Bullying Prevention Policy

HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help understanding the information in this policy, please contact Stawell Secondary College on 03 5358 1700 or at stawell.sc@education.vic.gov.au.

PURPOSE

Stawell 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 a shared understanding amongst all members of the Stawell Secondary College community
- Make clear that no form of bullying at Stawell Secondary College will be tolerated
- Outline the strategies and programs in place at Stawell 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 understand 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 to address and prevent bullying behaviour at Stawell Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Stawell 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.

Stawell 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, including harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how Stawell Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Stawell 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 the *Child Safety Code of Conduct Policy*, *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.

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 the 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 conflicts 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, 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) 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 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/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, both parties are generally upset and usually want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can escalate into bullying if one party repeatedly targets the other in retaliation.
Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, to exclude, or to create dislike in 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 who engage in them. Stawell 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 are not tolerated at our school, and there may be serious consequences for students who engage in such 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.

POLICY

Stawell 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 behaviours that demonstrate acceptance, kindness, and respect.

Bullying prevention at Stawell Secondary College is proactive and supported by research indicating 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 among the school, families, and the broader community, which means all members work together to ensure student safety.
- 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 foster a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment for 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 assertively to bullying behaviour. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution, and problem-solving.
- We promote upstander behaviour to empower our students to take appropriate action, safely and positively, when they see or hear about a peer being bullied.
- Students are encouraged to look out for one another and talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

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

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Stawell 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 who have witnessed it, 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 Stawell Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to Year Level Coordinators or Leading Teachers. 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 at Stawell Secondary College should contact either the sub-school leader to whom their

child would be assigned to. Junior (7&8), Middle (9&10), or Senior (11&12) School Sub-School Leader: parents can contact the front office on (03) 53581700, and the staff will contact the relevant leader.

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in Compass - Misbehaviour Major
2. Inform the relevant Year Level Coordinator.

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 Year Level Coordinator 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/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 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 promptly.

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.

Some bullying behaviour can also be abuse. If you believe the behaviour towards another student is abuse, follow the 4 Critical Actions - student-to-student abuse.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When 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 the Leading Teacher and Student Wellbeing Team.

A number of factors will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Stawell Secondary 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 perpetrator 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.

The Junior, Middle or Senior Sub - School Leader may implement all or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, 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 damaged by fostering remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied, and forgiveness on the part of the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate mediation between some or all of the students involved to encourage them 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 that involves the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour, and a group of students 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 an Individual Management Plan restricting contact between the 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, for example, Respectful Relationships within the curriculum from 7-10, Year Level Assemblies, recognition of positive behaviours, and positive reward trips.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for students engaging in bullying behaviour, including 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.

Stawell 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.

Either the Year Level Coordinator or the Leading Teacher is responsible for maintaining up-to-date records of investigations into 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
- Included in our staff handbook
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Made available in hard copy from the 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

Our school also follows the 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

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 evaluation will be collected through:

- 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 the Junior and Senior Leading Teachers.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	Oct 2026
Consultation	Leading Teachers, Year Level Coordinators, Assistant Principal
Approved by	Murray A Hart Principal
Next scheduled review date	Oct 2028

UPDATE HISTORY

First Issued	Feb 2024
History of changes	Feb 2024 New Policy
March 2026	Changes to Junior and Senior school leaders to include middle school.
Oct 2026	Inclusion of two points with the October DET Update: - Some bullying behaviour can also be abuse. If you believe the behaviour towards another student is abuse, follow the 4 Critical Actions - student to student abuse. - Implement cohort, year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example Respectful Relationships within the curriculum from 7-10, Year Level Assemblies, recognition of positive behaviours and positive reward trips.