BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office.
Phone: (03) 9398 2806

Email: seaholme.ps@education.vic.gov.au

PURPOSE

Seaholme Primary School 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 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

When responding to bullying behaviour, Seaholme Primary School 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.

Seaholme Primary School 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.

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

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Seaholme Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Seaholme Primary School 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 *Engagement and Wellbeing Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy, Yard Duty and Supervision Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*. Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

This policy applies to all school activities both face-to-face and online, 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.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying

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Date of Next Review: September 2024

1

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. 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:
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 is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example, via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

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 Child Safe Code of Conduct.

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

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

2

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

for students engaging in this behaviour. Seaholme Primary School 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. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Seaholme Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Seaholme Primary School will use its *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

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*.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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

Bullying Prevention

Seaholme Primary School 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 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 identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives from the Schools Mental Health Menu, our Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs such as School Wide Positive Behaviours (SWPBS) and Respectful Relationships (RR) and any other programs that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying, and help us to build a positive and inclusive school climate.
- 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 use SEL, RR and SWPBS programs 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.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of school incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

3

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

- 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.
- We encourage 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.
- 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

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

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 concerns to Seaholme Primary School

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 Seaholme Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher or the principal. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including other teachers, Education Support (ES) and/or wellbeing staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Seaholme Primary School should contact the principal by phone on (03) 9398 2806 or by email directed to: seaholme.ps@education.vic.gov.au

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:
1. record the details of the allegations on the incident register, through COMPASS and/or student file; and
2. inform the inform the relevant staff person, ie Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal (child safety officer)

Relevant staff and the child safety officer (principal) is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the child safety officer (principal) may:

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

4

- 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 child safety staff 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 cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: Brodie's Law.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When child safety staff 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 child safety officer (principal) and/or relevant school staff and 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, Seaholme Primary School 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.

The child safety officer (principal) and/or relevant staff may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

Offer wellbeing support, including referral to external providers as applicable to:

- the target student or students
- the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
- affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student/s.
- 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 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.

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

5

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).
- prepare an Individual Management Plan (as needed) 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, including connecting affected students with an older student mentor, and through our SWPBS, RR and SEL programs
- monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- implement cohort 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.

Seaholme Primary School 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.

The child safety officer (principal) and/or relevant staff are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and 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.

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.

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.

Procedures for Critical Incidents

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

6

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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*)

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:
- Available publicly on our school's website and communication platform
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information sessions
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included as a regular reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums and through SWPBS and RR
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Related School Policies/Documents:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safe Code of Conduct
- Digital Learning Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Parent Complaints Policy
- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Yard Duty and Supervision Policy

Appendices A and B

Related Department of Education and Training policies

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:

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
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Date of Next Review: September 2024

7

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

- 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

REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying.

Data to inform this review will be collected through:
- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- 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

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with students, staff and parents and at School Council.

Policy last reviewed	September 2022
Approved by	Principal
Consultation (Mandatory)	Consultation with staff/School Council September 2022
Next scheduled review date	September 2024

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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

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, 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.

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
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Date of Next Review: September 2024

9

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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 a Coordinator, Student Welfare Coordinator or peer mediator, peer support leader or a teacher that you feel comfortable with
- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
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10

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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.*

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

11

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What form(s) of bullying took place?

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

12

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

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:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
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Date of Next Review: September 2024

13

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?

_____

_____

Are they willing to participate?   YES ☐   NO ☐

If 'NO' why not?

_____

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
Date Approved by School Council: Not required (Consultation required)
Date of Next Review: September 2024

14

_____

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)?

_____

_____

_____

Date of Preparation/Update/Principal Approval: September 2022
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Date of Next Review: September 2024

15