyberbullying) or harassment.

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying and harassment in a consistent and systematic way, with a focus on student safety and wellbeing.

Disciplinary measures will apply to students in breach of the behavioral expectations established by the school and communicated through this Bullying and Harassment Policy (*Student Engagement and Inclusion Policy, 2016*).

All complaints of bullying or harassment will be taken seriously and treated sensitively. This policy will be clearly communicated to students, parents and staff on the school's website and through newsletters from time to time.

Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, tolerance, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Student programs will be organised to raise student awareness about bullying and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion and to aid development of attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in peer support programs, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs, classroom discussions and occasional activities run by outside experts. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with DET materials e.g. Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand and 'No Blame Approach to Bullying'.

Staff professional development programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with bullying and/or harassment issues.

An annual confidential bullying survey of the student body will be run and de-identified information will be used at staff and/or parent meetings.

If students believe they are being bullied, they may contact their classroom teacher in the first instance, or a staff member that they would prefer to discuss the matter with.

Student Support

If any staff member feels a student is at risk from bullying and harassing behaviours, they should discuss their concerns with their classroom teacher or/Assistant Principal/Principal in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that staff document fully any actions taken in response to student bullying and/or harassment.

Some strategies that might be used by the school to assist the student may include education in coping strategies, assertiveness training, problem solving, mentoring and social skills, counselling, peer support, and behaviour modification.

Prevention

Students and staff will be briefed periodically on the Bullying and Harassment Policy guidelines and on preventative strategies to undertake in the classroom, the school yard and the internet. These preventative strategies include:

Students: **If I am bullied or harassed I will:**

- Speak to the person with the support of a friend;
- Report the bullying or harassment to a staff member who will help me.

Families / Caregivers: **What should I do if I think my child is being bullied or harassed?**

- Keep calm and reassure your child;
- Listen to your child and discuss safe and respectful ways to address the issue;
- Talk about the problem with your child's teacher;
- Speak only with the staff at the school, do not approach children of other families, or use digital media to express concerns of complaints;
- Follow grievance procedures;
- Talk with the Primary Welfare Officer or school leadership for further support.

Staff Procedure:

- Talk with the child/parent and clarify the issues in detail;
- Speak to all people involved and record responses;
- Seek a resolution – meet and collaboratively discuss options for a resolution with family members and provide follow up opportunities;
- Speak to leadership and show records/documentation of issue not resolved;
- Follow DET grievance procedures if matter persists;
- Provision of counselling to assist with social and emotional issues.

Reporting & Responsibilities

Reporting of an incident should occur as soon after the incident as possible. This gives the school the best opportunity to follow up the incident and intervene.

Related Policies:

Abbotsford Primary School Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, 2016.

Abbotsford Primary School Child Safety Code of Conduct, 2016

Links:

DET's Bully Stoppers: Make a Stand, Lend a Hand
DET's Vulnerable Students
Bully Free World: Special Needs Anti-bullying Toolkit
Australian Human Rights Commission - Human rights in the school classroom
Safe Schools Coalition Victoria
Racism. No way! anti-racism education for Australian schools
Social Skills Training

Evaluation:

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's four-year review cycle.
This policy was ratified by School Council in September 2016.