

PURPOSE

Yarrowonga College P-12 is committed to providing an environment that is free from harassment & bullying. Every person at Yarrowonga College P-12 has the right to experience positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. They also have the right to learn and to teach in a happy, safe and respectful environment. Harassment and bullying is not acceptable at Yarrowonga College P-12 and will not be tolerated.

All students enrolled, and any child visiting, have the right to feel safe and to be safe. The wellbeing of children in our care will always be our first priority and we have zero tolerance to child abuse. We aim to create a child safe and child friendly environment where children feel safe and are free to enjoy life to the full without any concern for their safety.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of our school community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Yarrowonga College P-12 will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place 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 understand the importance 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 Yarrowonga College P-12.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Yarrowonga College P-12 aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Yarrowonga College P-12 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 Yarrowonga College P-12 aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Yarrowonga College P-12 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 restorative practices, *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 of Education'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. Yarrowonga College P-12 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

Yarrowonga College P-12 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 Yarrowonga College P-12 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 actively foster a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.

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- We strive to build strong positive partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are supported to incorporate restorative practices and classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- 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.
- Staff work to build knowledge of and respect for Aboriginal and world cultures, and actively work to address unconscious bias and racism in the school community.
- Restorative Behaviours practice, the Resilience, Rights & Respectful Relationships curriculum and Values education are incorporated into wellbeing practices and classroom 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.
- 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 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.

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

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to Yarrowonga College P-12

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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their teacher/Year Level Coordinator, Student Engagement & Wellbeing Leader (Child Safety Officer) or Campus Principal. 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 may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Yarrowonga College P-12 should contact the school and request to speak with the Campus Principal or the Student Engagement & Wellbeing Leader (Child Safety Officer).

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 Yarrowonga College P-12 are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Investigations

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

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1. Record the details of the allegations in Compass
2. Inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator and/or Campus Principal. Information may also be shared with the Student Wellbeing Team (Child Safety Officers) and College Principal.

The Campus Principal or 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 Campus Principal or the Year Level Coordinator 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/carer(s) 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 Campus Principal or 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

Once the Campus Principal or 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 College/Campus Principal, Year Level Coordinator, Class teachers and Engagement & Wellbeing Leading Teachers. Consultation may also occur with the Student Wellbeing Team or Department of Education SSSO team members or specialist regional 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, Yarrowonga College P-12 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 victim 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 student/s engaging in bullying demonstrate insight or remorse for behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

College Principal, Campus Principals or Year Level Coordinators may implement all, or some, of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Department of Education SSSO team members or specialist regional staff to:
 - the target student or students

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- 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 Respectful Relationships, Positive Education and other resilience based programs.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, year group and/or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example Respectful Relationships, Restorative Chats, targeted support programs.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the student/s 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 of Education policy.

Campus Principal or the Year Level Coordinator is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Yarrowonga College P-12 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.

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in our staff handbook/manual and induction processes
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Statement of Values and School Philosophy as well as the following school policies:

- 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](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [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](#)

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 will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- regular student, staff and parent/carer surveys
- assessment of other 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

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POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with School Council, Junior School Councillors and Campus based student leaders.

Policy last reviewed	13 th September 2022
Consultation	8 th – 13 th September
Approved by	YCP-12 School Council, Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2024

APPENDIX A

GUIDELINES FOR ACTION

If a student is being harassed they should report it to the Campus Principal/Leader, YLC, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING LEADER, Unit Leader or a teacher with whom they feel comfortable. The responsible adult will report the incident to the YLC, Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader, Child Safe Officer or Campus Principal.

The following steps will be followed in the event of harassment or bullying:

1. The incident will be documented and the complaint investigated by the YLC/UL, CAMPUS LEADER or STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & WELLBEING LEADER.
2. A restorative meeting will be held between the target and the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour, as well as any others affected by the incident. An agreement will be reached as a result of the meeting. For serious cases, a full conference with parents will be organized by a Restorative Practices trained staff member.
3. If the incident occurs again, the agreement is breached or an initial agreement cannot be reached; then parents will be contacted and invited to be involved in a restorative meeting. The student/s engaging in bullying behaviour may need to be removed from the grounds until the incident can be resolved.
4. For further incidents of harassment, or if the agreement is still not adhered to, then the matter will be dealt with in a punitive way, i.e. suspension, exclusion, withdrawal.
5. Ensure staff are aware of all legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse/sexual harassment. (Refer to Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures).
6. Ensure all allegations of abuse/harassment and safety concerns are appropriately recorded and stored securely to protect privacy.
7. Ensure culturally safe practices are applied if a Koorie child is involved in an allegation of abuse/harassment.

Documentation of all incidents of harassment and bullying is kept by the YLC/UL/PCO and is referred to in further incidents involving the same student. This is accessed by the Welfare Team (YLCs/ULs, Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader, Campus Principal) and is kept for the current school year.

If harassment or bullying occurs:

For students

- Tell a teacher immediately. You may also tell your Year Level Coordinator/Unit Leader, Student Engagement and Wellbeing Leader, Campus Principal.

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- Your YLC/UL or classroom teacher will be notified either by yourself or one of the above mentioned staff members. They will then ensure that a restorative meeting occurs. This process will ensure that the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour becomes aware of the harm that he/she is causing and also provides an opportunity for that person to repair the harm. An agreement will also be reached by all parties.
- Understand that if a report or allegation of harassment is made then you are provided with support and comfort.
- Where harassment involves a serious assault, you should immediately report the incident to the yard duty teacher or another staff member. In these cases, the CAMPUS LEADER or YLC/UL will remove the harasser from the school grounds and/or classroom. Parents will be notified.
- Where the harassment continues or recurs after a lapse of time, it is essential to report the continuation of the problem.

For staff

- Be alert to signs and evidence of harassment within the classroom and yard and refer directly to the YLC/UL or CAMPUS LEADER.
- Listen and acknowledge the seriousness of the report, no matter how trivial it may first appear. Deal with any breach of the Student Code of Conduct at that time.
- Refer the incident to the YLC/UL or CAMPUS LEADER. Inform the student/s of this action.
- The YLC/UL or CAMPUS LEADER will then deal with the matter or ask one of the RP trained staff to deal with the situation.
- Encourage positive behaviour – refer to Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Follow the Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures, and ensure you understand the stages of responding to abuse.
- Ensure you are aware of all legal requirements for reporting suspected child abuse/sexual harassment. (Refer to Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures).
- Ensure all allegations of abuse/harassment and safety concerns are appropriately recorded and stored securely to protect privacy
- Ensure culturally safe practices are applied if a Koorie child is involved in an allegation of abuse/harassment.

For parents/guardians

- It is suggested that you encourage your children to discuss harassment issues with you at home.
 - If your child reports that they are being harassed at school, encourage them to speak to a teacher at school. Students who feel strongly that harassment should be reported are our best asset in maintaining a climate that discourages this behaviour.
 - We also encourage parents to contact the school when you become aware of situations involving harassment.
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