

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Ballarat High School 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Ballarat High School 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 Ballarat High School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Ballarat High School aims to:

- be fair, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution
- Prevent the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Ballarat High School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Ballarat High School recognises that there are also inappropriate behaviours that are not defined as bullying. These unacceptable behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Behaviour Management Strategies Process as set out in the Engagement Policy.

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

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.

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:

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.

Harassment can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

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.

Other distressing behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Behaviour Management Strategies Process as set out in the Engagement Policy.

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.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Ballarat High School 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 Ballarat High School 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 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 agreements and management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Year level incursions and programs e.g. Courage to Care and Mpower programs, are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- Our Respectful Relationships 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 and Leadership programs 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 through programs such as Teen Mental Health First Aid.
- Whole school participation in awareness campaigns such as White Ribbon

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Ballarat High School

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 their relevant Team Leader. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers and wellbeing staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Ballarat High School should contact the relevant Team Leader.

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 Ballarat High School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Edumate under the student's history
2. inform the relevant Team Leader
3. Team Leader is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they may:
 - speak to the alleged victim and support them to fill out an incident report
 - speak to the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
 - speak to the parents of the students involved
 - speak to relevant staff members
 - obtain written statements from any of the above
 - gather any relevant additional evidence
 - take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
 - Record relevant information on Edumate

All communications with the Team Leader 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.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When a Team Leader 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. Team Leaders may consult with relevant stakeholders that

may include Parents/guardians, Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, Assistant Principal and Department of Education and Training staff and external agencies.

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,

Ballarat High School will consider (not an exhaustive list):

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and/or frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
- whether the perpetrator(s) have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the perpetrator(s) demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Team Leaders may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student(s), perpetrator(s) or other students impacted by the bullying including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with 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. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the victim student(s), the perpetrator students and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the victim(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Implement disciplinary consequences consistent with the school's Student Engagement policy.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan that supports the safety and wellbeing of all parties
- Provide discussion, education and support to address different social and emotional learning needs and competencies.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.

Team Leaders are responsible for maintaining up to date records on Edumate of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Ballarat High School 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.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- Student Engagement Policy
- Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Policy
- Student Services Handbook
- Promoting a Safe and Healthy Learning Community Statement

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](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Information will be evaluated through:

- discussion with students
- students - Attitudes to School survey
- Parent Opinion survey
- regular staff feedback
- assessment of school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with all key stakeholders

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy was last updated in Term 3 2019 and is scheduled for review in Term 4 2020