



# PATTERSON LAKES PRIMARY SCHOOL

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## WORKPLACE BULLYING – PREVENTION & RESPONSE POLICY

### RATIONALE

Research studies show that workplace bullying is a major contributing factor to high stress and low morale in the workplace. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, workplaces are required to put in place strategies designed to prevent psychological injuries. Therefore, identifying bullying risk factors and putting in place appropriate preventative measures through collaboration and consultation should form an important part of the workplaces OHS risk management system (OHSMS).

### AIM

To ensure a safe and supportive workplace environment for all staff members.

### GUIDELINES

#### Definition

Workplace bullying is characterised by persistent and repeated negative behaviour directed at an employee that creates a risk to health and safety

The definition of bullying encompasses a wide range of behaviours. Some common examples include:

- verbal abuse, yelling, screaming
- abusive language or intimidation
- excluding or isolating employees
- assigning meaningless tasks or giving employees impossible assignments
- continually criticising someone
- sabotaging someone's work or their ability to do their job by withholding vital information and resources
- belittling someone's opinions
- unexplained job changes
- failure to give credit where it is due or taking credit for someone else's work

Workplace bullying is not:

- reasonable management actions performed in a reasonable way, examples include:
  - setting performance goals, standards and deadlines
  - allocating work to an employee
  - deciding not to select an employee for promotion
  - informing an employee about unsatisfactory work performance
  - informing an employee about inappropriate behaviour or providing constructive feedback
  - implementing organisational changes
  - performance management processes
  - physical violence or threats of physical violence which are addressed separately in the DET Occupational Violence guide.
- a single incident of bullying-style behaviour. However, since an employer has a general duty to provide his or her employees with a safe workplace and safe system of work, single incidents of bullying-style behaviour must not be ignored or condoned.

### Issues associated with workplace bullying

The following health and safety issues can result from workplace bullying:

- A wide range of injuries and illnesses including psychological injuries such as anxiety, depression, social phobia (withdrawal from usual social interaction), insomnia, stress conditions and even suicide;
- A negative whole workplace/school climate including decreased employee morale and increased stress levels in teams and individuals.

### IMPLEMENTATION

#### What does the Principal need to do?

- Establish a local workplace bullying policy in consultation with employees.
- Identify, assess and implement control measures for bullying risk factors in your school/workplace and document on the [OHS Risk Register \(Excel - 1.1Mb\)](#).
- Consult with Health and Safety Representatives (HSR) and employees to when:

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- Bullying risks are being identified and assessed
  - Making decisions regards to measures to control bullying risks
  - Making decisions about developing and implementing procedures for resolving bullying complaints
  - Making decisions about providing information and training to prevent bullying
  - Reviewing existing prevention of bullying policy and/or procedures
  - Proposing changes to the way work is performed
  - Provide appropriate information, instruction and training for employees so they have the awareness, knowledge and skills to identify risk factors associated with bullying in the workplace and the appropriate prevention measures to control these kinds of risks.
- Record incidents into eduSafe as soon as possible after the incident

## Responding to Workplace Bullying

### Informal

An employee may choose to deal with a problem initially by informally speaking to the workplace manager. All reports of bullying should be taken seriously. After discussing the concerns with the employee the following strategies could be considered:

- Aim to gain a commitment from the employee displaying the alleged bullying behaviour to cease the behaviour. This can sometimes be achieved by:
  - the complainant (after careful consideration) choosing to approach the person responsible for the alleged inappropriate behaviour
  - a management representative counselling the employee displaying the alleged behaviour
- Discuss the option of involving an independent third party or mediator. Participation by all parties must be voluntary. (Contact the Employee Health Unit, 9637 2460)
- Conduct a workplace bullying awareness session for all employees, outlining responsibilities in relation to appropriate behaviour in the workplace
- Provide the option for employees to access independent counselling support if they require it from DET's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) on 1800 337 068

### Formal

Usually, the progression to a formal complaint is the choice of the complainant. However, in some cases the workplace manager may decide that it is in the interest of the organisation to proceed to the next level. If:

- Informal approaches appear to be having little impact
- The behaviour may constitute misconduct
- A criminal act may have occurred
- Where there has been or is likely to be significant disruption in the workplace
- Where there may be a safety issue

### Record Keeping of Complaints

Records of every complaint, the findings and resolutions, including actions taken need to be documented and kept on file. For further information Managers should contact the DET Conduct and Ethics Branch on 03 9637 2594 or 9637 2595 or via email at [conduct.ethics@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:conduct.ethics@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### Legislation, guidance and codes of practice

*Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*

### EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three year review cycle and/or as per DET recommendations.


### CERTIFICATION

These guidelines were adopted at the School Council Meeting held at Patterson Lakes Primary School on October 18, 2016.

Signed

  
School Council President

Signed

  
Principal