CROYDON SDS
BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school office on ph 9725 4933 or by email on croydon.sds@education.vic.gov.au

PURPOSE

Croydon Special Developmental School (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 so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Croydon SDS community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Croydon SDS will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Croydon SDS to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting 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 targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- 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 solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.
- take a preventative approach by explicitly teaching appropriate and positive pro-social skills through curriculum.
- explicitly teach self-advocacy skills to identify, respond and report bullying behaviour
- provide students with communication tools to report bullying behaviour using their preferred means of communication.

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 addresses how Croydon SDS aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Croydon SDS recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the

definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Inclusion and Diversity policy.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school.

POLICY

<u>Definitions</u>

Bullying

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:

> *Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.*
>
> *Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records)*
>
> *Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.*

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour which can be:

- Physical
- Verbal/written
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying)
- Cyberbullying

For further information about bullying, refer to: Bully Stoppers (education.vic.gov.au) and the Department's Bullying Prevention and Response policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

We understand that behaviour is a form of communication for our students. Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who

witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours are supported to report their concerns to school staff using the Stop, Go, Tell approach.

Our school will follow our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and this Bullying Prevention Policy where the behaviour constitutes bullying.

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 nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school. Croydon SDS will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression using our Behaviour Response Flowchart.

Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

Discrimination is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our school and will be addressed through Student Support Group (SSG) meetings, environmental review and adjustment, as well as, explicit teaching of pro-social skills. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Bullying Prevention

Croydon SDS has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates our school values; care, share, do your best and be safe.

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 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.
- We participate in the Respectful Relationships initiative, which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and include multicultural education such as Indigenous experience, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion.
- We participate in the Safe Schools program to help us foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.

- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum is tailored to student needs with a collective understanding of having holistic and developmentally appropriate expectations for behaviours encouraged at school.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to staff about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

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

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Croydon SDS

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Croydon SDS are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Croydon SDS should speak to their child's teacher.

Croydon SDS provides students with multiple means of communication to voice their concerns and report bullying behaviour.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Xuno which will then be reviewed through the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Universal supports teams.

A member of the MTSS or Universal supports team will investigate all allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the MTSS or Universal supports team member may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parent/carer(s) 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 MTSS or Universal supports team member 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 MTSS or Universal supports team 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 class teams.

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, maturity and individual circumstances of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

MTSS or Universal supports team may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral and consultations with external providers to:
  - the target student or students
  - the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
  - affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.
- Implement interventions for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Our school considers, explores and implements positive and non-punitive interventions to address bullying behaviours. Withdrawal from class will only be considered as a last resort.

Withdrawal measures may be used as part of a staged response to inappropriate behaviour in combination with other engagement and support strategies to ensure that factors that may have contributed to the student's behaviour are identified and addressed. Interventions at our school will be applied fairly, consistently and in consultation with families through SSG meetings. Students will always be provided with an opportunity to be heard using the communication tools that will be provided to suit their needs.

Intervention measures that may be applied include:

- warning a student that their behaviour is inappropriate
- teacher controlled consequences such as moving a student in a classroom or other reasonable and proportionate responses to misbehaviour
- behaviour support and intervention meetings
- suspension
- expulsion

Suspension and expulsion are measures of last resort and may only be used in situations consistent with Department policy, available at:

- https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/suspensions/policy
- https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/expulsions/policy
- https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/restraint-seclusion/policy

In line with Ministerial Order 1125, no student aged 8 or younger will be expelled without the approval of the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training.

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. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

All staff members are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included on the shared drive/staff dashboard
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

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
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

Our school also follows Department of Education and Training policy relating to bullying including:

- Bullying Prevention and Response

- [Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support Policy](#)

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data to inform this review will be collected through:
- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- Xuno
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2022
Consultation	School council meeting date 18.8.2022
	School community including staff newsletter dated 22.7.2022
Approved by	Principal Libby Anderson
Next scheduled review date	June 2024