

# BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

**AT COBRAM SECONDARY COLLEGE**  
*The school of choice for the Cobram Community*



## **Help for non-English speakers**

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact Cobram Secondary College, 5871 1700.

## **STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT**

Cobram Secondary College believes every student deserves a safe and positive learning experience where they are engaged and supported to reach their full potential.

The College adheres to the principles of Australian democracy and takes into account the diversity of all children and makes reasonable efforts to accommodate them. This includes (but is not limited to) the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning (LGBTIQ+) individuals, and children who are vulnerable.

The College is committed to creating a child safe environment protecting children from all forms of abuse and neglect.

## **PURPOSE**

Cobram 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
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Cobram Secondary College will not be tolerated
- 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 victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Cobram Secondary College.

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

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone

- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Cobram 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.

### **SCOPE**

This policy addresses how Cobram Secondary College aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. Cobram 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 Child Safe Code of Conduct, Child Safe Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy including Mandatory Reporting, School Engagement & Inclusion Policy.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

### **POLICY**

#### **Definitions**

*Bullying* occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

1. direct physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. direct verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. indirect bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

*Harassment* can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

#### **Other distressing behaviours**

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

*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 harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Cobram 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 Cobram 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 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.
- 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.

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

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **Reporting concerns to Cobram Secondary College**

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

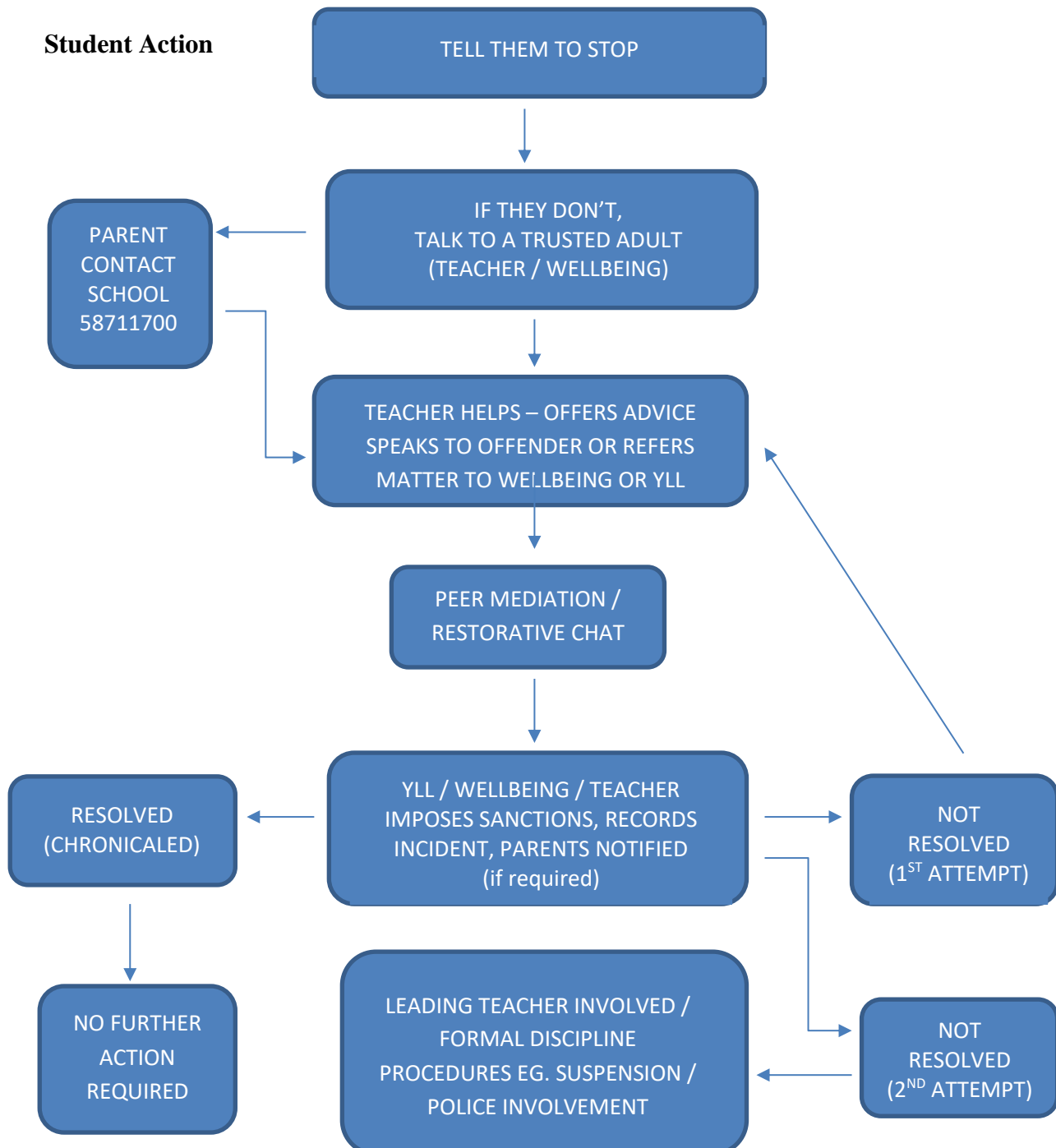
Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their Year Level Leader. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, etc.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Cobram Secondary College should contact their Year Level Leaders on 03) 5871 1700 or via email [cobram.sc@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:cobram.sc@education.vic.gov.au)

## Resolution of School Harassment Problems

Cobram Secondary College is committed to a culture where all members of our school community respect each other. However, unfortunately incidents of harassment may continue to occur. Therefore, teachers should follow this flowchart methodically and only move to the next step if the learner's behaviour fails to improve. In some very severe situations, teachers may 'skip' the early steps of resolution to begin at Leading Teacher Involvement.



## **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When the Year Level Leader 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 Services (SSS), Leading Teacher, Assistant Principal, 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, Cobram 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 victim student
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Year Level Leader may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, 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 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.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, 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.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including affected students with an older student mentor, resilience program.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

The appropriate Year Level Leader is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Cobram Secondary College understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate

bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Cobram Secondary College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

### **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
- Complaints Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- School Diversity and Inclusion 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](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)

### **EVALUATION**

This will be reviewed on a yearly basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that this policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- regular student bullying surveys
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

### **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 and child safety training processes
- Included on the staff portal
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

### **POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

Policy last reviewed	2021
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	June 2024

Kimberley Tempest  
Principal