



Warracknabeal Secondary College

Bullying Prevention Policy

Child Safety statement: Warracknabeal Secondary College is committed to child safety (Ministerial Order No. 870) and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the safety of our students is paramount.

Rationale:

Warracknabeal Secondary College is committed in our duty of care to provide a safe and caring environment to learn, where bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment is not occurring and students feel secure and valued at all times. This enables positive relationships to be formed amongst **all** students and staff, which encompass all five of our school values of Honesty, Excellence, Respect, Perseverance and Resilience.

This policy addresses how Warracknabeal Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Warracknabeal 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* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Inclusion and Diversity policy*. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

Aims:

Warracknabeal 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 Warracknabeal Secondary College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Warracknabeal Secondary College will be tolerated
- build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour through strategies and programs such as – School Wide Positive Behaviour, Young Achiever Awards, appropriate support for impacted parties (counselling, support plans, etc.), reference to bullying prevention in the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities.
- 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 targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Warracknabeal Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Warracknabeal 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.

Warracknabeal Secondary College acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

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.

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.

Cyberbullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Code of Conduct.

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. Warracknabeal 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. Further information about these two forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Warracknabeal Secondary College and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Warracknabeal Secondary College 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.

Implementation:

- All students and staff will be informed of the bullying prevention policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.
- Warracknabeal Secondary College displays a declaration in the office foyer of our stance towards zero bullying and harassment.
- Warracknabeal Secondary College will ensure that level assemblies will discuss the topic of bullying and harassment throughout the year.
- Staff will be informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with issues of bullying and harassment as outlined by DET, including restorative practices training.
- Student programs will be organised to raise student awareness about bullying. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum, assemblies, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by outside experts and workers. These programs will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current DET materials.
- The Bullying Prevention Policy will be available on our school's webpage and promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.

Incident Response

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.

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 Warracknabeal Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to a staff member. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers and school support staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Warracknabeal Secondary College should contact the Principal/Assistant Principal/Wellbeing Leader.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations on the electronic student management system; and
2. inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator or Student Wellbeing Leader, Assistant Principal, Principal.

The Year Level Coordinator (and if required a member of the leadership team) is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the investigator 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 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 investigator/s 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 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 investigator/s 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, Student Support Services (SSS), Assistant Principal, Principal, 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, Warracknabeal Secondary College will consider:

- the age and maturity 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, including any element of provocation.

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

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to 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 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 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 discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including - Mates Mentoring, resilience programs, etc.
- 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, for example – external agencies/speakers.
- 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.

Warracknabeal 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 Principal/Assistant Principal is responsible for relevant staff maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

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

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity 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:

- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed on a 1-2 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:

- Staff Survey
- Attitudes to School Survey
- [Parent Opinion Survey](#)

Ratified by School Council Date:

Signed: Principal: Therese Allen

School Council President: Kylie Zanker

18th February 2020

