

Policy

Wollemi Flexi Schools Network (WFSN) is part of Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA). It comprises of four registered schools including Albert Park Flexible Learning Centre, Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre, Rockhampton Flexible Learning Centre and Southport Flexible Learning Centre. WFSN's schools operate from a philosophy of Common Ground, where all young people and staff members are valued for their unique contribution to the school community. Safe and respectful relationships provide an essential platform for community members to engage fully and equally in the school community. Any form of bullying is contrary to the rights of the individual, weakens community spirit and interferes with the effectiveness of the work and learning environment. Bullying can be extremely detrimental to the health and wellbeing of those involved, including bystanders and can constitute a criminal offence.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how WFSN and its schools will establish learning communities in which everybody feels valued and safe, and where individual differences are understood, accepted, and appreciated. WFSN endeavours to ensure that young people and staff members enjoy their time within their learning communities, free from bullying and harassment. This policy is informed by the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF).

WFSN and its schools will work to prevent and address bullying by implementing educational activities to inform the community about the importance, development and maintenance of healthy relationships, as well as implementing protocols that sensitively and immediately manage incidents of reported bullying or harassment. In any such instance, the network and its schools will provide support for all parties involved to avoid the escalation of issues, restore relationships and re-establish safety and respect in the learning community.

Authorisation

WFSN Principal Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the Principal (or a delegated authority) to

- Implement this policy and to monitor its performance
- Ensure all Heads of Campus are aware of their responsibilities in regard to preventing and responding to bullying;
- Ensure Heads of Campus are given continuous support and guidance to implement uphold the WFSN Anti-Bullying Policy.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Campus to ensure that:

- They are familiar with anti-bullying policies and procedures, and that they follow them accordingly

It is the responsibility of all WFSN team and FLC staff members to ensure that:

- They are familiar with anti-bullying policies and procedures, and that they follow them accordingly;
- They engage with other members of WFSN and flexi school communities in ways that are safe and respectful;
- They work with colleagues and young people to prevent and respond to bullying in line with this policy

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Related documents

- EREA Code of Conduct
- EREA Safeguarding Program
- Young Person Code of Conduct
- School Brochure
- School Child Safeguarding Brochure

Related Sites:

Site

Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner

The Safe Schools Hub

Bullying No Way!

Cybersmart Program The Australian Communications and Media Authority’s
Cybersmart Program

The Cybersafety Help Button

The Easy Guide to Socialising Online

Web Address

www.esafety.gov.au

www.safeschoolshub.edu.au

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

www.cybersmart.gov.au

www.dbcde.gov.au/helpbutton

www.dbcde.gov.au/easyguide

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Procedure

Definitions

The following definitions have been taken from the National Safe Schools' Framework – NSSF (© 2010, revised 2013) and the Bullying No Way website that is linked to the NSSF, unless stated otherwise.

Student Wellbeing	a student's level of satisfaction with the quality of their life at school. Optimal wellbeing is characterised by positive feelings and attitudes, positive relationships with other students and teachers, resilience, and satisfaction with self and learning experiences at school.
Resilience	the ability to return to (almost) the same level of wellbeing and to continue to thrive despite encountering negative events, difficult situations, challenges or adversity.
Harassment	Behaviour that targets an individual or group due to their identity, race, culture or ethnic origin; religion; physical characteristics; gender; sexual orientation; marital, parenting or economic status; age; ability or disability. It offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment. It may be ongoing or a single, random act, as well as intentional or unintentional. This may lead to harm.
Harm	Any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the child's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing (section 9 of the Child Protection Act 1999). For harm to be significant, the detrimental effect on a child's wellbeing must be substantial or serious, more than transitory and must be demonstrable in the child's presentation, functioning or behaviour. (Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, 2015).
Aggression	Words or actions (overt and covert) that are directed towards another and intended to harm, distress, coerce or cause fear.
Violence	The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against another person/s that results in psychological harm, injury or in some cases, death. Students can exhibit aggressive and violent behaviours that do not necessarily constitute bullying.
Bullying	Repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying can be overt (obvious bullying) or covert (a type of subtle social or verbal bullying, hidden from those not directly involved). It harms another's social reputation, relationships and self-esteem.

NOTE: WFSN would like to acknowledge that certain groups have historically been targeted and impacted by bullying behaviours to a greater degree due broader historical and systemic marginalisation. These include (but not limited to) groups being bullied based on race, those who are culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQA+ young people, and those with diverse and differing abilities. These groups may require extra support in help seeking and extra support in managing any bullying related issues.

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What is bullying:

Repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying can be overt (obvious bullying) or covert (a type of subtle social or verbal bullying, hidden from those not directly involved). It harms another's social reputation, relationships and self-esteem.

Types of bullying:

Physical bullying	Any bullying that hurts someone's body or damages their possessions. Stealing, shoving, hitting, fighting, and destroying property all are types of physical bullying. Physical bullying is rarely the first form of bullying that a target will experience. Often bullying will begin in a different form and progress to physical violence. (www.respect2all.org)
Verbal bullying	An individual repeatedly uses verbal language (eg teasing, insults etc) to gain power over his/her peers in an attempt to degrade or demean
Relational bullying	Also called social bullying, is repeatedly ostracising others or convincing peers to reject another person, as well as sharing rumours or private information
Cyber bullying	The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature (Rigby and Johnson, 2016)
Restorative practices	This refers to the means by which practitioners can resolve conflict between students by bringing about genuine remorse on the part of the offender(s) accompanied by restorative action. For example, apologising to a victim and having the apology accepted (Rigby and Johnson, 2016).

What isn't bullying:

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for young people, are not bullying. These include:

Mutual conflict situations	Which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation
One-off acts (of aggression or meanness)	Including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying

Roles within bullying incidents:

Victim/target	The person who is the object of the bullying
Perpetrator/Initiator/Bully	The person who is exhibiting the bullying behaviour (please note that a person may exhibit bullying behaviours and also be a target of bullying)
Bystander	A bystander is someone who sees or knows about bullying, harassment or violence that is happening to someone else

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There are three main types of bystanders:

Followers	Do not initiate, but take an active role in the bullying behaviour
Supporters	Support the bullying behaviour (overtly or covertly, for example, by turning a blind eye or standing and watching) but do not take an active role in the bullying behaviour
Upstander' (defenders)	Someone who recognises when something is wrong and acts to make it right. When an upstander sees or hears about someone being bullied, they speak up. Being an upstander is being a hero; we are standing up for what is right and doing our best to help support and protect someone who is being hurt. In many ways, this is another word for being socially responsible (NSCC, 2010)

Bullying Prevention Measures:

Each WFSN school will implement a range of **preventative measures** to establish and maintain safe and respectful learning environment. These include:

- A structured curriculum and peer group system, that provides age-appropriate information and social and emotional competencies relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the year.
- Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies.
- Appropriate sharing among staff of information about bullying (including cyberbullying) incidents.
- Employing non-teaching staff (such as Youth Workers or Social Workers) and establishing relationships with community services in order to meet the wellbeing needs of young people
- Regular provision of information to guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a school community issue. To, equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear pathways for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying.
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, young people and parents/guardians.
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour among young people, staff, parents/guardians
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by young people, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels.
- Regular risk assessments of bullying within the school are undertaken by surveying young people to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff.
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and reviewed in order to identify persistent bullying behaviours and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- Education of staff, young people, parents/guardians on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear.
- Anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within the school.
- Promotion of student awareness and 'no-bullying' environment by participating in events such as National day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.
- Ensuring adequate supervision of young people is in place during school days and activities.

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Responding to Bullying:

Each FLC will implement a range of measures to **respond to allegations of bullying** among young people. Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts. In all circumstances the school:

- Takes bullying incidents seriously
- Act upon all reported cases of bullying and respond appropriately to incidents of bullying in line with the policy
- Provides assurance to the victim/s that they are not at fault and that confidentiality will be respected
- Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with all parties involved.
- Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- Maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullying behaviours and/or severe incidents
- Provide young people with information about their rights and options in response to bullying
- Provide staff with training, skills and strategies to address bullying among young people through supportive and restorative practices, in line with WFSN Principles, collaborative problem solving and young person code of conduct
- Treat very seriously, any case of retaliation against a person for reporting bullying
- Treat very seriously, any case of deliberate false accusation of bullying
- Engage with a Police School Liaison Officer when required

All WFSN team and FLC staff members will:

- Model appropriate behaviours that enable development of positive relationships
- Use classroom strategies that include all young people in the learning process
- Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- Address issues of bullying as soon as they become aware of an incident
- Ensure any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them is recorded appropriately
- Be vigilant in monitoring young people that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims

What to do if you observe bullying behaviour:

If staff members observe bullying behaviour between young people, they have a duty of care to respond in ways that maintain the safety of the learning community and in line with the Four Principles of Operation. This might involve speaking to the young people involved at the time of an incident, or separately following an incident, and facilitating a restorative process.

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What to do if a young person tells you they are being bullied:

- Take the matter seriously and be supportive
- Find a space to speak confidentially and sensitively with the young person
- Listen non-judgmentally while the young person tells you the whole story. When they have finished ask further questions if necessary, to determine when, where and how the bullying occurs.
- Reassure the young person that the bullying is not okay, and it is not their fault. Thank them for their honesty and willingness to talk to you about the bullying
- Listen to what they want to do to address the bullying and help them work out their options. These can include:
 - Supporting the young person to develop their own strategies to respond to the bullying, such as ignoring the behaviour, avoiding the perpetrator or speaking to the perpetrator
 - Working with young person to develop a Safety/Support Plan
 - Participating in a Collaborative Problem-Solving conversation with a staff member and the perpetrator
 - Asking a trusted staff member to speak to the person who is bullying. The staff member might work with the person who is bullying to develop a Safety/Support Plan to enable them to be safe and respectful at school
 - Reporting the bullying to a school leader and asking them for advice or to follow it up
- Document the conversation in the notes section of the young person's TASS student record
- If a young person has told you that they are being bullied, it is important to inform their guardian(s) and discuss how the school, guardian(s) and young people involved can work together to address the bullying.
- If you have significant concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a young person, it may be necessary to report these to the relevant State based authorities to help vulnerable families, youth and children, such as Child Safety Services or the Police. In this instance, you should inform your school leader and/or Wollemi Network Safeguarding Officer and discuss whether a notification is appropriate.

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