



Bullying Prevention Policy

PRESHIL VISION STATEMENT

At our core remains an unshakeable commitment to encouraging all children to set and achieve their own goals and to be respected as individuals in their own right. This is a commitment to our children to be nurtured and challenged in an atmosphere that inspires creativity and independent thinking in all areas of life and does not, overtly or subtly, use competition or punishment to motivate through the fear of failure.

As global citizens we encourage an awareness of world issues and encourage effort to make a positive difference. We believe that education should prepare students to be thoughtful, peace-loving and active citizens of the world. Preshil will remain a school that puts kindness, compassion and social relationships at the centre of its operations.

Keeping Our Children Safe

Preshil is committed to the creation and maintenance of a child-safe school environment. The care, safety and welfare of students are embedded in policies and procedures which ensure a commitment to zero tolerance of child abuse. All actions and programs will maintain high ethical standards and comply with child safety standards and child protection reporting guidelines. We have a moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for children and young people and to protect them from all forms of abuse and neglect. We are steadfast in our resolve to honour this responsibility and promote the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children and young people.

Mutual Respect

Preshil's emphasis on social and emotional learning involves learning how to recognise and manage emotions, promote caring and concern for others, make responsible decisions, establish and maintain positive relationships, and handle challenging situations effectively. Children who have social and emotional competencies and skills find it easier to manage themselves, relate to others, resolve conflict, and feel positive about themselves and the world around them.

This policy and other related policies affirm that students have the right to express their needs, to be listened to and taken seriously, stand up for themselves, take responsibility for their actions and make their own decisions through the use of conflict resolution and restorative practices skills. These skills are taught in the Kindergarten through to Year 12.

Mutual respect means that every person is recognised and accepted as a significant individual with a valued place and unique contribution to make in the community. Preshil's philosophy of mutual respect is based on our long-standing commitment to the empowerment of our students, by providing respect and safety in the rich diversity of school life as an absolute priority.

Our emphasis on mutual respect aims to promote a climate of trust and caring amongst the students and adults in our school. It sets standards and provides the commitment that the Preshil community makes to shared values and a code of conduct.

The prevention of and responses to incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour are more readily achieved in a caring and supportive school culture that promotes positive relationships. Bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, aggression and violence disregard our values, including dignity, respect, justice, equity, compassion, trust and courage. Importantly, such actions can adversely affect the wellbeing of our students and are therefore unacceptable.

Duty of Care

The school has a legal obligation (its duty of care) to take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and to protect students from foreseeable harm. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent physical or psychological harm occurring as a result of bullying.

Principles

Preshil does not tolerate harassing, abusive or bullying behaviour by any member of its staff or student body. Every member of the Preshil school community has a responsibility to refrain from harassing, abusing or bullying others, to actively discourage these behaviours and to support all parties involved in situations of potential conflict. Breaches of school policy should be reported immediately to assist in investigation. Any person who breaches school policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including expulsion.

This policy is grounded in the beliefs that:

- every person has the right to be treated respectfully and feel safe from any form of verbal, physical and emotional abuse
- the school is committed to building and nurturing a community that values diversity
- reporting of unacceptable behaviour is essential to the effective implementation of this policy
- complainant(s) will be protected from victimisation
- learning technologies are used ethically and responsibly in the school environment
- communication is respectful and human dignity is valued

Definitions

Bullying: is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person that creates a risk to health and safety. It occurs when an individual or a group deliberately upsets or hurts another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Forms of bullying include:

Physical bullying: pushing, shoving, fighting, pinching and any other unwelcome physical contact used intentionally to intimidate or hurt someone.

Verbal bullying: put downs, particularly those referring to physical characteristics, can result in loss of self-esteem. Racial discrimination of any kind is a form of bullying.

Gesture bullying: non-verbal signals used to silence and intimidate a victim.

Extortion bullying: physically stronger and more powerful students may bully other students into giving up their possessions, buying food and drink, or taking part in rule breaking activities.

Exclusion bullying: deliberately being left out of activities is a most hurtful form of bullying.

Visual bullying: offensive notes or material, graffiti, or damaging other people's possessions.

Sexual bullying: touching, sexually orientated jokes, drawings of, or writing about someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking questions about someone's private life.

Student Sexual Offending refers to sexual behaviour that is led by a student 10 years and over which may amount to a sexual offence.

- On occasions **bullying may be sexualised in nature** and may involve 'body shaming' and other personal sexual intimidation.
- It may be difficult to determine whether student sexual behaviour amounts to sexual offending.
- As outlined in the Four Critical Actions for Schools: Responding to Student Sexual Offending the School will seek further advice as to whether behaviour or suspected behaviour amounts or constitutes student sexual offending and or whether it is indicative of any underlying abuse.

Cyber-bullying: the use of various forms of electronic media to spread text and visual messages to cause hurt, embarrassment, intimidation.

Categories of Bullying:

There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying:** This form includes hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. **Direct verbal bullying:** This form includes name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
3. **Indirect bullying:**

This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:

 - lying and spreading rumours
 - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
 - mimicking
 - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
 - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
 - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress someone.

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying including:

- **Mutual conflict:** In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation, with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- **Social rejection or dislike:** Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specifically and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
- **Single Acts:** Single acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying, except in extreme cases.

Steps the School will take when staff become aware of bullying behaviour

Preshil will respond to all reported incidents of bullying, perceived or actual, sensitively, fairly and promptly by.

- using a Bullying Response Pathway when we become aware of incidents. The Pathway assists with a regulated and thorough response.
- implementing a Bullying Response Action Plan as part of the Response Pathway
- keeping a written record of any bullying investigation
- encouraging students, staff, parents and carers to report bullying and cyber-bullying to the Classroom Teacher, the Year Level Coordinator, the Student Support Team, and or the Heads of Campus.
- investigating complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved

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- nominating a person or staff member to coordinate strategies for the resolution of specific bullying incidents reported in this school
- notifying parents/guardians of bullying incidents involving their children
- contacting the Police or Police Youth Liaison Officer if the bullying situation has involved violence, student sexual offending or threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct
- maintaining records of bullying incidents and related interventions
- conducting Student Safety Audits at least once a year to promote safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments
- promoting student voice and empowerment in classrooms and through the use of Student Leaders and Student Leader meetings to discuss matters associated with bullying, cyber bullying, safety and wellbeing
- reviewing and evaluating the school's Bullying Prevention Policy and the responsible use of technology to ensure they are working effectively
- engaging with parents/guardians to review and evaluate the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology to ensure they are working effectively.

Student Responsibilities

Students at Preshil have responsibilities to treat everyone in the school community with respect and dignity and use technology appropriately and respectfully. The staff at Preshil will encourage and support students to:

- immediately seek help from a trusted adult if they are aware of or involved in a bullying or cyberbullying incident
- seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident
- understand that any social networking site that identifies the school by name or image or implication is part of the school environment
- In age-appropriate circumstances, the student should keep evidence of alleged bullying and produce it on request (for example, phone text messages).

Responsibilities of Parents or Guardians

Parents/guardians at Preshil have the responsibilities to treat everyone with respect and dignity, building positive relationships within the school community. Parents/guardians should use technology appropriately and respectfully. Preshil will work in partnership with parents/guardians in responding to incidents of bullying.

Preshil staff will

- remind parents/guardians about the need to reinforce the school messages in the proper use of technology to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens
- encourage parents or guardians to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider) and, as relevant, to the school
- ask parents/guardians to contact the school immediately through the Classroom Teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Student Support staff or directly to the Head of Campus if they know of any bullying incident

- expect that parents/guardians will model behaviour that reflect the school's Vision and Mission statement. Thus parents/guardians are required to act respectfully to all members of the school community at all times.
- When bullying affects the wellbeing of their child, parents are to contact the relevant Head of Campus.

Bullying and Harassment (including cyberbullying)

When a student makes a complaint of harassment, abuse, bullying (as defined by the Department of Education and Training Victoria)¹, cyberbullying (as defined below), the following principles of natural justice and restorative practice will be followed in all formal investigations and interventions.

- In the event an individual believes they are the subject of harassment, abuse, bullying, or cyberbullying, the individual should immediately report the issue to a teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Heads of Campus or Principal about their complaint.
- The staff member receiving the complaint will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and will outline the process that will be followed to the person raising the concern.
- As soon as a complaint is received, the staff to whom the complaint is made should report to the Principal the nature of the complaint. Preshil (through the Principal or staff representative), will develop the proposed timeline for resolution, and the type of investigation that will take place.
- The staff member receiving the complaint, or if appropriate, the Principal or Heads of Campus, will initiate a prompt and thorough investigation of the complaint(s).
- The staff member receiving the complaint will outline a timeline for resolution of the complaint to the person raising the concern that takes into account the investigation needed, the availability of the parties that may need to be interviewed (and any third-parties), access to the technology (in the case of cyberbullying), and the significance of the issue raised.²
- While complaints will be acknowledged when received, the ability to resolve the complaint will vary depending on the nature of the complaint, and persons, or personnel involved.
- The student accused of harassment, abuse or bullying will be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- All complaints will be explained to the student(s) they are made against
- The student will be given a chance to explain their version of events
- A course of action will be determined in consultation with the student's parents, teachers and Head of Campus.
- Counselling and support will be offered to both parties, if appropriate.
- A restorative justice practice approach will be used to address the harm caused and to ensure that a respectful agreement is made between all parties and that this is put into action.
- A report on action taken will be prepared and presented to the Principal as soon as possible so that the Principal can report to the parties concerned as soon as is practicable within the realms of privacy and confidentiality.

¹ The [Department of Education and Training](#) identifies three main features of bullying - the misuse of power in a relationship, it must be ongoing and repeated and it involves behaviours that can cause harm.

² It is important that complaints be resolved in a timely manner to avoid dragging out the complaints period. The staff member responsible should undertake to keep the complainant updated as to the progress of the complaint.

- All notes and reports of the complaints, process and its outcomes will be recorded and filed securely.
- If the complaint is upheld, any action taken will be commensurate with the seriousness of the matter in line with the practices of restorative justice.
- Mitigating factors will be taken into account when assessing if action is necessary
- **Any student found to have breached school policies may be subject to action up to and including, suspension, expulsion, or denial of re-enrolment.** The right of appeal can be invoked in the event that a child is expelled or suspended from school or is subject to another form of intervention.
- If the complainant student or their parent/s feels that an appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached, they will be advised to contact the Principal, the Head of Campus or the School Council, as appropriate.
- In the event of an intervention, the right of appeal is explained to both parties.
- No retaliatory behaviour is taken against the student making the complaint or any other students who may have witnessed the event(s) in the complaint process.

If implementation of this policy does not resolve the complaint, other measures may be considered and external agencies may be engaged at any stage of the investigation or intervention process, subject to the discretion of the Heads of Campus, in consultation with the Principal.

Students who engage in cyberbullying will be subject to the process outlined above in “Responding to a Compliant.” All students are encouraged to report cyberbullying behaviour to a teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Wellbeing Coordinator, Heads of Campus, or Principal.

Related Documents

Complaints Policy (Students)
Preshil Complaints Register
Social Media Policy

Review

This policy has been developed in consultation with the school community and is consistent with a whole school culture of positive behaviour, respect and tolerance. These guidelines have been reviewed and approved by the Management Team in July 2022. They will be reviewed again annually from the date of approval or as required by any critical incidents, legislative or regulatory changes.