

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



### Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact the school office.

**Phone:** 03 9727 3032

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### PURPOSE

Mooroolbark Grammar is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying or harassment will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying and harassment so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Mooroolbark Grammar community
- make clear that no form of bullying or harassment at Mooroolbark Grammar will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Mooroolbark Grammar to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying or harassing behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and harassment behaviour, and understand the importance of reporting incidents of bullying and harassment to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying and harassment are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying or harassing behaviour (including targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in the behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying and harassing behaviour at Mooroolbark Grammar

When responding to bullying or harassment, Mooroolbark Grammar aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying or harassment from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Mooroolbark Grammar 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 or harassing behaviour.

### SCOPE

This policy addresses how Mooroolbark Grammar aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying and harassing behaviour. Mooroolbark Grammar recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying or harassment which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *Student Code of Conduct*, and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*.

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



This policy applies to all school activities both face-to-face and online, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying or harassing behaviour between students that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student wellbeing and safety at school.

### 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.

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.

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Bully-Stoppers)

### 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. Our school will follow our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and/or this *Bullying and Harassment 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. Mooroolbark Grammar 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. Harassment is similar to bullying because it may hurt another person through cruel, offensive and insulting behaviours. Harassment is a form of discrimination and is unlawful. The basis for harassment relates to personal characteristics which are protected by law, such as:

- sex and gender identity or sexuality and sexual orientation
- race, religion, ethnic background
- disability.

### *Forms of Harassment and Discrimination*

*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.

*Sexual Harassment* occurs when a person is subjected to unwelcome and uninvited sexual conduct by another person which could be expected to make a student feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. Sexual harassment can also result when a sexually intimidating or offensive

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



environment is created. Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal, written or pictorial, and can range from sexual banter to actual physical violence.

It is important to remember that it is the way the victim perceives the behaviour that is important in determining whether or not harassment has taken place, not the intent of a particular individual.

Mutual attraction or consenting friendships do not constitute sexual harassment.

Examples of *sexual harassment* include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical contact, touching, brushing against another student, hugging
- persistent jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature
- repeated requests to go out
- offensive gestures
- persistent or intrusive enquiries into another person's private life, sexuality, or physical appearance
- sexual propositions
- sexually offensive phone calls, voicemail or in writing
- displaying offensive screen savers, photos, calendars or objects
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, or posts on social networking sites (refer to our Digital Learning policy)
- stalking
- sexual assault.

*Racial Harassment*: Examples include, but are not limited to:

- abusive, threatening or insulting words and behaviour
- deliberate exclusion from conversations
- displaying abusive writing and pictures
- insensitive jokes or pranks related to race

*Disability Harassment*: Examples of disability harassment include:

- humiliating comments or insults about a person's disability
- disparaging remarks to students who have received learning adjustments
- comments or actions which create a hostile environment for a student with a disability
- deliberately excluding a person with a disability

### Signs of Bullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying or harassment. Such behavioural changes may include:

- crying at night and having nightmares
- refusing to talk when asked *What's wrong?*
- having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of schoolwork
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



- beginning to bully siblings
- acting unreasonably

Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying or harassment and notify the school through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a class teacher), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying or harassment.

### POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Mooroolbark Grammar recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the school is respected and accepted.

Mooroolbark Grammar is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment based on mutual respect and is free from harassment. Bullying and harassment is not acceptable in any circumstances and will not be tolerated.

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/carer education and information
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying or harassment incidents when reported
- the creation of a *no-bullying* culture within the school community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary
- Positive behaviour posters posted in strategic locations in the school to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity

It is our policy that:

- bullying and harassment is managed through a ‘whole-of-school community’ approach involving students, staff and parents/carers
- bullying and harassment prevention strategies are implemented within the school on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and harassment and respond appropriately
- bullying and harassment response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture
- bullying and harassment prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

### Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible to:

- model appropriate behaviour at all times
- deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying and harassment in accordance with this policy
- educate and make students and staff aware of their obligations under this policy and the law

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



- ensure that any incident of bullying or harassment observed or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately
- intervene quickly and appropriately when inappropriate behaviour is identified
- be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims
- acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with the school if they believe their child is being bullied
- act fairly to resolve issues and enforce the school’s behavioural standards, making sure relevant parties are heard
- help students resolve complaints informally
- ensure students who raise an issue or make a complaint are not victimised.

### Student Responsibility

All students are required to:

- treat all students, staff and any other person at the school with respect
- avoid behaviour that could be interpreted as bullying or harassment and act to prevent other students from engaging in bullying or harassment, where this is reasonably practicable
- where students have witnessed bullying or harassment at the school, they are encouraged to report this to a staff member.

### Bullying Prevention Strategies

Mooroolbark Grammar recognises that the implementation of whole-school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying and harassment within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our bullying and harassment prevention strategy and our strategy to create a *no-bullying* culture within the school:

- a structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to bullying and harassment (including cyberbullying) to students over the course of the academic year
- education, training and professional development of staff in bullying and harassment prevention and response strategies
- regular provision of information to parents/carers, to raise awareness of bullying and harassment as a school community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying and harassment, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have related to bullying or harassment directly with the school
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/carers
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/carers
- reporting of incidents of alleged bullying or harassment by students, bystanders, parents/carers and staff are encouraged
- regular risk assessments of bullying and harassment within the school are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying or harassment issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



- records of reported bullying and harassment incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate
- education of staff, students and parents/carers on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear
- Positive behaviour posters are displayed strategically within the school
- promotion of student awareness and a ‘no-bullying’ environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence

### Reporting Bullying or harassment

A key part of the school’s bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying or harassment incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (including parents/carers) that:

- bullying is not tolerated within the school
- their concerns will be taken seriously
- the school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying or harassment incidents can be advised to the school verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher
- informing the wellbeing officer or the principal.

### Responding to Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances Mooroolbark Grammar:

- takes bullying and harassment incidents seriously
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- maintains records of reported bullying or harassment incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying or harassment include:

- notification of/consultation with parents/carers
- offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims
- implementing effective follow-up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the principal’s discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies in cases of severe incidents

# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



### Investigations

Mooroolbark Grammar will investigate formal complaints about breaches of this policy and take appropriate prompt remedial action, including counselling, education and disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

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

1. record the details of the allegations on the incident register, and student file; and
2. inform the wellbeing officer.

The wellbeing officer is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying and harassment in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying or harassment, the wellbeing officer may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying or harassing behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parent/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 wellbeing officer in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying or harassment 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 or harassment is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying or harassment will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying or harassment, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

### COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website and communications platform
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information sessions
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

### FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

#### Related School Policies



# MOOROOLBARK GRAMMAR

## Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy



### Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

- Child Safe Policy
- Child Safety Responding and reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures
- Digital Learning Policy
- Yard Duty and Supervision Policy

### POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier as required following any changes in regulations or requirements.

Policy last reviewed	July 2024
Approved by	Principal
Approved by	Governing Board
Next scheduled review date	July 2025