OAK PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

BULLYING (including cyber-bullying) and HARASSMENT POLICY and PROCEDURES

Ratified by School Council June 2014

RATIONALE

Oak Park Primary School is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self esteem for all. The school does not tolerate bullying in any form.

Safe schools:

1. Are free from violence
2. Are nurturing, caring and respectful of everyone
3. Are physically and psychologically healthy
4. Promote sensible risk taking
5. Enhance the self esteem of all

The Core Values of Oak Park Primary School are:

- Care and Compassion,
- Doing Your Best,
- Fair Go,
- Freedom,
- Honesty and Trustworthiness,
- Integrity,
- Respect,
- Responsibility,
- Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion
WHAT IS BULLYING?
At Oak Park Primary School, we believe bullying is:

Typically, but not necessarily, repeated ‘attacks’, verbal, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. Often, the aim of the bully is to gain attention, or a feeling of strength and may stem from a lack of social skills and/or self esteem.

Bullying is where there is an imbalance of strength, physical or psychological, and where there is intent to hurt. It can take the form of physical attacks and threats, name calling, exclusion, rejection and any number of other behaviours which undermine the independence and self esteem of a child.

Bullying in its truest form is comprised of a series of repeatedly intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same children, in the same bully and victim roles. This, however, does not mean that in order for bullying to occur there must be repeat offences. Bullying can consist of a single interaction. Bullying behaviour may also be defined as a criminal act if the bully is twelve years of age or older.

Bullying is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another:

- It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, gesture, extortion and exclusion
- It is an abuse of power
- It can be planned and organised or it may be on impulse
- Individuals or groups may be involved.

**Cyber-bullying** consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as mobile 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.

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

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.
Some examples of bullying include:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others
- Interfering with another’s property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it
- Using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families
- Using put downs, belittling others’ abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- Making degrading comments about another’s culture, religious or social background
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse
- Ridiculing another’s appearance
- Forcing others to act against their will.

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH RESPECT TO BULLYING AT OAK PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

- To be, and feel, safe and accepted in the classroom and in the playground
- To be treated fairly and respectfully at all times
- To state beliefs and opinions without fear of put downs or repercussions
- To be listened to
- To be able to learn to the best of their abilities
- To develop positive relationships
- To have personal and school property respected
- To expect a resolution of their problems, to be able to tell their side of the story in a dispute within a supportive environment and to be taught strategies to solve problems.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN WHO WITNESS INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

If students who are witnesses to bullying have the courage to speak out, they may help to reduce pain for other potential victims.

At Oak Park Primary School, we encourage students to:

- report cases of bullying
- refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.

If a student is present when bullying occurs, we ask that they:

- take some form of action - if appropriate
- report the incident or suspected incident and help break the code of secrecy
WHAT THE SCHOOL WILL DO TO PREVENT BULLYING ON THE PREMISES

Oak Park Primary School staff members will:

- work hard to develop positive relationships with all children
- model appropriate language and behaviour
- be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- follow up children’s absences
  - if a child is absent for 3 consecutive days, the class teacher will phone parents
- make efforts to remove opportunities for bullying
- actively patrol the playground and designated ‘hot spots’ during yard duty
- arrive at class on time and, where appropriate, move promptly between lessons
- take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk
- report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member such as class teacher, year coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal, who will follow the designated procedures

The school recommends that parents:

- watch for signs of distress in their child, eg unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- take an active interest in your child’s social life and acquaintances
- advise your child to tell a staff member about the incident. If possible allow him/her to report and deal with the problem. The child can gain much respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem without parental involvement
- inform the school if bullying is suspected
- keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- do not encourage their child to retaliate
- communicate to their child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- be willing to attend interviews at the school if their child is involved in any bullying incident
- be willing to inform the school of any cases of suspected bullying even if their own child is not directly affected.

EVALUATION:

This policy will be evaluated annually through:

- The annual Parent Survey.
- Examination and analysis of the register of reported incidents.
STEPS TO BE TAKEN WHEN DEALING WITH BULLYING INCIDENTS:

*All cases of bullying are to be reported to the Assistant Principal and/or the Principal who will then implement the following action plan:

1. Investigate – attempt to gather as much ‘background’ to the incident as possible. This will include listening to all parties involved, including teachers on yard duty
2. Inform classroom teacher
3. Assess the situation and apply appropriate and relevant consequences. These may include any or all of the following:

   **Apology**

   *An apology to the victim of bullying and a commitment not to repeat the behaviour*

   **Isolation of student**

   Removal of student from playground or classroom for an appropriate length of time. This may be in the office or the student may be sent home.

   **Loss of Privileges**

   These may include bans from school events such as excursions and interschool sport, bans from specified sections of the playground/equipment or the imposition of certain tasks eg. extra yard duty

   **Contract**

   Students enter into a contract which will specify the behaviour to be modified, time frame and consequences of breaking the contract

   **Inform parents**

   Parents contacted via letter or telephone and meeting time arranged in order to discuss the implementation of a behaviour modification plan

   **Suspension**

   This may be an informal suspension of up to 3 days where parents are asked to take the student home and support the school by ensuring appropriate supervision and consequences are imposed or an official suspension.
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.

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 college 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.

**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

**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 Welfare Coordinator.
Here, the Student Welfare Coordinator (or another who has responsibility for student welfare) 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 Welfare 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.
Appendix B

Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment

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? 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:

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Appendix C
Formal Referral of Student who has bullied / harassed other to Student Welfare Coordinator – Template

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

Staff member recording incident: ________________________________________________

Date: __ / __ / __ Position: ________________________________________________

Name of student being referred: ________________________________________________

Year/Class: ______________________

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? ___________________________________________________________

____________________________________

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

A brief description of academic performance of student over past year or more.
Distinguishing ‘at risk’ factors of student (e.g. limited English: economic disadvantage of family; ADHD)