

# Bullying Prevention Policy

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Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, contact [croydon.hills.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:croydon.hills.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

## PURPOSE

Croydon Hills 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 Hills community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Croydon Hills will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Croydon Hills 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 Hills.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Croydon Hills 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.

Croydon Hills 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 Hills aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Croydon Hills 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**

### **Definitions**

#### **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 intentional harm.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- Cyberbullying – any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

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.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://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**

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 should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and/or 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 and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Croydon Hills will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

*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 there may be serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. 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 Hills 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 acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Croydon Hills is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives from the [Schools Mental Health Menu](#) that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying and help us to build a positive and inclusive school climate.
- 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 teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal History, 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.
- We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way; building capacity of all individuals to navigate conflict.
- 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.
- Students sign behaviour agreements and internet codes of conduct that identify the code of conduct and set expectations around anti-bullying behaviour.
- Teachers incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Staff are:
  - observant to signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
  - proactive in raising awareness of the issues related to bullying
  - active promoters of social skills which build desirable citizenship
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- 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.
- Reduce the opportunity for bullying at school with an active presence of staff in and around the playground
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- We respond to individual problems and taking action to foster tolerance - using restorative practices, wherever possible
- We participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.
- Confidential records regarding bullying issues are maintained – these are kept on Compass and in some more private cases, with the Assistant Principal

## **Restorative practices**

Restorative practices refers to a range of processes that are underpinned by the following concepts:

- misconduct is a violation of people and relationships
- these violations create obligations and liabilities
- problem-solving focuses on healing and making things right.

Restorative practices involve the development and enhancement of relationships in schools and teaching conflict resolution and other problem-solving skills. They also involve classroom management that is participatory, democratic and focused on problem-solving. Restorative practices require a shift in philosophy from traditional punitive models of behaviour management to those relational models which, as well as holding wrongdoers accountable for their behaviour, provide support for the community affected by the wrongdoing.

Specific restorative practices are:

1. Small group conferences are usually confined to a small group of students or an individual student who have been involved in an incident of harm that is determined to have a less serious impact. Typically small group conferences might be used by a teacher or staff member to deal with low-level bullying before matters escalate. Parents, while not directly involved, are informed of the process and its outcomes. Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.
2. Classroom conferences involve a whole class in addressing issues such as classroom bullying and more generally, classroom disruption that has affected student wellbeing and teaching and learning in the classroom.

Community conferences bring together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the wrongdoer and the student being bullied or harmed, as well as their families and appropriate school personnel.

These conferences are conducted by a trained restorative practices staff member within the school, a series of scripted questions are directed to participants in order to understand the incident and its antecedents and the effects of the incident on the community. An agreement is reached whereby all participants feel there has been some restitution and relationships have been repaired. The agreement also reflects plans to meet identified needs of the participants, such as counselling, and to implement necessary changes to school policy and practice. Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.

The decision to use restorative practices should be made on a case by case basis as the views of those involved in an incident should be taken into consideration. Based on the circumstances of each individual incident, teachers and staff should consider whether it is appropriate to use restorative practices for matters relating to cyberbullying.

## **Promoting Cybersafety and preventing cyberbullying**

The internet and digital technologies are now very much a part of life and learning. As an increasingly interactive medium, digital technologies bring with them exciting new opportunities

to engage children and young people in their learning. At the same time these technologies also bring some challenges. At CHPS we promote Cybersafety by:

- encouraging cybersafe behaviour across the school, including Acceptable Use Agreements
- providing access to professional learning opportunities for teachers
- providing specific teaching of the safe use of technologies for students
- encouraging students to not communicate with strangers online
- warning against providing personal details to a stranger
- cautioning against adding strangers as friends on social networking websites
- encouraging students to immediately report concerns of online stranger danger to parents/carers, teachers or another adult
- explaining why students should not send, or participate in, the production or forwarding of abusive or offensive digital materials.

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

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **Reporting concerns to Croydon Hills**

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 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 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 Hills are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher/Year Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, Principals.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Croydon Hills should contact the school and speak the Assistant Principal - Wellbeing.

### **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass; and
2. inform relevant staff, Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal.

Staff are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, staff 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/carers 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 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 staff have 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, School Support Services, Assistant Principal, Principal or, as required, Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

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 Hills will consider:

- the age and maturity 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.

The school may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Officer, SSS and external providers to:
  - the target student or students
  - the students engaging in the bullying behaviour

- o affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate 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 Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Restrict 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, including resilience programs.
- 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 proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

Croydon Hills 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.

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

## **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](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every two years, 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 to inform this review will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- [Bully Stoppers Data Collection](#) tool
- 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](#)

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with staff and School Council

## REVIEW CYCLE

Consultation	- 16-20 February 2024 (Staff) - 21 February 2024 (School Council)
Ratified by Principal	- February 2024
Review Date	- February 2026