SILVER TREE
STEINER SCHOOL

Bullying Prevention Policy

2024

This policy applies to students, parents, employees, work experience students, volunteers and contractors.

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Policy

Background

Silver Tree Steiner School values and celebrates diversity and expects all sections of our school community to demonstrate respect towards others and together make our School safe for everyone. We seek to create at all times an environment which is safe, supportive and listening, where all sections of our school community (board members, staff, students and parents) understand that bullying in any form, by anyone (adults or children) and anywhere, is always unacceptable.

Our aim is to be a school at which bullying does not exist. We expect everyone to take action if bullying occurs, by implementing recognised procedures and strategies to minimise impact and ensure safety for all students. Silver Tree Steiner School is committed to being a Child Safe Organisation and explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to ensure:

- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within the School on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies;
- bullying is managed through a 'whole-of-School community' approach involving students, staff and parents;
- staff, students and parents are empowered to recognise bullying and respond appropriately;
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident;
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed regularly against best practice.

Application

This policy applies to and is binding upon all students, parents, employees, work experience students, volunteers and contractors of Silver Tree Steiner School. For the purpose of this policy 'parent' includes step-parents, foster parents, legal guardians, carers and grandparents.

Definitions

Child abuse:

Four forms of child abuse are covered by WA law as defined by the Department of Communities:

1. Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver.

2. Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
    a) the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence;
    b) the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
    c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour.
3. Emotional abuse includes:
    a) psychological abuse; and
    b) being exposed to an act of family and domestic violence.

4. Neglect includes failure by a child's parents to provide, arrange or allow the provision of:
    a) adequate care for the child; or
    b) effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment for the child.

Corporal punishment:
Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; typically involving hitting the child with the hand or with an implement; can also include, for example, forcing the child to stay in an uncomfortable position. It does not include the use of reasonable physical restraint to protect the child or others from harm (From UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 15: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007).

Degrading punishment:
Any punishment which is incompatible with respect for human dignity, including corporal punishment and non- physical punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child. (From UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 16: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007).

Policy Review and Dissemination

This policy and related procedures will be made available to the public and staff on the School website and is available to staff in the Policies and Procedures folder in Reception. The School Community will receive reminders to refer to this policy (and updated versions) through the School Newsletter.

All staff will be directed to read this document at the first staff meeting at the commencement of the school year. New staff will be informed of this policy as part of the School's Induction Program. The School will provide ongoing training to ensure that all staff members understand their responsibilities in relation to this policy.

The School may, at any time, make amendments to this policy to ensure continuous improvement. If changes are made prior to the scheduled review they will be noted in the Version Management table of the policy and communicated to the School community as appropriate. The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Head of School.

Relevant Legislation

- School Education Act 1999 (WA)
- School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 and Regulations 1996
- WA Work Health and Safety Act 2020
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005

Related Policies

Other policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy are:

- Child Protection Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Code of Conduct for Parents
- Code of Conduct for Staff, Board of Governors, Contractors and Volunteers
- Code of Conduct for Students
- Enrolments Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Concerns and Complaints Policy
- Critical Incident and Emergency Management Policy
- Camps, Excursions and Incursions Policy
- Work Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Management Policy

What is Bullying?

In line with the Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools and the recommendations of the Director General, Silver Tree Steiner School uses the national definition of bullying for 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, emotional 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 of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. Cyberbullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

What Isn't Bullying

Behaviours can be impolite or rude such as inadvertently saying or doing something that offends someone or forgetting to use our manners. At other times children can be deliberately mean and purposefully say or do something to hurt another person. Both these instances can be hurtful and damaging to relationships and can be addressed through restorative processes. These aren't the same as bullying which is intentional and repeated behaviour involving an imbalance of power.

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

Single acts of nastiness, physical aggression or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not the same as bullying, although elements of these may be present when bullying occurs.

Although these behaviours may not be described as bullying, they are not acceptable behaviours at our School and will have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is 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 and that offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment.

Harassment may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour, or it may be a single act. It may be directed randomly or towards the same person/s. It may be intentional or unintentional (i.e. words or actions that offend and distress one person may be genuinely regarded by the person doing them as minor or harmless).

Bullying Prevention

Bullying prevention at Silver Tree Steiner 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. In the classroom, our *Keeping Safe Curriculum* teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

An essential component of the Protective Behaviours curriculum includes explicit instruction on the role of bystanders. The action taken by this group has been shown to either discourage or support the person doing the bullying. The role of the bystander is becoming increasingly prominent as an effective means to counter bullying. Students are made aware that even taking action by telling a responsible adult can make a substantial difference.

Our Buddies Program encourages positive relationships between students in different year levels. They are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

It is essential that we respond to bullying as a community. Students, staff, parents and other members of the School community, including visitors, volunteers and contractors, all have responsibility to:

- be observant to signs of bullying
- report incidents of bullying as quickly as possible
- treat reports of bullying seriously
- be familiar with the School's policies & procedures.

Parents are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the School through their child's teacher, the Education Coordinator or Head of School immediately, if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

Recognising Signs of Bullying in Your Child and Supporting Your Child
Signs a teacher may notice:

- becomes aggressive and unreasonable
- starts getting into fights
- refuses to talk about what is wrong
- school achievement level or engagement level falls
- student is often alone or excluded from friendship groups at school
- student is a frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule at school
- change in the student's ability or willingness to speak up in class and appears insecure or frightened.

Signs a parent may notice:

- does not want to go to school or participate in school activities
- changes in their method or route to school or is frightened of walking to school
- changes their sleeping or eating patterns
- has frequent tears, anger and/or mood swings
- takes money from home
- has unexplained bruises, cuts and/or scratches
- loses or brings home damaged belongings or clothes.

Students who are more likely to be bullied are also more likely to:

- feel disconnected from school and not like school
- display high levels of emotions that indicate vulnerability and low levels of resilience
- be less accepted by peers, avoid conflict and be socially withdrawn
- have low self-esteem
- be relatively non-assertive

As a Steiner school, we do not advocate the use of electronic devices and social media in Primary school. However, we do understand that children may use technology at home and be vulnerable to being bullied online.

Signs of online bullying may include:

- being hesitant about going online or suddenly avoiding their phone
- seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- being visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone
- closing the screen, or hiding the mobile phone when others enter the room
- spending unusually long hours online
- receiving suspicious phone calls, emails or packages.

Supporting Your Child at Home
There are ways you can support your child if they are being bullied:

- Listen calmly, get the full story and let them know it is not their fault.
- Ask them how they want to deal with the bullying. Encourage them to seek help from their teacher.
- Talk about strategies for dealing with bullying. Practising at home can be useful.
- Focus on solutions and stay positive.
- Tell them you will report the bullying if it does not stop after they have tried to deal with it.
- Check in regularly with them.

Reporting Bullying

Students and their parents are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents for fear that it will only make matters worse. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents reporting concerning behaviour as soon as it occurs, so that the responses implemented by the School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to their teacher, or any trusted member of staff, as soon as possible. Each classroom has a *Concerns & Feedback* box that children are encouraged to use. There is also a *Concerns & Feedback* box at Reception.

Responding to Bullying

All communications with the involved parties in the course of investigating 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.

When determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour, Silver Tree Steiner 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 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, including any element of provocation.

Silver Tree Steiner 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 with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

Please refer to the School's *Behaviour Management Policy* for further information as to how the School responds to bullying and harassment.

References

Bullying No Way
Available: https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/support-and-advice/for-schools

AISWA Policies and Procedures Guidelines for Schools, *Bullying Prevention*
Available: www.ais.wa.edu.au

Be You - Bullying Resources
Available: https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/relationships/bullying

Appendix A – Bullying Fact Sheet

Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that's intended to embarrass, threaten or intimidate another person. It causes distress to everyone, but we can stop it.

What's bullying?

Bullying is hurtful, aggressive and repeated behaviour that aims to embarrass, threaten or intimidate another person.

Bullying can be carried out by an individual or group towards one or more persons and is a complex social problem which can occur in environments such as schools. Researchers agree that there are five key features of bullying behaviour:

1. The person (or people) who engage in bullying behaviour intend to inflict harm or fear upon the target.
2. Aggression towards the target occurs repeatedly.
3. The targeted child or young person doesn't provoke bullying behaviour by using verbal or physical aggression.
4. Bullying tends to occur in familiar social groups.
5. The person engaging in the bullying behaviour is usually more powerful (either in reality or perception) than the person they're targeting. This power may be, for example, social, physical or age-related.

What bullying isn't

Behaviours that don't constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there's no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or nastiness
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

To effectively respond to bullying at a whole learning community level, it's important that staff have an agreed definition that's understood and applied consistently.

Types of bullying behaviour

There are several different types of bullying behaviours:

Face-to-face

Face-to-face (or direct) bullying may include damaging a person's belongings, kicking, hitting and punching, or verbal actions such as making threats, name-calling and insults. Face-to-face bullying is usually more easily witnessed.

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Covert

Covert bullying is more subtle – it's typically non-physical and occurs out of sight of others. Covert bullying can include hand gestures, threatening looks, whispering, excluding, blackmailing, spreading rumours, threatening and trying to socially isolate someone. Other covert bullying behaviours may include trying to damage social relationships, playing nasty practical jokes, telling others' private information, criticising clothes and personalities, sending mocking or abusive notes, or intentional ignoring.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, or online bullying, occurs via technologies such as email, social media, text messages, or instant messaging. Cyberbullying differs from offline bullying in that the perpetrators can more easily remain anonymous, the nasty content can reach a larger audience, and material can be difficult to remove.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner has some great resources on cyberbullying.

These different types of bullying can occur in combination and cause children and young people to feel they have no safe space.

Read more about recognising the signs of bullying behaviour.

Bullying can have serious consequences

There are serious short-term and long-term psychological and social consequences of bullying for both the children and young people who are bullied as well as for those who bully them.

These consequences can include:

- feeling unsafe in the learning community
- increased likelihood of depression and suicidal thoughts (especially young people who are bullied)
- decreased self-esteem
- lower levels of academic achievement
- negative attitudes towards school
- high levels of absenteeism
- alcohol and substance abuse
- poor mental health in adulthood.

Bullying also has consequences for children and young people who witness repeated bullying of their peers, as they can experience negative emotional effects similar to those experienced by the victimised individuals themselves. Children and young people may feel distressed because they feel powerless to stop what's happening to someone else as well as fearing that they too may be unsafe or targeted.

Unfortunately, bullying is relatively common.

Here are some recent statistics:

- Approximately one in four Australian students are affected by bullying.
- Approximately one in seven young people have been cyberbullied, with research suggesting this number may be increasing.
- More than three-quarters of students who were bullied online were also bullied offline.
- Bullying is the fourth-most common reason young people seek help from children's help services.

Read about what your school can do about bullying.

What causes bullying?

There's no simple explanation for bullying.

Bullying emerges from a complex interaction of social, personal and psychological circumstances. Underdeveloped social and emotional skills may lead to bullying behaviour. Children and young people who have poor self-regulation and anger management skills are more likely to engage in bullying behaviour compared to those with better-developed skills.

Children and young people who engage in bullying behaviour may feel disdain for their targets, find bullying others to be enjoyable, feel strong and in control when bullying others, and/or believe that bullying others will help make them popular. Bullying behaviour can also occur because of distrust, fear, misunderstandings and lack of knowledge or jealousy.

For more information visit
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Appendix B – What can schools do about bullying?

What can schools do about bullying?

In a situation in which a child or young person is identified as a target of bullying, educators should act quickly and follow your learning community's policies and procedures relating to bullying.

Whole-school strategies

Whole-school strategies can help prevent bullying

Whole-school strategies that send anti-bullying messages, teach social and emotional learning skills, focus on teaching students the skills of resilience, and promote healthy and positive relationships across the whole school community, will go a long way to preventing bullying and assisting individuals to deal with it more effectively.

Lower levels of bullying and higher levels of student wellbeing are more likely when the following circumstances are in place:

- Safety and wellbeing are clear school priorities which are communicated regularly and clearly throughout the learning community.
- Schools have specific anti-bullying strategies in place (for example, safe and friendly student committees).
- Evidence-based whole-school behaviour management systems are applied consistently in the classroom.
- School staff understand their duty of care to ensure the safety of their students and have sufficient training to feel confident in preventing and responding to bullying.
- Most students feel connected to their school.
- Students have sound levels of social and emotional skills and also resilience.
- There is a no-tolerance approach to against bullying and aggression.
- Students perceive that their school has clear support and disciplinary structures in place to address bullying.
- Students perceive that educators in the school actively care about and promote student wellbeing and student welfare, and that the environment of their school is positive, welcoming, cooperative and fair.

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- Educators promote cooperation.
- The culture of the school is positive, caring, respectful and supportive. This includes positive relationships between peers, and positive student relationships with educators.

Role modelling

The relationships and social behaviour of adults in the learning community can have a significant influence on students who are continuing to develop relationship skills. When you model positive, respectful and inclusive behaviours, students are more likely to act in these ways.

Safety and supervision

Active classroom and yard supervision is crucial for catching incidents at early stages, responding to inappropriate or disrespectful language or behaviour, and for sending clear messages to students about expectations. The school's physical environment is also important in terms of the places where students feel safe.

Bullying in secondary schools is more likely to occur in the corridor or in the class and during competitive or aggressive activities. Anti-bullying initiatives need to take this into account when developing strategies.

Bullying outside of the school: cyberbullying

Students may be involved in bullying behaviours outside the school that become obvious from their behaviours at school. If outside incidents, such as cyberbullying, have an impact at the school, they need to be dealt with using the school's policy.

Ask "What effect is this bullying behaviour having on the students concerned and what do we need to do in response?" This might mean including families or others involved. Read more about cyberbullying at the Office of the eSafety Commissioner website.

Review your policies and procedures

Reviewing your current policies and practices will help you determine what's working and what's not. What you learn will help develop and improve your school's policies and procedures on bullying.

Be You Professional Learning

The Mentally Healthy Communities domain includes modules that look at promoting a positive school culture that will encourage inclusion, respectful relationships and valuing diversity, which, in turn, may lead to awareness of the inappropriateness of bullying.

Working with families

Families have a significant role in influencing their children and modelling positive behaviours.

Schools and families can work together to teach social and emotional skills that promote healthy relationships. Educators can play a role in helping families understand the risks associated with bullying and what they can do to help prevent it.

The kind of family circumstances that make it less likely that children will be bullied are those that are characterised by significant parental involvement with their children and good communication between the child and their family. By working in partnership with families, schools can help to build knowledge and understanding about the importance of family involvement within the school community, sharing strategies to promote good relationships and communicating school approaches to tackling bullying.

How can schools work productively with families to tackle issues of bullying?

Be You's Family Partnerships domain helps educators understand how to work effectively, sensitively and confidentially with families to foster the mental health of children and young people. The Inquire module explores topics like communicating and sharing concerns with families.

When students are supported to develop respectful peer and adult relationships, respect and embrace diversity, and understand their own feelings and needs as well as those of others, the risk of conflict and relationship problems escalating into bullying behaviour can be reduced.

For more information visit
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