

Learn • Trust • Respect • Sense of Humour

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY**

### **RATIONALE:**

Cranbourne West Primary School aims to provide a welcoming, supportive, and emotionally and physically secure learning and working environment for every member of the school community.

Cranbourne West Primary School recognises and promotes human rights, and values the diversity of culture, beliefs, practices, customs, physical and intellectual abilities and life experience of the whole school community.

Every student and staff member at Cranbourne West Primary School should feel welcome, supported and emotionally and physically secure at school. The wellbeing of all students and staff is a priority for Cranbourne West Primary School. We understand that you cannot achieve your potential if someone is treating you unfairly, discriminating against you, vilifying, harassing or victimising you.

### **GENERAL STATEMENT:**

#### **Our commitment**

Cranbourne West Primary School aims to create an inclusive school culture that fosters acceptance and respect for diversity. In doing so, we seek to deepen understanding and knowledge, promote student and staff wellbeing and help everyone achieve their full potential. This school is enriched by and celebrates the diversity of our whole school community.

That is why discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation will not be tolerated at Cranbourne West Primary School under any circumstances.

Cranbourne West Primary School is committed to ensuring that the working environment is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation.

This school acknowledges that in society some people are treated unfairly or unfavourably because of irrelevant personal characteristics such as their sex or race. This school supports the Charter of Human Rights and the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic), which says that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone, including students and school staff, because of their actual or assumed:

- age
- breastfeeding
- carer status
- disability/impairment
- gender identity
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status

- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these personal characteristics.

No member of the school community will be treated less favourably because they possess any of these personal characteristics nor will such characteristics affect access to benefits and services Cranbourne West Primary School provides.

On behalf of the whole school community, the principal, the school council president and the parent association support this policy, and the human rights principles and practice of equal opportunity, inclusion and respect for diversity that it articulates.

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Under this policy, every member of the Cranbourne West Primary School community has the right to learn and work in a safe and inclusive environment free of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. Along with this right comes the responsibility to respect and promote human rights and responsibilities by behaving according to this policy.

### **Who and what this policy covers**

This policy covers the whole school community, including staff, students, parents, school council members, contractors and volunteers.

This policy applies to:

- education (teaching and learning, enrolment, student management, student services, curriculum development and delivery)
- the provision of goods and services (extracurricular activities, camps, parent–teacher interviews, access to facilities)
- school sport
- employment at the school (recruitment, allocation of duties, employment conditions, access to benefits such as training, promotion and leave).

### **Policy framework and relevant information**

Cranbourne West Primary School’s EO policy is one component of the Victorian Department of Education’s broader policy framework for the promotion of safe and inclusive schools and protection of human rights.

Other relevant documentation includes:

- [DET’s Diversity and Equity policies](#)
- [DET’s Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures](#)
- [Employee complaint resolution procedures](#)
- [DET Occupational Health and Safety policies](#)
- [Safe Schools are Effective Schools](#)
- School codes of conduct
- School anti-bullying policy
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 including any relevant [DET policies](#)
- Charter of [Human Rights and Victorian Schools Checklist](#)

**Discrimination** may be direct or indirect – both are against the law.

**Direct discrimination** means treating someone unfairly or less favourably because of one of the personal characteristics listed above or because of their association with someone identified with one of those characteristics.

Indirect discrimination happens when a rule, policy or requirement unnecessarily or unreasonably disadvantages a person or group of people because of a protected personal characteristic they share.

**Harassment** is behaviour (through words or actions) based on the personal characteristics listed above, that are unwanted, unasked for, unreturned and likely to make school an unfriendly or uncomfortable place by:

- humiliating (putting someone down)
- seriously embarrassing
- offending (hurting someone's feelings) or
- intimidating (threatening someone so they behave in a certain way).

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, request for sex or any other sexual behaviour that a reasonable person would know or expect would offend, humiliate, seriously embarrass or humiliate another.

**Vilification** is behaviour (through words or actions) that incites hatred, serious contempt or ridicule of another person or group of people because of their race or religious belief.

**Bullying** is unreasonable behaviour that is intimidating, threatening or humiliating and repeated over time or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour. Bullying can be physical, verbal or indirect, and creates an unfriendly, threatening or offensive environment.

**Victimisation** means treating someone unfairly or otherwise disadvantaging them because they have made an EO complaint or might do so in the future.

### **IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES:**

- Cranbourne West Primary School will take immediate and appropriate action to address and resolve EO issues and complaints.
- Cranbourne West Primary School encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school if possible although it is the right of the individual to seek help from outside the school. Eg. The Department's regional office, the Ombudsman or the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).
- Cranbourne West Primary School will also take action to promote human rights both in terms of school policy and practice and within its educational activities and culture. Proactive steps will be taken to encourage and promote wider school discussion and student learning on the key themes of Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity.
- The principal of Cranbourne West Primary School is accountable for implementation of this policy.
- The principal of Cranbourne West Primary School may appoint an EO and Anti-Harassment Co-ordinator to support implementation of this policy.
- Equitable resources will be allocated to support this policy.
- Surveys of staff, students and parents will be used to gather information.
- Relevant and appropriate professional development programs for staff and parents will be provided or arranged.
- Development and implementation of awareness raising programs about the educational needs of girls and boys will occur.
- Appropriate curriculum development will be conducted.

### **Complaints procedures**

- When it is believed an individual has been discriminated against, harassed, sexually harassed, bullied, vilified or victimised as explained earlier in this policy and the complaint is about education or employment at Cranbourne West Primary School, or goods, services or sport provided by Cranbourne West Primary School, the Cranbourne West Primary School 'Complaints resolution Policy' should be referred to and followed.
- Any member of the school community who raises an issue of discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification in good faith will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon as quickly as possible.
- Cranbourne West Primary School will treat all reports of misconduct fairly, confidentially and quickly. Only people directly involved in the issue or complaint will be told about it. Each complaint

will be investigated to work out whether it is more likely the behaviour happened than not and, if so, how serious it is. Appropriate action to resolve the problem will be taken.

- The principal (or someone else they appoint) has responsibility for investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation.
- Cranbourne West Primary School will arrange counselling and support, where appropriate or where requested, for any student who has experienced bullying or harassment. Counselling may also be provided for a person who has bullied or harassed another.
- Cranbourne West Primary School will monitor how the complaint was resolved and the wellbeing of those involved. Further action will be taken if the problem behaviour continues.

### **Right to appeal/review**

Persons unhappy with the decision about a complaint, may seek a review of the decision in accordance with departmental procedures.

### **Where to obtain help and advice**

- School complaints contact(s)
- DET contacts including the regional office and Student Wellbeing Branch
- VEOHRC contact details
- School Council contacts
- Parent support contacts
- Student contacts [helplines]

### **EVALUATION:**

- Monitoring, recording and reporting of all equal opportunity complaints received and action taken.
- Evaluation within the triennial review process.