

 	<h1>BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY</h1>
<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	June 2025
<b>Consultation</b>	School Council
<b>Approved by</b>	Principal
<b>Next scheduled review date</b> College Council will review this policy every 2 years	June 2027



## HELP FOR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKERS

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Nathalia Secondary College on 03 5866 2331 or [nathalia.sc@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:nathalia.sc@education.vic.gov.au).

## PURPOSE

Nathalia 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 Nathalia Secondary College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Nathalia Secondary College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Nathalia 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 accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to Homeroom teacher/Head of House/Assistant Principal/Principal
- 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 Nathalia Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Nathalia 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.

Nathalia 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 Nathalia Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Nathalia 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 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 deliberate 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 \(education.vic.gov.au\)](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 the *Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy, Student Engagement Policy and Personal Responsibility Policy*.

*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. Nathalia Secondary College will use its *Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy and Student 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.

## **Bullying Prevention**

Nathalia Secondary College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Nathalia 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 aim to build a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing through our School Wide Positive Behaviour Support Program.
- 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.
- Teachers are to ensure classrooms are a safe place where students are clear about what constitutes respectful behaviour.
- Teachers are to incorporate classroom management strategies that define and aim to prevent bullying, and promote positive behaviour.
- Teachers are to speak with students about bullying before it happens and provide opportunities to learn and practise effective strategies for responding.

- Staff will participate in professional development focused on positive student engagement and wellbeing, with specific reference to the impacts of bullying and strategies to respond with.
- The school will promote non-bullying through display of anti-bullying posters throughout the school and ensure students are aware of Brodie's Law.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- The Homeroom program promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- School awards will highlight inclusive, positive and respectful behaviour.
- Leadership will follow up on data from student opinion surveys and the Bully Stopper survey that reflect on student wellbeing and safety.
- The Peer Support Program encourages 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 where students are invited to sign a pledge against bullying at Nathalia Secondary College.
- All students will be provided with individual and confidential computer and network logins and passwords and students will be regularly reminded of the importance of maintaining password confidentiality. Processes will be put in place to ensure tracking of student activity on the school's computer network
- All students will participate in whole school assemblies, building respect for the achievement of fellow students while celebrating the diversity of the school community

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

## **Incident Response**

### **Reporting concerns to Nathalia Secondary College**

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 Nathalia Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their Homeroom teacher or Head of House. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including welfare staff, classroom teachers and Education Support staff members, Assistant Principal or Principal.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Nathalia Secondary College should contact the Wellbeing Coordinator or Assistant Principal on (03) 58662331.

### **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations as a Behaviour Report in SIMON and as a Welfare Referral in SIMON

The Welfare Coordinator/Head of House/Assistant Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Welfare Coordinator/Head of House/Assistant Principal 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 Welfare Coordinator/Head of House/Assistant Principal 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 Welfare Coordinator/Head of House/Assistant Principal 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 Service Officers, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Education and Training specialist staff, and the police where necessary.

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, Nathalia 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 role of any identified witnesses

Head of House/Assistant Principal/Welfare Coordinator/Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Student Support Services, 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 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).
- 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 the School Wide Behaviour Support program, the Resilience program, the Homeroom program and the Peer Support Program.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Contact the police in regards to Brodie's Law where necessary.
- If required, students will be moved to separate classes/electives to minimise contact.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example the LiveforLife Program.
- 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.
- Involve parents in support meetings and consultations where Safety Plans are required.
- 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.

Nathalia 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.

[Head of House/Assistant Principal/Welfare Coordinator/Principal] is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

## **Procedures for responding to incidents of bullying**

### **Students:**

All students are responsible for respecting the rights of others to learn, teach and feel safe within the school. This is demonstrated through safe, fair and kind behaviours.

### **Reporting for students**

- Students are expected to report bullying behaviour, either as a victim or bystander
- Students should report bullying to the teacher of the class in which the bullying takes place. It is important that students do not assume that the teacher has seen or heard the bullying
- For bullying outside of the classroom, students should report it to the appropriate Head of House. Where there is an immediate risk of physical injury or danger, the bullying should be reported to the closest yard duty teacher
- If the bullying behaviour does not cease the student should continue to report until the issue is satisfactorily addressed. This may sometimes mean the student tells a different member of staff what

is happening. At school there are many people to turn to for assistance – teachers, teacher assistants, coordinators, assistant principal and principal, office staff, student wellbeing, chaplain, school nurse

- At home, a student should let a family member or trusted adult know about the bullying

### **Strategies for students**

- Students who feel unsafe or threatened should remain as calm and confident as possible. They should remove themselves from the situation and make sure the incident is immediately reported or have a friend help them to report it. Do not respond in anger; tell the perpetrator that what they are doing is not ok.
- Do not incite others to fight the bully. Inciting others to retaliate may result in serious consequences.
- In the case of cyberbullying having blocked the bully, it is important to collect evidence. Do not respond to cyberbullies or encourage others to do so. Use the social networking site's reporting procedures to notify about inappropriate use of the site
- Talk about your concerns with a parent, supportive adult or teacher. Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 is a confidential phone and online service available to young people to discuss a range of concerns

### **Parents/Guardians:**

- Nathalia Secondary College recognises the critical role of parents in noticing that their child may be being bullied and in working with the school to effectively deal with the problem

### **Reporting for parents/guardians**

- Parents should support and encourage students to report instances of bullying. Be aware that students may avoid reporting
- Parents should report to the school concerns or instances of bullying behaviour that they become aware of. Early parental reporting can assist with prevention, intervention and mediation

### **Strategies for parents/guardians**

- Observe your child and note any behaviour changes that might indicate bullying
- Ask about bullying and listen with concern
- Encourage the child to be assertive, not aggressive
- Support your child to report to the school
- Phone or meet with the Head of House to discuss your concerns
- In the case of cyberbullying, guide your child to block the bully, to keep evidence of the cyberbullying and to refrain from retaliating
- Work with the child and the school to resolve the problem

### **Staff:**

- All staff are responsible for ensuring that the school environment is safe and secure and that any bullying or harassment is acted on immediately. This involves following the appropriate student management procedures including reporting all instances of bullying behaviour to the relevant sub-school coordinator
- All instances of bullying need to be taken seriously, including low-level behaviours. All staff should be alert to and take appropriate action in response to bullying behaviours in the classroom as well as in the broader school environment

### **Classroom teachers:**

#### **Classroom teacher procedures**

- First time or low level bullying in the classroom needs to be addressed by the classroom teacher

- The teacher should listen to the student's concerns and not minimise these concerns. Avoid blaming the victim. Remain objective by seeking the other side of the story from the alleged bully. Where appropriate, asking students to write their account of the bullying is helpful for clarity. Speak to other students who may have witnessed the incidents
- The classroom teacher can ask students to be involved in a conference, with the focus on: the victim being able to speak safely about the issues of the bully being informed about the distress caused by the bullying restoring expectations of a safe and respectful learning environment
- Teachers may seek assistance from Head of House in such conferences
- Classroom teachers should accurately document all bullying incidents including actions taken, reporting on SIMON as a Behaviour Report
- Classroom teachers should continue to carefully monitor students involved following bullying and report to Head of House any further incidents. Head of House will record and follow through and oversee process from initial report

#### **Classroom teacher strategies**

- Establish and maintain clear expectations for a safe, kind and fair learning environment
- Intervene early (use "withitness")
- Address low level niggling, undermining comments, repeated jokes at one student's expense and 'Just joking' excuses
- Include 'bullying' topics in the curriculum
- Seating plan

#### **Homeroom teacher procedures**

- The teacher should listen to the student's concerns and not minimise these concerns. Avoid blaming the victim. Remain objective by seeking the other side of the story from the alleged bully. Asking students to write their account of the bullying is helpful for clarity. Speak to other students who may have witnessed the incidents
- Homeroom teachers should continue to carefully monitor students involved following bullying and report to Head of House any further incidents. Head of House will record and follow through and oversee process from initial report

#### **Head of House procedures**

- Head of House will respond to, investigate and manage repeat allegations or repeat instances of bullying; more serious incidents of bullying; bullying outside of the classroom and cross year level bullying
- Head of House will document all reports of bullying on the student management tool, including those passed on by classroom teachers, so as to track repeated behaviours
- Students identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations
- Parents of both victims and perpetrators will be contacted in all cases where bullying has been determined to have occurred
- Head of House will put in place ongoing support including regular check-ins with victims and bully until the issue is deemed resolved
- Depending on the outcomes of the above, a Head of House may email specific staff to make them aware of instances of bullying and request they take additional preventative measures in their classrooms
- Victims and bullies will be offered counselling support. This may include support from School Nurse, Student Wellbeing Coordinator or referral to SSSO service



- If student bullying persists, parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Engagement Policy, including ongoing consultation as appropriate with Principal team in cases of unresolved bullying
- Cyberbullying may be responded to by denial of access to the school's network and computers for a period of time

#### **Assistant Principal Procedures**

- Oversee any bullying issues and support the Head of House.
- Convene mediation meetings and keep records of the conversations and agreed procedures for moving forward.
- Convene student support meetings and keep records of the conversations and any agreed procedures for moving forward.
- Communicate with the Principal where necessary; e.g.: for ongoing bullying that requires higher level response (safety plan, DET assistance).

#### **Principal Procedures**

- Convene parent meeting that needs higher level response (safety plan, DET assistance) and keep records of the conversations and agreed procedures for moving forward.

## **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/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Included in student diaries so that it is easily accessible to parents, carers and students
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools
- 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:

- Personal responsibility policy
- Child safe policy
- Student engagement policy
- Anti-bullying and anti-harassment 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 - survey](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [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:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers;
- regular student bullying surveys;
- regular staff surveys;
- [Bully Stoppers Data Collection tool](#) – I have requested access to this tool;
- 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 group, Student Wellbeing Team, Leadership Team and school council.