
Student Bullying Prevention Policy

PURPOSE

Blackburn 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 so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Blackburn High School community.
- make clear that no form of bullying at Blackburn High School will be tolerated.
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Blackburn High School 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 accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to the child's Mentor Teacher. The Mentor Teacher will work with their House leadership team and/or an Assistant Principal to resolve the incident.
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed by either the child's Mentor or Classroom Teacher, in conjunction with the child's House leadership team and an Assistant Principal.
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour).
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Blackburn High School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Blackburn High School 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.

Blackburn High School 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. In regard to incidents that occur outside of the School, the School is limited to mediation and counselling.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Blackburn High School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Blackburn High School 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
- Inclusion and Diversity policy
- BHS Statement of Values and School Philosophy

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps, excursions and on-line activities. 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 \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Bully-Stoppers) 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 this Bullying Prevention Policy where the behaviour constitutes bullying and or:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing and 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 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. Blackburn High School 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.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Blackburn High School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Blackburn High School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

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

Blackburn High School 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 Blackburn 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 respectful 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 Mentor Program activities and targeted programs are planned for students 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.
- Our Mentor Program and House structure encourages (and expects) 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 Mentor and/or classroom teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, refer to:

- Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Blackburn High 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 Blackburn High School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their Mentor and/or classroom teachers. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including Wellbeing team members, School Nurse, House leadership teams, as well as the Principal team. Students can email their concerns directly to any of these staff members.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Blackburn High School should contact their child's Mentor Teacher via email or by phone on 8804 6464.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations on the child's XUNO chronicle stating only the facts.
2. inform the child's Mentor Teacher who will work with the child, their parent/carer and the house leadership team. The House leadership team may need to consult with a Principal team member.
3. The Wellbeing team may need to support the student because of their bullying incident.
4. A meeting may need to occur which may involve the child and their parent/carer, the child's Mentor Teacher, a House leadership team member and/or a Principal team member.

The child's Mentor Teacher and/or a House leadership team member is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they may:

- speak to 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/carers of the students involved.
- speak to the Mentor and/or Classroom 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 Mentor Teacher and/or a House leadership team member 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 implement an appropriate response most effectively 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.

Where bullying occurs outside of school hours, the school is limited in its capacity to investigate and will refer the matter to the appropriate external organisation.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the child's Mentor Teacher and/or a House leadership team member have 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. This can occur in consultation with the Wellbeing team, teachers, SSS, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff.

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, Blackburn High School 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/s.
- 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 demonstrate insight or remorse for their behaviour.

- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The child's Mentor Teacher and/or a House leadership team member may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Wellbeing team, SSS and /or an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Wellbeing team, SSS and /or an external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Wellbeing team, SSS and /or an external provider.
- 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 understanding, empathy, 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 target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).

The rationale behind using the Support Group Method is as follows:

- *Victims of school bullying will describe to a practitioner the distress they have*

experienced by those who have bullied them, especially when they are convinced that the perpetrators will not be punished. They will also disclose the names of the perpetrators.

- *Perpetrators will empathise with what has been happening to their victim when they are told about their distress especially if they attend a meeting convened by the practitioner in the company of some other students who are supportive of the victim.*
- *In these circumstances the perpetrators will accept responsibility for helping to alleviate the victim's distress and act accordingly.*
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.

The rationale behind using the Method of Shared Concern is as follows:

- *Bullying behaviour is commonly (though not always) undertaken by, or with the support of, a peer group.*
- *Approached in a non-accusatory manner, individual members of such groups will typically acknowledge the distress of the victim and agree to act to reduce that distress.*
- *A minority of targeted children have in the past acted provocatively and need to recognise their part in the ensuing conflict.*
- *Once some individual members of the group have begun to act constructively, the group can be brought together to plan how they will finally resolve the matter with the person they have targeted.*
- *An agreed resolution involving all concerned is likely to be sustainable.*
- 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 target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.

- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including targeted social and emotional learning programs coordinated by the House leadership and Wellbeing team.
- 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.
- Implement 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.

Blackburn 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, the child's Mentor Teacher and/or a House leadership team member will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The child's Mentor Teacher 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:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes

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
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Communication 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](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a 2 year basis, or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers.
- regular staff meetings – House leadership and Wellbeing team with an Assistant Principal.
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each Mentor Group and the

effectiveness of the responses implemented.

- Student Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with staff, student representative groups, Education and Policy sub-committee and School Council.

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Approval Authority	
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References	Victorian Government Schools Advisory Guide