Bullying Prevention Policy

PURPOSE

Croydon Special Developmental (Croydon SDS) 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 Croydon SDS 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 Croydon SDS.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Croydon SDS 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.

Croydon SDS 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 applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our school's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Equal Opportunity policy, Inclusion and Diversity Policy, Duty of Care Policy and Statement of Values and School Philosophy.

POLICY

Definitions

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike. In this policy any reference to 'bullying' includes all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.

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, 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 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 technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Other distressing behaviours

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

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

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.

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

BULLYING PREVENTION

Croydon SDS 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 Croydon SDS 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. At our school:

- We have a Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support Framework 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 Positive Behaviour Support strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Croydon SDS has identified a range of whole school preventative strategies :

- SoSafe! forming the basis of a whole school approach to teaching social skills including understanding relationships, appropriate behaviour and protective behaviours.
- Using the SWPBS framework and to model and promote school values.
- Planning and provision of effective supervision in the school environment.
- Promotion, re-enforcement and celebration of positive social behaviours.
- Provision of play areas to cater for student needs, with communication support resources.
- Review and adjustments to staffing to support student needs.
- Explicit teaching of playground and classroom behaviour expectations.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Croydon Special Developmental 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 teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including team leader or Family Support Co-ordinator.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Croydon SDS should contact Libby Anderson, Principal on 9725 4933.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the student central file; and
2. inform the teacher, team leader, Assistant Principal and Principal.

The Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Principal 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 Principal 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 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.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Principal 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 in consultation with teachers, the Family Support Co-ordinator, SSS, Assistant Principal.

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, Croydon SDS will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the developmental age and stage of the child
- 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.

Croydon SDS may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to Family Support Co-ordinator, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to Family Support Co-ordinator, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to Family Support Co-ordinator, SSS, external provider
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

Croydon SDS is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Croydon SDS understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour if greatly affected by student reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Croydon SDS are timely and appropriate to the circumstances.

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
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Equal Opportunity Policy

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on an 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:
- 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 parents, staff, students and school council

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated on 1/4/2019 and is scheduled for review in April 2021.