

BHCS Bullying & Harassment Policy

PURPOSE

To ensure the well-being of all students at BHCS is catered for in relation to bullying and harassment.

RESPONSIBILITY

All staff, both employed and volunteer.

ONLINE SAFETY ACT 2021¹

New legislation was introduced in 2021 to expand Australia's existing laws in relation to online safety. This legislation provides the eSafety Commissioner² with new powers to protect all Australians online across most online platforms.

The Online Safety Act also broadens the Cyberbullying Scheme for children in relation to capturing harm that occurs on services other than social media.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING & HARASSMENT

Harassment and bullying both involve behaviour that intends to harm its recipient through threats, intimidation, victimisation or humiliation. Harassment is any conduct that negatively targets a person based on their race, sex, religion, gender or disability.

Bullying is considered to be the ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Online bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, e.g. the internet or mobile devices. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

In short, bullying is an ongoing misuse of power involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour, which includes harassment.

Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

¹ [Online Safety Act 2021](#)

² <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

TYPES OF BULLYING

- **Physical bullying** includes but is not limited to hitting, tripping, pushing and damaging property.
- **Verbal bullying** extends to, but is not limited to name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, taunts aimed at gender or gender identity, faith-related vilification, verbal abuse, put downs and threats.
- **Indirect bullying** can take the form of spreading rumours, social exclusion, making jokes with the intent to embarrass and humiliate, using mimicry and purposefully ignoring a person.
- **Psychological bullying** includes but is not limited to being stalked and giving dirty looks.
- **Online bullying (cyberbullying)** is carried out through the use of technology including the internet and mobile devices. This includes but is not limited to social media, chat programs and email. Our BHCS Cybersafety Agreement outlines the School's procedure in minimising the risks of cyberbullying.

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Students may be apprehensive about telling a staff member when they are being bullied due to feeling ashamed or weak, or due to the mistaken belief that involving others will make the situation worse.

Common signs that could indicate a student is being bullied may include:

- Reluctance to go to school or deliberately skipping school
- Lack of social interaction with their peers
- Changes in behaviour, such as unexplained aggression, depression and tears
- Withdrawal and a lack of confidence
- Poor performance or a change of performance in school
- Reluctance to discuss what may be wrong
- Unexplained physical abrasions or bruises

ANTICIPATED FEELINGS OF A STUDENT BEING BULLIED

- Feeling frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- Inability to work, sleep, eat or concentrate well
- Powerlessness at preventing the deterioration in relationships with family and friends
- Confusion about how to deal with the situation

PREVENTION – STAFF AND STUDENTS

BHCS feels strongly about not allowing bullying to go unreported. Staff are encouraged to make students feel comfortable and confident enough to speak up should bullying or incidents of bullying occur.

Staff should at all times:-

- Act as role models in word and action
- Be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- Make efforts to remove occasions for bullying and harassment by providing a consistent visible presence including actively patrolling during yard duty and arriving at class on time and promptly between periods
- Take steps to assist victims by removing sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk
- Report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member be it Homegroup Teacher, Head of School or Pastoral Care Member.

Students should:-

- Refuse to be involved in any sort of bullying situation
- Take preventative action where appropriate if a bullying situation occurs
- Report incidents or suspected incidents to staff members and help break down the code of secrecy that allows bullying to thrive

FOR PARENTS

BHCS recommends that parents take the following actions:-

- Monitor children for signs of distress including watching for some of the following:-
 - feeling ill in the mornings
 - lack of friends
 - changes in behaviour, such as unexplained aggression, depression and tears
 - becoming withdrawn and lacking in confidence
 - crying themselves to sleep and having nightmares
 - wagging school
 - doing poorly with their school work
 - wanting extra money without giving a reason
 - refusing to talk about what's wrong
 - having unexplained cuts and bruises
 - torn or damaged clothing
 - changing the way he or she travels to and from school

- Actively take an interest in their children’s social life and friends
- Speak to their children about approaching teachers or other staff members about any incidents of bullying. Where reasonably possible, allow children to report and deal with the situation themselves, so they feel empowered through dealing with the problem without parental involvement
- Keep a written record of any instances of bullying (who, what, where, why, how)
- Refrain from encouraging children to retaliate
- Discuss with children when parental involvement becomes necessary that it will be appropriate for the situation
- Be willing to meet with the School if their child is involved in a bullying incident
- Be willing to inform the School if any cases of bullying or harassment are suspected – even when their own child may be directly involved

Further information and strategies on how to deal with bullying can be found at the following website: <http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences of bullying should be directly in line with our Behaviour Management Policy. All incidents of reported bullying are taken seriously, irrespective of the type of bullying that is taking place. Consequences may vary, however, dependent on the type of bullying and its frequency.

FURTHER REFERENCES

- [BHCS Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [BHCS Cybersafety and Digital Technology Policy](#)
- [BHCS Online Learning Policy](#)
- [BHCS Cybersafety webpage](#)

PROCEDURE FOLLOWING A REPORTED INCIDENT

- Appropriate person to be notified be it Homeroom Teacher, Head of School and Pastoral Care Member
- Appropriate person (generally the teacher) to speak to the victim and follow up the student in question and any relevant bystanders in order to establish the facts

PROCEDURE IF THERE IS NO VERIFICATION

- Incident to be documented and situation to be further observed and monitored

PROCEDURE FOLLOWING VERIFICATION OF BULLYING

- Appropriate person to counsel the student in question to ensure they are aware of the detrimental impact on the victim (and the victim's family)
- Appropriate person to ensure that the student in question acts in a responsible and constructive way to remedy the situation eg. Give an apology, written or verbal
- Appropriate steps to be taken by the teacher in line with the Behaviour Management Policy
- Details of the incident to be documented and attached to the student's record
- Parents to be notified and an interview time made

PROCEDURE FOLLOWING FURTHER INCIDENTS

- Teacher or Head of School in collaboration with Deputy Principal and/or Pastoral Care Member to interview student and their parents
- Head of School and/or Deputy Principal to make clear the consequences of repeat occurrences
- Counselling to be recommended for the victim
- Further action (internal/external suspension or termination of enrolment) to be at the discretion of the Principal and Deputy Principal

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Information and strategies on how to deal with bullying for parents, students and schools:

- <http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

To report online bullying (cyberbullying):

- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/i-want-to-report-cyberbullying>

For resources on cybersafety for parents:

Office of eSafety Commissioner

- <https://www.esafety.gov.au/iparent>

Thinkuknow

- <https://www.thinkuknow.org.au/>

For information and support for victims of bullying:

- Kids Helpline <http://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- Lifeline <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- Reach Out <https://au.reachout.com/>
- Beyondblue www.beyondblue.org.au
- Headspace www.headspace.org.au
- Australian Psychological Society www.psychology.org.au