

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



Help for non-English speakers: If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the school on 98398800 / 97363650.

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PURPOSE

Yarra Hills 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 shared understanding amongst all members of the Yarra Hills Secondary College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Yarra Hills Secondary College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Yarra Hills Secondary 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 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 targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Yarra Hills Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Yarra Hills Secondary 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.

Yarra Hills 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.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Yarra Hills Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Yarra Hills 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 school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Code of Conduct, Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, and Inclusion and Diversity 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.

POLICY

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 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 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. Yarra Hills Secondary 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 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 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. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Bullying Prevention

Yarra Hills Secondary 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 acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Yarra Hills 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. School-wide programs that can prevent and address bullying and its antecedents are:

Respectful Relationships program – YHSC is proud to have continued on from being a pilot school for the '[Respectful Relationships In Secondary Schools](#)' program, and this is now embedded in our [Health, Life Skills and Aspire courses](#). The Respectful Relationships initiative teaches our students how to build healthy relationships, resilience and confidence. It also supports school leaders, educators and our school communities to promote and model respect and equality.

School Wide Positive Behaviour & Support program – (SWPBS) is an [evidence-based framework for Victorian government schools](#) and is the basis for our program for promoting and explicitly teaching appropriate and positive behaviours. Teaching, modelling and reinforcing positive social behaviour is an important part of a student's educational experience. Teaching behavioural expectations and acknowledging students for meeting them is a much more positive approach than waiting for misbehaviour to occur before responding.

Restorative Practices – YHSC uses [Restorative Practices](#) to encourage engagement and develop our school values and responsibility in each individual student. Our use of Restorative Practices aims to maximise student engagement and wellbeing and social justice approaches. Restorative Practices seeks to value and support those involved so that they feel empowered to take positive action to address the situation and move forward. We have partnered with [Real Schools](#) to support our Restorative Practices ethos and approaches.

As well, 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. Examples of these include ManCave, Flourish, and ThinkUKnow.
- We participate in and promote the Respectful Relationships initiative, and we have embedded it into our Years 7-10 Life Skills program to support a culture of respect and equality across our school.
- 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.
- We develop or participate in programs or initiatives to help us foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students, such as our PRISM club.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies, based in Respectful Relationships, Restorative Practices, and SWPBS, that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- As well as incursions and programs to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts, this is included directly in our Life Skills and Aspire programs.
- 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.
- 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.
- We participate in awareness-raising activities, such as the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.
- 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.

For further information, and related preventative strategies, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, Student Code of Conduct, and Inclusion and Diversity policy

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Yarra Hills Secondary College

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 Yarra Hills Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their Year Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, educational support staff, and principals.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Yarra Hills Secondary College should contact their child's Year Level Coordinator by phone on 9839 8800 (Mooroolbark

campus) or 9736 3650 (Mt Evelyn campus) or by email – either: yarra.hills.sc@education.vic.gov.au or directly to the Coordinator’s email address, or through the Contact page on our website.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in a Compass chronicle
2. inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator

The Year Level Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Year Level Coordinator may speak with the students involved or impacted, and any witnesses. From there, as needed, they may speak to or meet with parent/carer(s) of the students involved. Year Level Coordinators will make or record, and share as relevant, notes and statements from their investigation.

All communications with the Year Level 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 Year Level 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 Heads of School, Assistant Principals, the Wellbeing Team, teachers, and Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

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, Yarra Hills 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 their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

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

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, School Support Services, or an external provider 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 process and conversation 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,

responsibility and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone, and to make an agreement on the expected conduct from all parties henceforth

- 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.
- Provide targeted education for specific students
- 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 and education to reinforce positive behaviours, for example the School-Wide Positive Behaviour program
- 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.

Yarra Hills 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 Year Level Coordinator or relevant teacher or leader overseeing the matter are 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:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our online staff policies pages (on the Moodle platform)
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions as required
- Included in brief in student diaries so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Child Safety Policy
- Student Code of Conduct
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

Our school also follows Department of Education and Training policy relating to bullying including:

- [Bullying Prevention and Response](#)
- [Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)

- [LGBTIQ 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!](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [ThinkUKnow](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- [Lilydale Youth Hub](#)
- [Cybersmart](#)
- [Cybersafety](#)
- [Break through Bullying](#)

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 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:

- Feedback and input from student managers, wellbeing staff, and other relevant school-based key stakeholders
- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- Bully Stoppers Data Collection tool
- assessment of specific school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student representative groups, parents groups and/or the school council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	March 2023
Consultation <i>Consultation on this policy is mandatory</i>	Consultation: Student representative council – March 20, 21 of 2023 School Council – March 21, 2023 Staff – March 9-16, 2023
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date (required within 2 years)	March 2025