Bullying:
Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy (2011)

The NSW Department of Education and Communities rejects all forms of bullying. No student, employee, parent, caregiver or community member should experience bullying within the learning or working environments of the Department.

Bullying

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyber bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long term effects on those involved including bystanders.

Conflict or fights between equals or single incidents are not defined as bullying.

Bullying behaviour can be:

- **Verbal** eg name calling, teasing, abuse, putdowns, sarcasm, insults, threats
- **Physical** eg hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting
- **Social** eg ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating, making inappropriate gestures
- **Psychological** eg spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions, malicious SMS and email messages, inappropriate use of camera phones.

The term “bullying” has a specific meaning. The school’s Anti-bullying Plan sets out the processes for preventing and responding to student bullying. The school has a range of policies and practices, including welfare and discipline policies that apply to student behaviour generally.

Schools exist in a society where incidents of bullying behaviour may occur. Preventing and responding to bullying behaviour in learning and working environments is a shared responsibility of all departmental staff, students, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community.

**School staff** have a responsibility to:

- respect and support students
- model and promote appropriate behaviour
- have knowledge of school and departmental policies relating to bullying behaviour
- respond in a timely manner to incidents of bullying according to the school’s Anti-bullying Plan.

In addition, teachers have a responsibility to:

- provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact on individuals and the broader community.

**Students** have a responsibility to:

- behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity
- behave as responsible digital citizens
- follow the school Anti-bullying Plan
- behave as responsible bystanders
- report incidents of bullying according to their school Anti-bullying Plan.

**Parents and caregivers** have a responsibility to:

- support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible online behaviour
- be aware of the school Anti-bullying Plan and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour
- support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the school Anti-bullying Plan
- report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

All members of the school community have a responsibility to:

- model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community
- support the school’s Anti-bullying Plan through words and actions
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.
Our School Anti-Bullying Plan

This plan outlines the processes for preventing and responding to student bullying in our school and reflects the Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy of the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities.

At Banksmeadow Public School we reject all forms of bullying. No one should experience bullying within the learning and working environments of our school. This plan was developed by the Learning Support Team and Student Welfare Committee in collaboration with teachers, students and parents. The plan will be implemented in February 2012, evaluated on an ongoing basis and formally reviewed every two years.

Statement of purpose

Banksmeadow Public School has an inclusive environment where diversity is affirmed and individual differences are respected. Quality education is provided for students to meet their learning needs in a secure, ordered and supportive school environment. The focus of quality education is for students to learn and grow with confidence. Any inappropriate behaviour that interferes with teaching and learning at the school and/or the wellbeing of students cannot be accepted, including cyberbullying. Any such behaviour is unacceptable and needs to be managed and attract appropriate consequences.

Students, teachers, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community have a shared responsibility to create a safe and happy environment, free from all forms of bullying. Teachers, parents and other adult members of our community have a responsibility to model positive behaviour for all students in our community. Such modeling involves positive interactions on a daily basis and also appropriate reactions if bullying occurs.

Protection

The Department of Education and Communities defines bullying as repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyberbullying refers to such behaviour carried out through information and communication technologies.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders.

Students, teachers, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community can expect:

- that students will be safe at school, free from fear of bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimization.
- to be involved in the collaborative development of the school Anti-bullying Plan
- to know what is expected of them and others in relation to the Anti-bullying Plan
- that all students will be provided with appropriate support when bullying occurs.

Students, teachers, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community have a responsibility to:

- promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the whole school community
- actively work together to resolve incidents of bullying behaviour if and when they occur.
- contribute to the development of this Anti-bullying Plan and support it through words and actions

School Anti-bullying Plan – NSW Department of Education and Communities
• **Social** eg ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating, making inappropriate gestures
• **Psychological** eg spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions
• **Cyber** eg malicious SMS and email messages, inappropriate use of camera phones, hacking of online accounts, social media/blogging comments and posts.

*Each group within the school community has a specific role in preventing and dealing with bullying*

Students can expect to:
- know that their concerns will be responded to by school staff
- be provided with appropriate support (both the subjects of and those responsible for the behaviour)
- take part in learning experiences that address key understandings and skills relating to positive relationships, safety, gender equity, discrimination, bullying and harassment. These experiences will be guided by the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus, Values Education and other Key learning Areas.

Students have a responsibility to:
- advise teachers of any bullying or teasing
- behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity
- follow the school Anti-bullying Plan
- behave as responsible bystanders
- behave as responsible citizens
- respond to incidents of bullying according to the Anti-bullying Plan.

Parents and caregivers have a responsibility to:
- support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible on-line behaviour
- be aware of the school Anti-bullying Plan and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour
- support their children in developing positive and appropriate responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the school Anti-bullying Plan
- report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

Schools have a responsibility to:
- develop an Anti-bullying plan through consultation with parents, caregivers, students and the community which clearly identifies both the behaviours that are unacceptable and the strategies for dealing with bullying in the classroom and playground (following the guidelines established by the Department of Education and Communities)
- inform the students, parents, caregivers and the community about the School Rules and Anti-bullying Plan
- provide students with strategies to respond positively to incidents of bullying behaviour, including responsibilities as bystanders or observers
- provide parents, caregivers and students with clear information on strategies that promote appropriate behaviour, and the consequences for inappropriate behaviour
- communicate to parents and caregivers that they have an important role to play in resolving incidents of bullying behaviour involving their children
- follow up complaints of bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimisation.

Teachers have a responsibility to:
- respect and support students in all aspects of their learning
- model appropriate behaviour
- respond in an appropriate and timely manner to incidents of bullying, according to the Anti-Bullying Plan.

**Managing Bullying**

One-off incidents of inappropriate behaviour should be dealt with by the class or playground teachers as they arise. If the inappropriate behaviours are repeated, whether they are verbal, physical, social or psychological, then other strategies come into action.

At the outset, all students are consistently reminded that they have the right to come to school and feel happy and confident in their learning and play, free
from bullying and harassment. No-one has the right to make another person feel worried or uncomfortable. If someone is making a student feel like this, then they must tell someone about it. Bullying only flourishes in a culture of silence or not telling. Telling someone about bullying behaviour is not "dobbing". It is merely asserting their right to feel safe and happy while at school and while coming and going to school.

Strategies When a Bullying Incident is Observed or Reported
- The incident is initially investigated by the teacher to whom it has been reported.
- The teacher determines whether or not the incident is bullying, according to the agreed definition.
- If it is not bullying the incident is dealt with by the teacher
- If it is bullying the incident is dealt with by the teacher or Stage Supervisor using the following strategies:
  - Interview with the victim, bullies and witnesses using Restorative Justice practices. For the bully, this is a non-adversarial interview designed to emphasise the concern of the person who is being hurt or elicit some empathy and to come to some agreement as to what the person might do to help the victim. For the victim, this is done in a supportive manner and the aim is to explore ways in which the victim can behave to minimise the chances of the bullying being repeated. This may involve the victim being shown assertive behaviour or reducing behaviour which may be provoking the bullies. During the meeting the teacher remains calm, empathetic, never angry or indignant and respect is shown for each person.
  - All information will be documented on our school student welfare recording system, ESR.
  - Punishments may occur depending on the circumstances.
  - Both victim and bully will be offered counseling if deemed necessary.
  - Follow-up with bullies and victims. It is essential that daily follow-up takes place. This involves asking the bullies individually how they have followed through what they agreed to do to help the victim and asking the victim how they are progressing and whether or not there have been any further incidents. The follow-up is initially carried out daily, and then tapered off if all is going well.
  - If the bullying behaviour does not stop as a result of this intervention, then other sanctions will be implemented as part of the Behaviour Management Policy. There will be a need to keep working with the victim at this time to support them. This may have to be carried out by a member of the executive, depending when the bullying incidents come to light.
  - Communicate with parents (both victim and bully’s) the details of the incident, how it has been dealt with and how it will be followed up. Ask for support from the parents to help develop behaviours and attitudes in their children which are consistent with the Anti-Bullying Plan.

Prevention

Strategies to Prevent Bullying
- Maintaining a positive school climate that acknowledges that bullying is not tolerated within the school community.
- Provision of programs that promote resilience, for example, life skills and social skills, conflict resolution and communication skills, Positive Behaviour for Learning Program, Life Education, Bigger Than a Bully, Child Protection, Bounce Back, Circle Time, Buddy Programs and Harmony Day initiatives.
- Consistent focus on school behaviour expectations and understanding of acceptable behaviour.
- Professional development for staff related to bullying and strategies to counteract it.
- Build community awareness and input relating to anti-bullying, its characteristics and the school’s programs and response (newsletters, weekly forums).
- Maintain staff commitment to acknowledge victims of bullying and deal with bullying incidents.
- Ongoing gathering and recording of data.
Advice to students who are being bullied
• Ignore or walk away
• Look directly into the eyes of the person attempting to bully you, speak firmly and say, “Stop that, I don’t like it”.
• Go directly to a teacher or staff member and report the incident if the attempts to stop the bullying behaviour do not work.
• Other protective strategies such as stay away from the bully or places where bullying occurs and be with supportive friends.
• Do not share private information like passwords, name and address, phone numbers with people you don’t know. This can include sharing photos of yourself, friends and family.

Advice to students who know someone else is being bullied
Students should be made aware that witnesses to bullying have a very powerful role to play and early intervention can defuse situations before bullying gets out of hand.
• If possible, intervene as the bullying occurs by telling the bully to stop.
• Refuse to join in with the bully.
• Support students who are being bullied – just standing by them can help prevent bullying.
• Tell an adult if you are concerned about bullying.
• It is every student’s right and responsibility to report bullying whether it happens to them or someone else.

Incidents of Cyberbullying
If students are being harassed online they are encouraged to take the following actions immediately:
• Tell a trusted adult – teacher, parent(s), older sibling, grandparent
• Log out and stop messaging if you feel you are being harassed
• Block user messages if being harassed through email or instant messaging
• Never respond or reply to harassing messages
• Keep a record of calls, messages, posts or emails that may be hurtful or harmful
• Advise your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or phone company. Most service providers have appropriate use policies that restrict users from harassing others. They can respond to reports of harassment over their networks or help track down the appropriate agency to report to.
• Report incidents to police if bullying includes physical threats. Some people believe they can get away with serious threats because it is anonymous. They are wrong. Most can be traced and it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone or any form of communication to menace, harass or offend another person.

Early Intervention
• Students to be encouraged to report bullying incidents involving themselves or others.
• Teachers to regularly remind students to report incidents and reiterate that reporting is not “dobbing”.
• Parents encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.
• Students recognised for positive behaviours.
• Teachers use class or playground management plans if an incident of bullying occurs.
• Executive staff are made aware of incidents of bullying.
• Bullying incidents are recorded in playground folders, student welfare book or staff’s own diaries.

Those students, who are at risk or identified as being ongoing victims of bullying type behaviour will be encouraged to report directly and immediately to a member of staff if they feel either bullied or intimidated. Early intervention arrangements for students at risk will be communicated to all staff.

Response

Incidents of bullying can be reported immediately to any staff member by students and/or their parents. Any bullying incidents will be investigated and recorded as outlined in this plan. Consequences for inappropriate behaviour will be managed by the class teacher, stage supervisor or principal. Individual cases will be dealt with according to the circumstances. Feedback and meetings will be held, where required, with all those involved.
The school will manage serious incidents as per Department of Education and Communities policies including:

- Student Discipline in Government Schools - support materials
- Suspension and Expulsion of School Students Procedures
- Student Welfare Policy
- Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy
- Bullying Among Young Children: A guide for parents
- National Safe Schools Framework
- Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing - Summary
- Complaints Handling Policy Guidelines

Our school community will be empowered, through a variety of strategies, to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, harassment and victimisation and behave as responsible bystanders. These may include:

- Parent forums
- Information evenings
- Parent/teacher interviews
- School website
- School newsletter

Incidents of bullying will be monitored on an ongoing basis. Student Welfare programs will be evaluated annually and reported on in the Annual School Report. The Anti-Bullying Plan will be formally reviewed every two years.

**Additional Information**

Additional information, resources and support relating to effective anti-bullying strategies can be found at:

- Police Youth Liaison Officer, Mascot Police 8338 7399

**Principal’s comment**

As a staff and school community we have a responsibility to take positive and consistent actions to deal effectively with bullying. Our Anti-Bullying Plan aims to prevent and deal effectively with any incidences of bullying. Banksmeadow Public School staff recognise that bullying occurs and that it needs to be dealt with quickly and with due thought to procedural fairness.

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