BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Purpose

The University High School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment. Every member of our community deserves to be treated with respect and dignity; free from bullying and harassment. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clarify the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the University High School community
- Make clear that no form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated at University High School
- Outline the strategies and programs in place at University High School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- Emphasise the collective responsibility that everyone in our school community holds in reporting bullying behaviours, and to educate all individuals to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour,
- 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 University High School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, University High School aims to:

- Be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- Find a constructive solution for all involved
- Prevent the bullying from happening again
- Restore the relationships between the students involved

University High School acknowledges that all school staff owe a duty of care to students, and must take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

Scope

- A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying and harassment in a consistent and systematic way
- This policy will be communicated to all students and staff
- All reports of bullying and harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously
- The College will organise, develop and deliver preventative curriculum programs to educate members on bullying and harassment and its impacts
- There will be disciplinary consequences, in line with University High School's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, and Racial Harassment Policy
- This policy extends to all school activities, including camps and excursions, as well as student interactions that may take place online outside of school hours

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

Types of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: Brodie's Law.

 The table below outlines different types of bullying and harassment.

Category	Definition/examples
Direct physical bullying	Hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
Direct verbal/written bullying	Name calling, insults, teasing, insulting someone about an attribute, quality, or personal characteristic, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse
Indirect bullying	Action designated to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Examples include: - Lying and spreading rumours - Playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate - Mimicking - Encouraging others to socially exclude someone

	• Damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.
Cyberbullying	Direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies such as via computer or mobile device. Examples include harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal social page and taking unwanted and unapproved photos and sending them onto others, can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.
Harassment	• Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person • Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed, sexuality or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.
Sexual Harassment	Any unwanted or uninvited sexual behaviour that is offensive, embarrassing, intimidating or humiliating. It includes behaviour that creates an intimidating environment. Examples include: • unwelcoming touching • staring or leering • suggestive comments or jokes • sexually explicit pictures, posters, screensavers • intrusive questions about a person's private life or body • insults, name-calling or taunts based on your sex
Racist Bullying	Belittling, mocking, intimidating or shaming someone because of their physical appearance, ethnic background, religious or cultural practices and/or the way they dress or talk.
Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying	Bullying on the basis of sexuality or gender expression. It can include physical violence, cyberbullying, name calling, exclusion, 'jokes' and/or sexual harassment.

Indicators of Bullying

Students who are being bullied may show some or all of the following signs:
- Poor health – lost appetite, anxiety, depression
- Lower self-esteem
- Reduced academic performance
- Unwillingness to come to school, missed classes, social withdrawal
- Coming home regularly with damaged clothes or possessions
- Mood swings

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 University High School's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Sexual Harassment Policy, and Racial Harassment Policy, and Student Code of Conduct.

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. University High School 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, racial harassment, and disability harassment. Further information about these three forms of harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Sexual Harassment Policy, Racial Harassment Policy, and Inclusion and Diversity Policy. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at University High School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. University High School will refer to its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.

Bullying Prevention

University High School 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 University High School 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, such as strategies the approach of the Berry Street Education Model
- 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 cross-curriculum 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, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct
- For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy

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Incident Response

Reporting concerns to University High School

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 University High School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their coordinator or the Head of their Sub-School. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including (teachers, wellbeing staff, member of principal class.)

Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at University High School should contact the Assistant Principal overseeing student management and wellbeing via phone on 03 9347 2022. Concerns can also be directed to students' respective Heads of Sub-School or Coordinator.

Investigations

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

1. Record the details of the allegations via Compass Chronicle entry; and
2. Inform Coordinator and/or Head of Sub-School. Matter will be escalated to Assistant Principal when required

The Coordinator and/or Head of Sub-School is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Coordinator and/or Head of Sub-School 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 Coordinator and/or Head of Sub-School 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.

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Responses to bullying behaviours

When Head of Sub-School, Coordinator, and/or 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, relevant teachers and/or classroom education support staff, and if required, Student Support Services (SSS), College Principal, 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, University High School 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.

Head of Sub-School, Coordinator, and/or Assistant 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, SSS, external support services
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external support services
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, external support services
- 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. 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, 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)
- 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
- Have all students involved complete reflection and self-regulation activities in line with approaches outlined within the Berry Street Educational Model
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Behaviour Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviours
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.

- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example, activities or lessons in line with the Respectful Relationships curriculum.
- 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.

University High School 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.

Assistant Principal, Head of Sub-School, Coordinators, and Wellbeing Team Staff are require to collaborate in the process of maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Further information and resources

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Racial Harassment Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity 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:

- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- Headspace: Understanding Bullying
- Bully Stoppers

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 will be collected through:

- Discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- Regular student bullying surveys/student-led feedback collection of student issues
- Annual staff surveys
- Bully Stoppers Data Collection 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 leadership teams, school staff, and school council.

Review cycle

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