

ANTI CYBER-BULLYING

Rationale

Eltham Primary seeks to create a school where all members of the school community are safe, included and equal. Bullying, including cyber-bullying, can be violent, exclusive and discriminatory, and as such, bullying is a threat to all of these outcomes.

Eltham Primary School does not tolerate any form of bullying, and views all forms of bullying as unacceptable.

Principals and teachers have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from any harm that should have reasonably been foreseen, including those that may be encountered within the online learning environment. School based cyber safety education and conversations with adults influence young people's online safety strategies

Definition

Cyberbullying is bullying using digital technologies including mobile phones, email and social media tools. Cyberbullying includes:

- Pranking - Repeated hang ups, anonymous, mocking or threatening phone calls.
- Image sharing - Forwarding or sharing unflattering or private images without permission.
- Sexually explicit images - People of any age, who forward or share images of a sexual nature of a person under 18 need to be aware that this is a criminal offence (child pornography) that may result in prosecution.
- Text and email - Sending insulting or threatening text messages or emails.
- Personal online information - Publishing online someone's private, personal or embarrassing information without permission, or spreading rumours online.
- Identity theft - Assuming someone's identity online and negatively representing them in a way that damages their reputation or relationships.
- Hate sites - Creating hate sites or implementing social exclusion campaigns on social networking sites.

Other types of cyberbullying

It is also cyberbullying when a student, or students, uses technology to run a multi-step campaign to bully another student. For example, setting another student up to be assaulted, video-recording their humiliation, posting the video-recording online and then sending the website address to others.

Cyberbullying vs bullying

While cyberbullying is similar to bullying in some ways, there are also differences.

Differences:

Cyberbullying is invasive

Cyberbullying can be difficult to escape and is incredibly invasive. It is more likely to occur outside of school, including while at home, and can happen at any time.

Cyberbullying can involve a large audience

Cyberbullying can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly shared to a large audience, for example, rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once. This material can also continue to be available and harmful long after the cyberbullying has ceased.

Cyberbullies have a sense of anonymity

Cyberbullying can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the target, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

Similarities:

Power imbalance

The power imbalance between the 'bully' and 'target', the repetitive nature of the bullying behaviour and the intent to harm, humiliate, embarrass, ostracise, or isolate can occur in bullying and cyberbullying.

Types of behaviour

Types of behaviour including spreading rumours and making threats or insults, can occur in bullying and cyberbullying.

Reasons for behaving in a bullying way

People often engage in cyberbullying for the same reasons they engage in bullying.

Creating a Safe, Inclusive and Equitable Environment

To provide a safe, inclusive and equitable environment, the school:

- Teaches positive behaviours through the School-wide Positive Behaviour System. The EPS Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy outlines our School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) framework that explicitly defines, teaches and reinforces positive behaviours at EPS
- Teaches strategies that promote student resilience are also explicitly taught through SWPBS
- Teaches the types of bullying and roles people can play in bullying, including the roles and types of bullying involved in cyber-bullying
- Teaches the process for students to report all incidents of bullying and cyber-bullying, including the process when a child is frightened of reporting the incident
- Utilises the School Wide Positive Behaviour Supports (SWPBS) weekly lessons to reinforce these lessons
- Engages with community supports such as the Victorian Police, to work with both students and families regarding the prevention of cyber-bullying. This includes but is not limited to sessions with Victorian Police and Students, and information evenings for the community
- Has developed a thorough Acceptable Use policy to promote the safe use of Digital Technologies within the school.

Response to Incidents

Reporting

It is the role of all students, parents and staff to report incidents of bullying, including cyber-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 cyber-bullying incident, they must report it to their child's teacher and/or the principal. Teachers who become aware of cyber-bullying incidents will immediately contact the principal.

Planned Interventions

When a cyber-bullying incident is reported, it is vital there is a consistent response from the school. If the cyber-bullying occurred within school hours on school devices, the school will respond with the following actions:

- Once an incident of cyber-bullying has been reported, the matter will be investigated and addressed by the classroom teacher and principal
- This will involve mediation and conferencing with both the student targeted and the student engaged in cyber-bullying behaviour. There will be appropriate disciplinary action for the student engaging in cyber-bullying behaviour
- This may include a Behaviour Action Plan being developed
- If appropriate a Student Support Group may be formed to support the student targeted by cyber-bullying behaviour
- If necessary, counselling will be provided for both the student targeted by and the student engaging in cyber-bullying behaviour
- The parents of all students involved will be contacted and updated throughout the response process. If Behaviour Action Plans and Student Support Groups are necessary, parents will be directly involved in these processes
- The privacy of all parties will be recognised within the bounds of privacy legislation
- Support in the form of mediation, conferencing and counselling will be provided to all students who witness and/or report cyber-bullying behaviours
- Review current practices regarding devices and student's working online to prevent future similar incidents.

If the incident/s of cyber bullying behaviour happened outside of school hours on private devices but has been reported to the school, the school will respond with the following actions:

- The parents of the student targeted and the student who has engaged in cyber-bullying will be contacted and made aware of the content and circumstances of the online behaviour
- The school will support both families to manage the incident. This support may include access to the DET's cyber-bullying support materials
- The school will support both students to ensure the outside school cyber-bullying incident does not impact either child's capacity to feel safe and happy while at school
- If necessary, counselling will be provided for both the student targeted by and the student engaging in cyber-bullying behaviour.

Procedures for Critical Incidents

The Principal will contact the DET Emergency and Student Critical Incident 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. 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:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/complaints/Pages/default.aspx>

This policy will be reviewed annually.