

TERANG COLLEGE

Bullying and Harassment

POLICY

1. RATIONALE

Terang College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

2. AIMS

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Terang College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at our College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Terang College to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our college community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting bullying behaviour to college 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

3. IMPLEMENTATION

- Issues, actions and decisions relating to this policy will take into account Department of Education and Training policies, memos, guidelines and circulars and Government Ministerial Orders and Acts.

When responding to bullying behaviour, the college aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- prevent the reoccurrence of bullying behaviour
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Terang College acknowledges that college staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which may include harm that could 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.
 - 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 our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and 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. Terang 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.

- Terang College has several programs and strategies in place that 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.

- The prevention of bullying at Terang College is proactive and supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a wellbeing team, comprising of a full-time counsellor, Secondary School nurse, Mental Health Practitioner and staff who work proactively with students as well as responding to student needs.
- Terang College has identified and implemented 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 are implementing Positive Education, School Wide Positive Behaviours and Restorative Practice.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the college, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- We are a lead school 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.
- 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.

- **Incident Response**

Reporting concerns to Terang College

- Bullying is not tolerated at our college. 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 college 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 Terang College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
- We encourage students to speak to the classroom teacher, sub-school leader, principal class or the wellbeing staff. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.
- Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour should contact the child's classroom teacher or the sub-school leader.

- **Investigations**

- When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, college staff are required to:
 - record the details of the allegations in Compass

- inform the sub-school leader. They are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner or refer it to the principal class. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the staff member 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 parent/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 staff 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 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 there is 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 the affected students. Consultation will be provided with the Wellbeing Team, teachers, Assistant Principal, and 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, Terang College 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
 - 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 behind the behaviour.
- The staff responding to the incident may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:
- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external providers 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 Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan, Risk Assessment Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- 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.
- 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.

Terang 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, college staff will endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

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

- **Communication**

- This policy will be communicated through the following ways:
 - Published on the College website
 - Available as a hardcopy if requested
 - Part of the staff manual and induction process

4 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 to inform this review 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

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student representative groups, parents groups, school council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	June 2023
Consultation	Student discussion – February 2023 Parent survey - 2022 School council – 21/3/23
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	May 2025