

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY



PURPOSE

Seaholme Primary School will provide a positive culture of inclusion where bullying (including cyber-bullying), is not accepted. A safe and supportive school climate, in line with Child Safe Standards, can help prevent bullying. Safety starts in the classroom. Students should also feel and be safe everywhere at school, in the classrooms, the library, the toilets and the playground.

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.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected, and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Seaholme Primary School 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 Seaholme Primary School

Seaholme Primary School has **zero tolerance of bullying and of harassment in any form**

SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Seaholme Primary School's related school policies, including *Engagement and Wellbeing Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

DEFINITIONS

Definitions:

Types of bullying behaviour

There are some specific types of bullying behaviour:

- **verbal or written abuse** - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
- **violence** - including threats of violence
- **sexual harassment** - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation

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- **homophobia** and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality
- **discrimination including racial discrimination** - treating people differently because of their identity
- **cyberbullying** - either online or via mobile phone.

What is not bullying?

There are also some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying:

- **mutual conflict** - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- **single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying
- **social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others

Bullying roles

People in a bullying scenario may take on one of the following roles:

- a person who engages in bullying behaviour
- a target who is subjected to the bullying behaviour
- an assistant who assists the bullying behaviour and actively joins in
- a supporter who encourages and gives silent approval to the bullying, by smiling, laughing or making comments
- a silent bystander who sees or knows about someone being bullied but is passive and does nothing, this may be an adult bystander
- a defender who supports the student who is being bullied by intervening, getting teacher support or comforting them.

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.

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.

Cyberbullying consists of direct or indirect psychological bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, any form of internet forums, websites, or multi-user domains etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio. It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

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Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

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 of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Seaholme Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Seaholme Primary School aims to:

- to create a culture of inclusion
- to reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable
- to articulate the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported whether a person is an observer or a victim
- to ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are responded to consistently and effectively
- to seek parental and peer-group support and cooperation at all times
- 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.

The Bullying and Harassment Policy of the school will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package, and included on the school's website, while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

Seaholme Primary School 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.

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Bullying prevention at Seaholme Primary School 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 have a positive school environment 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 classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- 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.
- The Schoolwide Positive Behaviours (SWPBS) framework encourages positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- 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.

Developing shared understandings:

Students will develop a consistent understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour through the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS). The types of bullying and roles people can play in bullying will also be addressed, as will the process for students to report all incidents of bullying.

Response to incidents:

Reporting

It is the role of all students, parents and staff to report incidents of bullying. Whilst reporting can be difficult, particularly for students who fear reprisal, incidents must be reported to school staff. If parents become aware of a bullying incident, they must report it to their child's teacher and/or the principal. Teachers who become aware of bullying incidents will immediately contact the principal.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the school incident register, and/or Compass
2. inform the relevant staff person, ie Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal

The principal class is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the school may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents

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-
- 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 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 school 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 the Principal.

When a bullying incident is reported, it is vital there is a consistent response from the school. Once an incident of bullying has been reported, the matter will be investigated and addressed by the classroom teacher, staff member and/or principal. This will involve mediation and conferencing with both the student targeted and the student engaged in bullying behaviour.

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, Seaholme Primary School 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 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.

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

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider

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- Facilitate a meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective being 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 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, 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.
- 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 victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including SWPBS strategies.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example year group strategies

Seaholme Primary School staff and the principal are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of the responses to bullying behaviour.

Seaholme Primary School understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Seaholme Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Procedures for Critical Incidents

The Principal will contact the DET Emergency and Security Management Unit (ESMU). The ESMU provides a single reference point to assist schools in responding to and reporting emergency matters and critical incidents including criminal and unwanted activities.

Critical incidents are determined at the principal's discretion and include but are not limited to physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats or homophobic bullying. (See also Critical Incidents Policy)

Proactive Bullying Prevention

The Student Engagement and Wellbeing, and Behaviour Management policies outline our School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) framework that explicitly defines, teaches and reinforces positive behaviours at Seaholme Primary School.. The SWPBS data collection system allows for the identification of patterns of bullying in the school. Positive behaviours are reinforced through SWPBS acknowledgement systems. Strategies that promote student resilience are also explicitly taught through SWPBS.

Professional development will be provided for and shared with all staff relating to prevention of bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms.

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The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Related School Policies

- Child Safe Policy
- Managing Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Work Place Bullying Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable use Policy
- Camps and Excursions Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Critical Incident and Accident Reporting Policy

There are additional supports available to students involved in bullying incidents, such as the Kid's Helpline phone counselling service - ph.1800 55 1800

If parents are concerned or have complaints regarding the school's anti-bullying processes, they may contact the principal, then if required the Department of Education and Training

DET Resources

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [Respectful Relationships](#)
- [Bullying, No Way!](#)
- [Evidence gathering and school audits](#)
- [STEPS decision making tool](#)
- [School Wide Positive Behaviour Support](#)

Appendices

- Appendix A: Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures
- Appendix B: Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template
- Appendix C: Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed other to Student Welfare Coordinator – Template

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle and/or in response to any critical incident, and/or if circumstances and regulations change.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed and include consultation (where applicable) i.e. student representative groups, parents groups, school council

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Appendix A- Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures

What are Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Types of Bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying:

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** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student'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 electronic means to humiliate and distress

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:

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

Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation

Single episodes 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.

Cyber-bullying

Consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

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Harassment

Is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Why do we have a Policy on these?

To provide a safe and friendly school environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

Am I bullying or harassing someone?

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?

"I will ignore it and it will go away."

If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.

"I don't want to cause trouble."

Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.

"Am I to blame?"

Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

"Am I imagining things?"

Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However,

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if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

Bullying can involve

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

Cyber-bullying can involve

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities

It can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?

- tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
- discuss the matter with the classroom teacher, a teacher you feel comfortable with, Student Welfare Coordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal

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- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

How will your complaint be dealt with?

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially. School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below.

Level 1

If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- think time detention
- private conference
- shared control discussion

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, an Incident Report Form should be completed and submitted to the student welfare coordinator or principal/assistant principal.

Level 2

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

Here, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator (or another who has responsibility for student wellbeing) may:

- meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
- conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and "target"

Level 3

For 'at risk' students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual 'strength building' plan should be developed by the student welfare coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

Level 4

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. Student Wellbeing Coordinators will need to be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family.

Note: The school may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted, and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with '*Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines*' (DET) at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment.

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Appendix B

Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template

Staff member recording incident: _____ Date:

Name of student(s) who appears to have instigated bullying

Year/Class:

Name(s) of
target(s)

Name(s) of witnesses

Did you observe the incident?

YES ✕

NO ✕

If 'NO' who reported the incident to
you?

Brief description of incident (what was allegedly said or done to the student who appears to
have been bullied?

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What form(s) of bullying took place?

Verbal. ☒ Physical ☒ Indirect ☒ Cyber ☒

Other ☒ Please detail:

Was the incident of bullying: Mild ☒ Severe ☒

Describe how you responded (Did you use a school anti-bullying practice?)

Describe how student responded to your intervention

Where / when / time incident took place:

Location:

When: before school ☒ recess ☒ lunch ☒ in class
☒ after school ☒

Time: am/pm

Date incident took place:/...../.....

Additional comments:

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Appendix C

Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed others to Student Wellbeing Coordinator – Template

(This form may be completed by a classroom teacher, year level coordinator, school administrator or Student Wellbeing Coordinator)

Staff member recording incident:

Date:/...../..... Position:
.....

Name of student being referred:

Year/Class teacher:

History of incident(s) of bullying (dates, description)

Have parents/guardian been notified? YES ✕ NO ✕

If 'NO' why
not?

Have they attended a conference? YES ✕ NO ✕

If 'NO' why
not?

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Are they willing to participate?

YES ✕

No ✕

If 'NO' why
not?

What appears to be the reason for the student's bullying behaviour (family, peer, school, personal, other risk factors)?

What practices have been tried?

Impact

What has been the student's attitude towards student(s) who have been targets? (e.g., any concern or remorse expressed)?