



## Bullying Prevention Policy

### Purpose:

Whittlesea Secondary College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explain the definition of **bullying** so that there is a shared understanding amongst all members of the Whittlesea Secondary College community
- Make clear that no form of **bullying** at Whittlesea Secondary College will not be tolerated
- Outline the Strategies and programs in place at Whittlesea Secondary College to build a positive college culture and prevent **bullying behaviour**
- Ask that everyone in our College community be alert to signs and evidence of **bullying behaviour**, and accept responsibility to report **bullying behaviour** to College 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 targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- Seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing **bullying behaviour** at Whittlesea Secondary College.

When responding to **bullying behaviour**, Whittlesea 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
- Address the impacts of **bullying**

Whittlesea Secondary College acknowledges that College 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**.



## Scope:

This policy addresses how Whittlesea Secondary College aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Whittlesea Secondary College recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our College. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#). This policy applies to all College activities, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school.

## Definitions:

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all 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 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 behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records)*

*Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.”*

## **Bullying has three main features:**

- **It involves a misuse of power in a relationship**
- **It is ongoing and repeated, and**
- **It involves behaviours that can cause harm.**

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. 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.



There are 4 main types of Bullying Behaviour:

1. **Direct physical Bullying** – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging or stealing property. This includes threats of violence.
2. **Direct Written/Verbal Bullying** – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. **Social Bullying-** (sometimes called relational or emotional 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.
4. **Cyberbullying-** any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.

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. In this policy any reference to 'bullying' includes all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers) and the Department's [Bullying Prevention and Response](#) policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

**Harassment** is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

**Discrimination** is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our College and there may be serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group.

Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy. [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)



## Other Distressing Behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to Whittlesea Secondary College staff and our College will follow our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and/or this Bullying Prevention Policy where the behaviour constitutes bullying.

*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. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our College and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Whittlesea Secondary College will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

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 College.

## Bullying Prevention

Whittlesea Secondary College has several programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a College culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect. Bullying prevention at Whittlesea Secondary College 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.



At our College:

We identify and implement evidence-based programs and initiatives from the [Schools Mental Health Menu](#) that are relevant to preventing and addressing bullying and help us to build a positive and inclusive College climate.

- We strive to create a positive College environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the College, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and teach multicultural education, including Aboriginal History, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion.
- 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 raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- 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 Check-in program and SWEAP groups 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.
- We participate in the Safe Schools program to help us foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- We participate in the Respectful Relationships initiative, which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school.



- The Student Voice and Agency team encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels, as well as the Student Representative Council. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- 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 Policy](#)

## Bullying/Incident Response:

### Reporting concerns to Whittlesea Secondary College

Bullying is not tolerated at our College. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

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

When reporting concerns to Whittlesea Secondary College bullying complaints/allegations will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our College.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Whittlesea Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to their Head of House, Check-in teacher, leadership or the College Wellbeing team. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Whittlesea Secondary College should contact the **Assistant Principal for Engagement and Wellbeing** by phone on **9719 1200** or by email on **Whittlesea.sc@education.vic.gov.au**.



## Investigations:

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

1. Ask the student/s to write a statement with details of the incident.
2. Inform students Head of House and/or Wellbeing Team if necessary. The Head of House is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner.

To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Head of House may:

- Speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- Speak to the parent/carer(s) 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 Head of House and/or Wellbeing Team during 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: [Brodie's Law.](#)



## Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Head of House and/or Wellbeing Team has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, several strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with the Principal Team, Leadership Team, Teachers and Student Support Services.

There are several factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When deciding about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Whittlesea Secondary College will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances 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 the behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.
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**The Head of House may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:**

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to The Wellbeing Team to:
  - the target student or students
  - the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
  - affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- 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 the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan between the target and student/s.
- Prepare a Student Support Plan for the target or the student/s.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours using School Wide Positive Behaviour Support that reinforces school wide expectation.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, 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.

Whittlesea Secondary College 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 and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

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

### Communication:

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website and/or via COMPASS
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request



## Further Information and Resources:

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Whittlesea Secondary College policies:

- [School Values and School Philosophy](#)
- [Communication with staff policy](#)
- [Complaints Policy](#)
- [Inclusion and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Duty of care Policy](#)
- [Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy](#)

## Related Resources:

Our College also follows the Department of Education Policy related to bullying including:

Bullying Prevention: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bullying-prevention-response/policy>

Cybersafety: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/digital-technologies-responsible-use/policy>

Equal Opportunity: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/equal-opportunity-human-rights-students/policy>

LGBTIQA+: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/lgbtiq-student-support/policy>

## Further information:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Bully Stoppers - Survey tools](#)
- [Safe Schools](#)
- [Respectful Relationships](#)
- [Bullying, No Way!](#)
- [School Wide Positive Behaviour Support](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)



## Evaluation:

The Principal team are responsible for reviewing and updating this Policy every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the school community.

## Policy Review and Approval:

<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	<b>August 2024</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	Principal Executive on 13/11/2024
<b>Approved by</b>	Principal
<b>Next scheduled review date</b>	<b>August 2026</b>