

 BERWICK COLLEGE POLICY	TITLE	BULLYING PREVENTION & RESPONSE		
	VERSION/YEAR	7/2024		
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	REVIEWED BY	ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL STAFF/COLLEGE COUNCIL	RATIFIED BY	COLLEGE COUNCIL
	PURPOSE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that Berwick College policies and procedures accurately reflect the College operations, values, service standards, educational philosophy and goals and meet all legislative, compliance and duty of care requirements. The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requires Victorian schools to have a policy which provides students with a safe learning environment where the risk of harm is minimised and they feel physically and emotionally secure. 		
BACKGROUND:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berwick College seeks to provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted and ensure that all students and staff members will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment. 			
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department Guidance: Diversity and Equity Staff Handbook http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/culture.aspx Multicultural Victoria Act 2011, Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 Berwick College Duty of Care, Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations, Complaints and Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policies 			

RATIONALE:

Berwick College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated and will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the College community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

AIMS:

Berwick College aims to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Berwick College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Berwick College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Berwick College to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting
- 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 Berwick College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Berwick College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again

- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Berwick 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.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Berwick College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Berwick 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 school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

This policy applies to all school 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

Bullying

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.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- 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 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 \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://BullyStoppers.education.vic.gov.au) and the Department's [Bullying Prevention and Response](#) policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy and/or this Bullying Prevention and Response 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 nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Berwick College will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

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, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our school 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.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Bullying Prevention

Berwick College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates our ICARE values of empathy (and acceptance), kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Berwick 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 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 school climate.
- 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.
- We communicate the College's policy to parents, teachers, students and the community.
- We participate in the Respectful Relationships initiative, which aims to embed a culture of respect and equality across our school.
- Provide curriculum material and discussion that focuses on appropriate social skills and behaviour. Lessons will be delivered by guest speakers and Health classes
- Assist students to develop skills for resolving conflict and dealing with bullying incidents
- Teachers are encouraged to implement School Wide Positive Behaviour strategies and classroom management strategies contained in the ICARE Handbook that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Maintain a pastoral care system that enables students to develop a feeling of connectedness, belonging and trust.
- We take seriously reports/complaints of bullying and investigate in a timely manner.
- Encourage students to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed or log details on Compass using the Report A Bully notification in Favourites.
- Document incidents of bullying as a pastoral note on Compass
- We participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence
- We administer a student bullying survey twice a year and act upon the results including analysing data to identify patterns of bullying behaviour and potential 'risks' for bullying to occur in the College environment
- Provide regular updates to parents about the management of incidents in relation to their child within the bounds of the privacy legislation.

INCIDENT RESPONSE:

Reporting concerns to Berwick College.

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

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. 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 school staff or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

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 Berwick College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher or Student Learning Leader. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including learning support staff and wellbeing staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Berwick College should contact a Student Learning Leader or Principal Class Officer by phone on 8768 1000 or email berwick.sc@education.vic.gov.au

Investigations:

Staff members are required to follow Child Safety Responding & Reporting Obligations policy. When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass and
2. inform the relevant Student Learning Leader, Sub School Coordinator or a Principal Class Officer.

The Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator 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 parents or carers 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 Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator 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 the Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator 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 teachers, wellbeing team or principal class officers.

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, Berwick 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 their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

The Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- refer to wellbeing for support.
- referral for counselling with an appropriate external professional agency.
- 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 amediation 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. 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 meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example LifeChanger program, Resilience Project lessons.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, after school reflection, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Engagement and Wellbeing policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

In line with Department legislation, corporal punishment is not permitted at the College.

Berwick 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 Student Learning Leader or Sub School Coordinator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

PARENT/CARER - KEY INFORMATION:

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Berwick College should contact their child's homegroup teacher or Student Learning Leader by phone on 8768 1000 or email the College at berwick.sc@education.vic.gov.au who will direct their enquiry to the relevant staff member

Berwick College recommends that Parents or Carers:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child e.g. unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- Take an active interest in their child's social life and acquaintances, including online activity
- Encourage their child to report incidents of bullying to a teacher. If possible, get students to report and deal with the problem themselves. They can gain respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem without parental involvement
- Inform the College (Home Group Teacher, Learning Team Leader or Wellbeing Team) if bullying is suspected, even if their child is directly/indirectly involved
- Keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- Do not encourage their child to retaliate
- Communicate to their child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- Be willing to attend interviews at the College if their child is involved in any bullying incident and to work with the College to find effective solutions.

STUDENTS:

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or via Compass/School Favourites/Report a Bully as soon as possible.

What students can do to stop bullies and to support their peers:

- If you feel confident, ask the bully to stop it in a firm and assertive manner
- If you witness bullying, talk to your parents or a teacher. Ask them for their advice.
- Reassure the person being bullied. Make sure they are fine and then tell a teacher. This will help to build up their confidence

- Stay cool and walk calmly away
- Talk to a teacher, your parents or friends that you trust
- Go to a safe area within the College and report it to a teacher.

Our College also follows Department of Education policy relating to bullying including:

- Bullying Prevention and Response
- Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies
- Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students
- LGBTIQA+ Student Support Policy

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- **Victoria Police - Youth Resource Officer:** [Youth \(police.vic.gov.au\)](http://youth.police.vic.gov.au) A policing youth framework that increases the capacity of police to deal with police and youth issues; meeting the needs of modern policing, operational police, the local community and government located at each local police station.

EVALUATION:

- This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data to inform this review will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- a student bullying survey each Semester
- School Wide Positive Behaviour data analysis
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the Berwick College community and College Council.