Safe School Bullying Prevention and Response Policy and Procedures

(Updated 21/08/2017)

Section 1: Our school's expectations, the principles underlying this policy and our schools agreed definition of bullying behaviour.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is one form of aggressive behaviour and can be covert or overt in nature. Widely accepted definitions of bullying behaviour emphasise the following four characteristics.

- *Bullying is deliberate-* there is an intention to cause physical and/or psychological pain or discomfort to another person.
- *Bullying involves a power imbalance-* there is an actual or perceived unequal relationship between the target and the initiator that may be based on physical size, age, gender, social status or digital capability and access.
- *Bullying has an element of repetition-* bullying behaviour is usually not on-off. It is repeated over time, with the threat of further incidents leading to fear and anxiety. Repeated acts of bullying may involve single acts with different targets, as well as multiple acts with the same target.
- *Bullying is harmful-* there is short or long-term physical or psychological harm to the target (e.g. as a result of coercion or intimidation).

"Not all forms of verbal or physical aggression are bullying… There will always be an element of professional judgement at play in determining whether specific incidents are bullying or not." (Bullying Prevention and Response: A Guide for Schools. P.11)

Expectations

All bullying behaviour, including verbal, physical, emotional and cyber bullying is unacceptable in our school. Also not acceptable in the school is the bullying aimed at particular groups, including racist bullying, bullying students with special needs, homophobic bullying, transgender bullying and sexual harassment. All instances of bullying (alleged or observed) will be taken seriously and followed up in line with this policy. The school is committed to ensuring that all staff and students are able to work and learn in an environment free from harassment so that they are able to meet their potential.

Principles

1. Bullying behaviour will occur in our school (as in all schools). There is no room for complacency.
2. Bullying is a way of behaving and can be changed through effective prevention and response strategies.
3. Effective prevention of bullying requires a whole-school approach- involving staff, students, parents and Whanau (i.e. the whole community).
4. Parents and Whanau need to have confidence that the culture, structures and processes at our school will reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring.
5. Parents and Whanau need to have confidence in how our school will respond when an incident of bullying does occur.
6. Prevention of bullying requires our school to create safe and positive social and physical environments.
7. Our school needs to set the expectation that students will report bullying to a member of staff and encourage students to feel comfortable doing this.
8. Prevention of bullying requires our families and whanau to work to create safe and positive social and physical environments in the home and in the community beyond the school (so that aggressive and bullying behaviour is not seen as a necessary survival skill in the community).

Section 2: Our school's bullying prevention activities

Education, Publicity and Prevention

A whole school approach is required to ensure a safe school environment.
All members of the school are to have a responsibility to recognise bullying and to take action when they are aware it is happening. It is also important to recognise when altercations and social infractions are not instances of bullying, and to take appropriate action.
The school will also work to prevent and/or reduce bullying by reinforcing positive behaviour and attitudes e.g. developing acceptance and tolerance of differences; developing empathy and social skills; developing the skills to effectively manage one's own behaviour; developing and expecting a culture of caring and support for each other.

The school's philosophy about bullying and the range of remedies available will be made explicit to students, staff and parents in the following ways.

Students, through:

- having clear and explicit standards set for students by teachers in their individual classrooms and as monitored across the school
- incorporating positive social skills and anti-bullying into the school and classroom health programme
- integrating the Key Competencies
- hearing regular positive supporting messages in school assemblies
- developing their understanding of digital citizenship and the Acceptable Use of ICT Policy that they have signed prior to use and to be reviewed and renewed each year
- having student leaders who are trying to set a positive example
- being encouraged to report harassment/bullying that occurs inside or outside the school
- having clear options as to who they can approach including staff, student leaders and parents
- having access to special guidance programmes

Staff, through:

- being clear on the school policies and procedures
- attending professional development/training as required
- developing and using appropriate student management strategies
- maintaining good data systems to collect relevant information
- communicating effectively within a whole-school team approach

Parents/Caregivers, through:

- providing school communication e.g. newsletter, website
- being available for parent meeting appointments
- identifying and recommending parent courses as applicable and available

Board of Trustees, through:

- maintaining regular Health and Safety reviews
- seeking information e.g. staff, student and/or parent/caregiver surveys
- attending professional development/training as available and required

Section 3: What we will do when bullying behaviour occurs

Identification

After ascertaining the facts teaching staff are to determine whether an event falls under the definition of bullying as stated above.

Response Levels

If it is felt that the event is a case of bullying, then the school's response will be guided by the management levels as stated in the Ministry of Education publication, *'Responding to Bullying Incidents: Quick Reference Guide'* (see below)*.

However, it is also to be understood that this is a guideline. Professional judgement and the principles of natural justice are to be used to make sure the actions taken fit the facts and context of any incidents to which they are applied, or to which exceptions and different approaches may seem best. For example, children develop their social skills and self-management skills as they grow older; the social ineptness of younger students would necessarily be taken into account. To assist with this process a *Bullying Assessment Matrix* is provided below, with some indicative *Bullying Scenarios*.

As can be seen below, the Ministry of Education guidelines advise school's identification and subsequent actions to be categorised within four levels of severity: Green, Yellow, Orange and Red. <u>All bullying within the Yellow to Red range will be referred to the school principal (or deputy principal) for follow up and action</u>.

Responding to Incidents

1. The victim will receive appropriate support and will be made to feel as safe as possible. In some situations both sides may see themselves as the victim, and all involved should be managed accordingly.
2. All sides of a potential bullying incident will be investigated fairly and an open mind maintained.
3. The principal (or deputy principal) will be informed and all information passed on.
4. It is often very helpful for the principal to corroborate and clarify the information received. Information will be sought from those involved and if required witnesses will be sought. Depending on the situation it is sometimes necessary to let some time pass before this is undertaken (e.g. to allow students to regain their composure or calm down), or a delay might simply be forced due to the time an incident occurs e.g. just before the end-of-school bell).
5. The principal will then make a determination, to the best of his/her ability, as to the facts of the case and the appropriate response. A judgement will have to be made based on the preponderance of evidence and what seems the most likely sequence of events. It may be that it is not possible to accurately determine the veracity of the events recounted; with this in mind it will be understood that it is better to let a perpetrator get off, than to incorrectly punish an innocent party (i.e. all parties are to be treated as "innocent until proven guilty"). If the bullying stops, then the process has been somewhat successful; if it continues then the new facts gained will be used to clarify and support any subsequent decision.
6. Responses and consequences will be determined by the principal and will be proportionate and according to the principles of fairness and natural justice. The principal will decide on a case by case basis which, if any, of the recommended responses as are outlined in the MOE guidelines will be actioned. The purposes of any applied consequences are: to immediately stop the bullying behaviour and its continuance; to ensure the ongoing safety of the victim; to modify the behaviour of the perpetrator towards positive behaviour; and to restore normal and amicable (or at least polite and tolerant) social behaviour and interactions between the parties.
7. The principal will make the decision as to who might need to be contacted or informed and at what stage this should occur. This can be at the initial stages, especially if someone is hurt, and/or at any subsequent time he/she feels is best. The guiding questions are: Who has a right to know and will want to know? Will informing this person or organisation help those involved in a positive way?
8. The victim and perpetrator will always be informed of the outcome/consequences, and feedback will be sought from both parties.
9. A record of, or reference to, all decisions/outcomes will be kept in eTap.

10. The principal will keep the board informed of bullying incidents and decisions.
11. Any media requests will be managed according to the board's Media Policy.

Responding to Bullying Incidents
Quick Reference Guide

Rating	What the bullying behaviour looks like ...	Response/action needed
Severe School should seek external advice and support	Severe bullying incidents (RED) are likely to: › involve physical or psychological harm requiring medical and / or mental health attention › involve serious sexual threats or any inappropriate sexualised behaviour › be part of a series of bullying incidents › be very likely to recur and / or be replicated through digital technology The target is likely to be: › particularly vulnerable and / or likely to require intensive, on-going school-based or specialist support The initiator is likely to be: › vulnerable and require intensive follow-up *Note: there may be other aggravating factors that have led to the incident being rated RED*	› reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident › activate your school bullying policy and processes for responding to incidents › engage your Board of Trustees and parents and whānau early › refer incident to the Police – call 111 or your local Police station for advice › contact Child, Youth and Family if you have concerns about possible neglect or abuse › contact NetSafe if you require urgent advice or support around cyberbullying › identify a media spokesperson and activate your school's media protocol › **DO NOT** investigate or interview students before seeking advice from the Police or Child, Youth and Family
Major School may need to seek advice or support	Major bullying incidents (ORANGE) are likely to: › involve physical threats or harm, and / or intimidation › involve some inappropriate sexual statements or threats › have occurred previously and be likely to recur or be replicated through digital technology The target is likely to: › have the resilience to cope with a period of additional school-based support in place *Note: there may be other aggravating or mitigating factors that have led to the incident being assessed as ORANGE*	› reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident › activate your school bullying policy and processes for responding to incidents › engage your Board of Trustees, parents and whānau early › contact other agencies for advice if you are uncertain whether or not they should be involved › follow your school's media protocol, identify a media spokesperson and engage with media as required › contact your school health guidance service if you have concerns about a student who is particularly troubled by bullying, eg, for a mental health assessment
Moderate School can manage response internally	Moderate bullying incidents rated (YELLOW) are likely to: › involve minor physical threats or harm, intimidation, or social exclusion › have no inappropriate sexual element › have never or rarely occurred before › be very unlikely to recur or be digitally replicated The target is likely to be: › resilient and able to cope well with minimal / short-term school-based support	› reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident › activate your school's bullying policy and processes for responding to incidents › engage your Board of Trustees and parents and whānau early › identify a media spokesperson in case of media interest
Mild Student can respond appropriately	Mild bullying incidents rated (GREEN) are likely to: › involve mild physical threats or harm, intimidation, or social exclusion › have no inappropriate sexual element › have never or rarely occurred before › be very unlikely to recur or be digitally replicated The target is likely to be: › resilient and able to cope well with peer support	› student knows strategies and can respond appropriately › peer support and / or minimal adult intervention may be needed › student knows how to report, and is reassured that they have done the right thing › report of incident is recorded and followed up according to school's policies and processes

Note: Most incidents of bullying behaviour can be appropriately responded to by students themselves, or by classroom or duty teachers. This quick reference guide is intended to be used with the Bullying Assessment Matrix – mainly for incidents that require a higher level of response. It focuses on actions schools may need to take over and above attending to the immediate needs of students and implementing their relevant policies and processes to respond to bullying incidents and ensure targets of bullying are adequately supported.

Bullying Assessment Matrix

The bullying assessment matrix is intended to help guide a school's response to a bullying incident and to be used prior to referring to the quick reference guide. It is intended as a supporting resource and does not replace decisions based on professional judgment and experience or schools' current policies and processes.

Most incidents of bullying behaviour can be appropriately responded to by students themselves, or by classroom or duty teachers. This bullying assessment matrix is intended only for incidents where a higher level of response is appropriate.

Incident Details

Brief description of what happened:

Date: _____   *Assessment completed by:* _____

Important Considerations

› *Your initial assessment may change (eg ORANGE to RED) as new information comes to light.*

› *You may decide to assess an incident as RED for reasons other than those stated here. Please note these below if this is the case.*

› *Student vulnerability may be influenced by factors such as mental health, disability, or lack of a social support group.*

Comments

(record any other mitigating or aggravating factors that have contributed to your assessment here)

Bullying Assessment Matrix

Instructions

Circle a number (1-3) for severity, impact and frequency.
Add ratings to obtain a total score. Give the incident a red, orange or yellow rating as follows:

› total score of 8-9, rate incident RED

› total score of 6-7, rate incident ORANGE

› total score 3-5, rate incident YELLOW

If any domain (severity, impact, or frequency) has been scored a '3' rate the incident as RED.

Factors which may DECREASE impact:

› target is resilient and able to manage situation with minimal support

› incident is unlikely to recur or be replicated via digital technology

› initiator willing to cease behaviour

Factors which may INCREASE impact:

› vulnerable target, likely to require significant support

› significant physical and / or psychological or emotional impact on target

› significant impact on other students and the wider school community

› incident replicated or prolonged using digital technology

› similar incident has occurred before (same target and / or initiator)

› incident involves inappropriate sexual behaviour or physical violence

› marked size or age difference between target and initiator

Severity

1. moderate	2. major	3. severe
eg, physical threats or harm, intimidation, social exclusions (no sexual element)	eg, some physical threats or harm, intimidation, sexual statements or threats	physical harm requiring medical attention, sexual threats or inappropriate sexualised behaviour, statements that may incite suicide

Impact

1. moderate	2. major	3. severe
target likely to cope well and require minimal / short-term support	target likely to cope well with a period of additional school-based support	target vulnerable and / or likely to need ongoing or intensive support from school and / or specialist support

Frequency

1. moderate	2. major	3. severe
has never or rarely occurred before and is very unlikely to recur or be digitally replicated	similar incidents have occurred fewer than 3 times and / or are likely to recur or be digitally replicated	similar incidents have occurred 3 or more times and / or are very likely to recur or be digitally replicated

Assessment Total: _____

Are any of the domains scored a '3'?
YES / NO

(if yes, code the incident RED)

Rating (please circle)

YELLOW	ORANGE	RED
moderate	major	severe

Bullying Scenarios

Moderate (Yellow):
A student (the initiator) makes inappropriate and derogatory remarks to another student (target) based on his / her ethnicity. A group of students is watching (bystanders). One or two similar incidents involving the same students have occurred over the past few weeks and the target student has received a few negative text messages. The target student is confident and assertive. He / she has told the initiator that his / her behaviour is disrespectful and inappropriate and has reported all the incidents to his / her class teacher.

Assessment rating:

Frequency	2	Has happened previously and is likely to be replicated
Impact	1	Student is confident and able to cope well with peer / teacher support
Severity	1	Comments, although offensive, does not contain threats
Total	**4**	**Moderate: Action – implement school bullying policy.**

Major (Orange):
A student (the initiator) makes inappropriate and derogatory remarks to another student (target) based on his / her ethnicity. A group of students is watching (bystanders). One or two similar incidents involving the same students have occurred over the past few weeks and the target student has received a few negative text messages. The target student is a migrant and is new to the community and to the school. He / she has not yet developed a strong peer network and is quite isolated. The remarks are particularly hurtful and intimidating and the student is feeling threatened and unsafe at school.

Assessment rating:

Frequency	2	Has happened on a few occasions and is likely to be replicated
Impact	3	Student is vulnerable
Severity	1	Comments are intended to intimidate
Total	**6**	**Major: Action – implement school bullying policy and consider whether external support is needed.**

Severe (Red):
A student (the initiator) makes inappropriate remarks to another student (target) based on his / her ethnicity and pushes him / her to the ground while continuing to threaten and verbally abuse him / her. There is a group of students watching (bystanders). Several similar incidents involving the same students have occurred over the past few weeks and the target student has received text messages. As a result of the fear of further bullying, the student's (target) school attendance has dropped and he / she feels very unsafe when at school.

Assessment rating:

Frequency	3	Has happened on several occasions and is being replicated
Impact	2	Student is fearful of further bullying and attendance is being affected
Severity	2	Comments intimidating and combined with physical aggression
Total	**7**	**Severe: Action – implement school bullying policy and engage external support.**