BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

PURPOSE

Ringwood 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:

- provide the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Ringwood Secondary College community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Ringwood Secondary College will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Ringwood 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 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 Ringwood Secondary College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Ringwood Secondary College aims to:

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

Ringwood 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 Ringwood Secondary College aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. The 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*, *Inclusion and Diversity policy* and *Student Safety Code of Conduct*.

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 which:

- involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- is ongoing and repeated, and
- involves behaviours that can cause harm.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include:
    - hitting, pushing or shoving
    - physically hurting another person
    - threats of violence or intimidation
    - damaging or stealing their belongings.
- 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 or sharing information that will have a harmful effect
    - damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- Cyberbullying – examples include:
    - any form of bullying behaviour that occurs via an electronic device
    - verbal, written or audio/visual material which may include threats of violence.

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 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*, *Inclusion and Diversity 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. Ringwood 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 and/or political 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 may include 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

Ringwood 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 behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Ringwood Secondary College is proactive and is 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 positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing
- 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 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
- 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
- emotional literacy, kindness and empathy are explicitly taught through the College's wellbeing program – Bounce, as preventative strategies, along with mindfulness to assist with emotional regulation. The Bounce program aims to promote resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem-solving from Years 7 – 12
- the Year 7 Bounce program focuses on Positive Relationships, utilising the Friendology Program from UR Strong. This program develops language for promoting healthy relationships and explores different types of behaviour
- inclusion strategies are used to promote respect for diversity and reduce homophobic bullying. These strategies are led by the Stand Out group, which is a student led group that tackles homophobia and promotes equality throughout the College. Strategies include: Stand Out group, Wear it Purple Day, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) Day, Harmony Day and various inclusivity training for students and staff
- are committed to the Respectful Relationships initiative that promotes gender equality and aims to teach students skills in developing respectful relationships within the school. Students and teachers are also guided on how to support those who are experiencing relationship abuse and/or violence.

Some of the approaches Ringwood Secondary College uses to generate a safe culture that prevents bullying include:

- a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing
- strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students
- teachers incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour
- year level incursions and programs for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts
- encouraging students to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed
- the wellbeing program, *Bounce* which explicitly teaches
  - emotional literacy, kindness and empathy as preventative strategies,
  - mindfulness to assist with emotional regulation
  - promotion of resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem-solving from Years 7 – 12
- a proactive transition program which focuses on Positive Relationships, utilising the Friendology Program from UR Strong. This program develops language for promoting healthy relationships and explores different types of behaviour

- promoting respect for gender and racial diversity including:
  - o a student led group - Stand Out - which tackles homophobia and promotes equality
  - o Wear it Purple Day, International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexism and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) Day and Harmony Day and
  - o inclusivity training for students and staff
- an ongoing commitment to the Respectful Relationships initiative that promotes gender equality and aims to teach students skills in developing respectful relationships within the school.
- guidance for students and teachers on how to support people experiencing relationship abuse and/or violence.

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

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to Ringwood 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 students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

We encourage students to speak to their Year Level Co-ordinator. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers and wellbeing staff.

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Ringwood Secondary College should contact their child's Year Level Co-ordinator (via email or phone 9870-2002). Alternatively, an email can be directed to the College's account at ringwood.sc@education.vic.gov.au.

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 Ringwood Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations in Compass (with appropriate levels of visibility).
2. Inform relevant staff, which may include Year Level Co-ordinators, Sub-School Leaders, Wellbeing Team members, Assistant Principals and/or the Principal.

The Year Level Co-ordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Year Level Co-ordinator 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(s)/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 Co-ordinator 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 the Year Level Co-ordinator 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 Sub-School Leader, teachers, Wellbeing Team members, Assistant Principals, Principal and/or Department of Education and Training specialist 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, Ringwood Secondary College will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances of the student(s) 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 bullying behaviour.

The College may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours which involve the target student, the student engaging in bullying, and/or witnesses to the event:
- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the Wellbeing Team or external providers
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting where the objective is to repair relationships.
- Facilitate a mediation, where participation is voluntary, to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan
- Prepare a Behaviour Management Plan restricting contact
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies
- Monitor the behaviour for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences, 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.

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
- Inclusion and Diversity policy
- Duty of Care

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
- 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 review will be collected through:
- discussion and consultation with students and parents/carers
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year level 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, parent groups and School Council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	15th June 2022
Consultation	Student Representative Council – 3rd June 2022
	Policy & Education Committee – 1st June 2022
	School Council – 15th June 2022
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2024