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# BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

INCORPORATING CHILD SAFE STANDARDS 6 AND 7

## PURPOSE

Wellington Secondary College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

Our school is committed to providing an inclusive environment which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff. We aim to encourage self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Wellington Secondary College will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Wellington Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Wellington Secondary College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved

Wellington Secondary College acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

## GUIDELINES

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

All new students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our related school policies, including *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*, *Duty of care Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

## POLICY

### DEFINITIONS

*Bullying* occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. This can include harassment on the basis of culture, ability, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality or other factors. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct physical bullying* – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property
2. *direct verbal bullying* – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse
3. *indirect bullying* – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

*Mutual conflict* involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

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

*Single-episode acts* of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as

bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Wellington Secondary College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Wellington Secondary College is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to build resilience and raise awareness about bullying and its impacts such as Verbal Combat, Digital Thumbprint, Cyberia, Respectful relationships program, Safe Schools, Reach etc.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- The Peer Support Program encourages positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* and *Inclusion and Diversity* policies.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **REPORTING CONCERNS TO WELLINGTON SECONDARY COLLEGE**

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to the appropriate Head of Sub-school or Year Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member

of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, school social worker etc. These contacts can be in person or arranged online.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Wellington Secondary College should contact the Assistant Principal Student Programs Brendan Dwyer, by phone on 95476822 or by email directed to [brendan.dwyer@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:brendan.dwyer@education.vic.gov.au)

## INVESTIGATIONS

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass Chronicle and
2. inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator/Head of Sub-school as well as the Student Wellbeing Team and Assistant Principal where necessary

The Year Level Coordinator (YLC) is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the YLC may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above

All communications with the YLC in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying 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.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

## Responses to bullying behaviours

When YLC has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with the Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, SSSO staff, Assistant Principal, and or the Principal.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Wellington Secondary College will consider:

- the age and maturity and vulnerability of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context

- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive for the behaviour, including any element of provocation

The Year Level Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student(s), including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, external provider, etc.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student(s), including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, external provider, etc.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSSO, external provider. etc.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator student(s), which may include removal of privileges, detention, exclusion, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including connecting affected students with the school social worker, an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, or outside agencies where necessary, etc.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example resilience programs, class group discussions, etc.

YLC is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Wellington Secondary College understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour **as soon as possible**, so that the responses implemented by Wellington Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- DET's Bullying Policy Advice  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bullying-prevention-response/policy>
- DET's Cyber Safety Advice  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/cybersafety/policy>

## EVALUATION

This will be reviewed on an annual basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- regular student and staff surveys
- assessment of school based data

## REVIEW CYCLE

<b>Date of implementation</b>	Prior to the 2018 Review
<b>Date endorsed by Council</b>	Prior to the 2018 Review
<b>Policy author</b>	E. H Blaikie - Principal
<b>Policy review schedule</b>	2 – 3 years
<b>Last review date</b>	March 2021
<b>Next Review Date</b>	March 2023