



# NUMURKAH SECONDARY COLLEGE

## BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Policy last reviewed	July 2023
Consultation	July 2023 Student forum July 2023 school newsletter Student attitude to school survey School Staff survey
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2024

### PURPOSE

Numurkah 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 Numurkah Secondary College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Numurkah Secondary College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Numurkah 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 Numurkah Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Numurkah 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.

Numurkah 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 Numurkah Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Numurkah 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 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. 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. Numurkah 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**

Numurkah 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 Numurkah 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.

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 participate in the Respectful Relationships initiative, which aims to embed 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 participate in the Safe Schools program to help us foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year 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.
- 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 and the Peer Mediation program encourage 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 the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy.

## Incident Response

### Reporting concerns to Numurkah 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 Numurkah Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to your teacher/Year Level Coordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, school social worker etc.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Numurkah Secondary College should contact Assistant Principal – Student Engagement and Wellbeing on 5862 1088.

## Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in Compass; and
2. Inform the relevant Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, Principal.

The Year Level Leader is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate any allegation of bullying, the Year Level Leader may:

- Speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents.
- Speak to the parents of the student 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 Year Level Leader in the course of investigating any 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 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 in consultation with the Student Wellbeing Team and Assistant Principal.

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, Numurkah 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 victim student.
- Whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- Whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- Whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- The alleged motive of the behaviour.

The Year Level Leader/Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, 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 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 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).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- 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 connect affected students with an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, etc.
- 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 to reinforce positive behaviours, using the School Wide Positive Support Matrix.
- 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.

Numurkah 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 Leader is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

## COMMUNICATON

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our schools website.
- Included in staff induction processes.
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required.
- 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
- Parent Complaints policy

- 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!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)
- <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

The attached 'Parent Flyer: Bullying' will be included in Year 7 transition and information packs to help parents understand and respond to bullying.

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every two years, 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 to inform this review will be collected through:

- Discussion with students and parent/carers
- Regular student, staff and parent/carer surveys
- Assessment of 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 school council.

## Parent Bullying Flyer.

At Numurkah Secondary College we take our responsibility to ensure every student feels safe and secure at school very seriously.



## What should you do if you think your child is being bullied?

This worrying question causes many parents sleepless nights.

People sometimes use the term "bullying" to describe all negative interactions between children; between adults; and between adults and children.

But are all negative interactions bullying?

What are the essential characteristics of "bullying" behaviour?

1. Bullying involves a **power imbalance** e.g., physical size, age or status.
2. There is **intent to cause distress**.
3. The 'victim' experiences **distress**.
4. Without intervention, the bullying behaviour is **repeated** over and over again.

**All four characteristics must be present, for the behaviour to constitute 'bullying'.**

So, when your child comes home from school and says – *Fred hurt me* or *Mary was mean to me* – don't immediately jump to the conclusion that your child is the 'victim' of a 'bully', and that the 'bully' needs to be punished and kept away from the 'victim'.

**How else can you respond as a parent?**

## **PLEASE DO**

- Listen attentively, whenever your child is relaying events/experiences/feelings.
- Acknowledge the situation without judging it, e.g. That sounds tricky – what did you do? Are you feeling OK now? If not, who could you talk with to help you work out what to do next? In other words, try to keep your own emotions under control, particularly the desire to hurt the other child/ren yourself.
- Support your child to talk to their Year Level Leader or a trusted teacher about the situation so they can discuss the situation and work on strategies together. If your child refuses, please alert staff to your child's comments and ask if they can help your child to work through it and ask if they have any tips for you.
- Because bullying involves a power imbalance, it's important to see your child as powerful or potentially powerful, rather than sending them the message that you see them as a powerless victim. The challenge is to help your child to find the strategies that enable them to have power.

## **PLEASE DON'T**

- Underestimate your child's potential to work through their relationship difficulties, and their ability to seek adult assistance (when needed) to support their efforts to negotiate solutions with others.
- Reward your child when they complain, by only half-listening to them at other times, but giving them lots and lots of attention when they complain about others. They quickly learn that's how to get your undivided attention – a very effective attention-eliciting strategy, they can use over and over again.
- Over-react emotionally when your child describes a negative interaction with another child (don't forget you're only hearing one side of the story!), and automatically blame the other child/ren or use negative name-calling, don't forget you're showing your child how to act in difficult situations.
- Suggest your child retaliate by hurting the other child/ren physically or by name-calling – this will escalate the negative interaction, not solve it.
- Approach the other child/ren or family yourself and then lecture, threaten or hurt them – this will escalate the negative interaction, not solve it.

Blame and punishment don't change behaviour – they merely drive it underground. Rather than unintentionally 'rewarding' your child (through lots of attention) when she or he complains, focus instead on supporting them to be active, assertive problem-solvers – so they learn that they can often change an outcome by changing their own behaviour, rather than simply blaming others.

We look forward to working beside you to support your child/ren to resolve conflict with others positively and proactively and to be optimistic, resilient, and confident young adults.

