

Lowther Hall

ANGLICAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

All about the girl

Bullying Intervention and Prevention Policy

Date of last review:
Review cycle:
Review and approval responsibility:
Category:
VRQA required:
Locations:

2025
3 yearly
Executive
Child Safety
Yes
O Drive, LowtherLink, Website



1. DEFINITIONS

Bullying

The repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there may be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Child Safe Standards

The 11 Victorian Child Safe Standards which came into effect in July 2022 in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Harassment

Harassment is a form of bullying and is the systematic and/or continued or annoying unwelcome and unwanted conduct that causes a person to be offended, humiliated or intimidated. It can take the form of: physical contact, verbal comments, electronic messages (including messages posted on social media), jokes and gestures or other behaviour that creates an uncomfortable or hostile environment.

Mirrored behaviour

Copying a bullying action in order to retaliate towards a perpetrator.

Vulnerable students

Students who may need particular care, including:

- students with disability
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- students who are unable to live at home
- international students
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) students
- First Nations students.

2. PURPOSE & CONTEXT OF THE POLICY

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Discipline Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to assist in maintaining Lowther Hall as a safe and inclusive environment for students. It is designed to assist with the identification, prevention and follow up of behaviour that is deemed to be bullying or harassment.

The Policy is informed by, and seeks to support Child Safe Standards, VIT Teacher standards, VRQA Regulations and Democratic Principles. It sits alongside the School's Discipline Policy, Code of Conduct and the Respectful Workplace and Equal Opportunity Policies to promote positive relationships across the Lowther Hall Community. One important goal of the Policy is to ensure that racism is identified, confronted and not tolerated, and any instances of racism within the school environment are addressed with appropriate consequences.

The Policy seeks to support the following regulatory instruments:

Victorian Government Acts

- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic) (the Act).
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Act 2015 (Vic)
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards Compliance and Enforcement) Amendment Act 2021 (Vic)
- Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017 (Vic)
- Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic).
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Crimes Amendment (Grooming) Act 2014 (Vic)
- Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014

Other regulatory instruments and reports

- Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards 2021.
- Ministerial Order 1359 July 2022 (Vic) – Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and Boarding Premises.
- Betrayal of Trust Report 2014 (Vic)
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisation, Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018 and adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in February 2019.
- Victorian Child Safe Standards, July 2022.

3. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This Policy applies to all students at Lowther Hall Anglican Grammar School when interacting with each other. It applies on campus, off campus and online. It applies in and out of school hours.

Interactions between staff are dealt with in the Staff Equal Opportunity and Respectful Relationships Policy. Interactions between students and staff are dealt with by the Reportable Conduct Procedures and Child Safe Standards Policy. Interactions between parents or between parents and students are dealt with in the Parent Code of Conduct.

4. IDENTIFYING BULLYING

Bullying can take many forms including (but not limited to):

- Physical bullying which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- Psychological bullying is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying might include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics, cultural background, sexual orientation or gender identity. This includes racism.
- Indirect bullying is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- Online bullying is the ongoing abuse of power or opportunity to threaten or harm another person using technology. Online bullying can occur in the following contexts (or in any other online context): private, direct or group messaging, group chat, on social networking sites, interactive gaming, through emails or on mobile phones.

5. WHAT BULLYING IS NOT

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying.

These include:

- Mutual Conflict Situations which arise where there is disagreement between students. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation; or
- One Off Acts (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.
- Words or actions of students who, due to developmental stage or diagnosed condition, mismanage a social interaction with a peer or peers. (Such acts require diligent monitoring and follow up for all parties by school staff, families and sometimes, other appropriate professionals)
- Changes of friendship group, where students alter the amount of time they wish to spend with other students.

NOTE: In the event that an incident has occurred which is of concern, but does not constitute bullying, it should still be brought to the attention of the School for follow up.

6. POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING

Major behaviour changes in a student may be indicative of bullying or another distressing situation which needs to be followed up. 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 school work;
- Increase in online use;
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- Increased reluctance to allow adult access to a device or application;
- Beginning to bully siblings; and
- Acting unreasonably.

It should be noted that some situations that are NOT bullying, may also precipitate these changes in behaviour.

7. POLICY STATEMENTS

Lowther Hall 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.

Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of possible bullying and notify the School immediately through a staff member (such as a teacher, co-ordinator, Deputy Head of School or Head of School), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

Students are also encouraged to recognise signs of possible bullying to themselves or others and notify a responsible adult at home or at school, if they believe there is bullying occurring.

Bullying is not tolerated at Lowther Hall.

It is our policy that:

- Bullying be managed through a 'whole school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/carers;
- Bullying prevention strategies be 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 respond appropriately;
- Bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident as per the levels outlined below;
- Staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture; and
- Bullying prevention and intervention strategies be reviewed regularly against best practice.
- Parents do not approach other parents or students directly regarding alleged bullying.

8. INTERVENTIONS IN SITUATIONS OF BULLYING/ALLEGED BULLYING

Outlined below are four levels of action that can be taken to resolve situation of bullying/suspected bullying.

Level 1

A student who feels she is being bullied can take direct personal action by:

Sharing how she is feeling with someone she trusts (preferably an adult), who could help to decide what to do next.

and/or

Making it clear, in an assertive manner, that the behaviour is unacceptable and that she does not want it to continue.

and/or

Removing herself from the situation to avoid further confrontation.

and/or

Considering whether she has done something to contribute to the situation.

It is not appropriate for students to deal with bullying through retaliation or mirrored behaviours.

If seeking support from other students, victims of alleged or actual bullying are encouraged to be respectful in their conversations. Making accusations before issues have been followed up can, in turn, cause damage to individuals.

Bystanders are people who observe unacceptable behaviour. A bystander can make a difference doing any or all of the following:

- Intervening when unacceptable behaviour occurs;
- Saying that the behaviour is unacceptable;
- Reporting the incident to a member of staff or trusted adult; and
- Offering support and friendship and encouraging the student to seek further help from a trusted adult.

Level 2

If the above steps have been taken and/or the behaviour is repeated, continuing or becoming increasingly concerning:

- Tell a trusted adult. The appropriate person to tell is a trusted adult such as a Home Group Teacher, Classroom Teacher, Coordinator, Deputy Head of School or Head of School.

Note, staff will inform the relevant Deputy Head of School or Head of School prior to taking any action.

Once an adult is informed, the next stage of the process may include:

- Gathering further information
- The facilitation of discussion with girls (separately and/or together) to clarify and resolve the situation;
- Monitoring of subsequent behaviour; and/or
- Informing parents of proposed action.

Level 3

If the behaviour is still a problem a more formal process may apply (this would normally be overseen by a senior staff member).

Such a process would usually be based on the principles of Restorative Practices, which in turn are based on fairness and mutual respect. 4 questions would usually be asked of and answered by all parties:

- What has occurred?
- What were you thinking and/or feeling at the time?
- What relationships have been damaged?
- How can these relationships be mended?

Level 4

If deemed necessary, the Head of School, Principal or an external agency may be involved. Possible consequences may include: removal of privileges; separation of students; suspension or expulsion from School; further counselling or external support.

9. PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

If a parent or caregivers believes that their daughter may be being bullied they should either encourage their daughter to address the situation herself by contacting a member of staff or contact the School themselves. **Other parents or students should not be approached directly.**

- In Raymond House or Blinkbonnie House, contact the classroom teacher or the Deputy Head of School or the Head of School.
- In Senior School contact the appropriate Year Level Coordinator, Deputy Head of Senior School or the Deputy Principal – Head of Senior School.
- If the situation occurs while a student is on a camp or trip, parents should still report the matter to the staff outlined above at the School.

10. REPORTING BULLYING

Students and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of Lowther Hall's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/carers) that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the School;
- Their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- The school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

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

- Informing a teacher (such as a Classroom Teacher or Home Group Teacher);
- Informing a student's Coordinator; or
- Informing the Deputy Head of School, Head of School or the Principal.

11. 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 the school:

- Takes bullying incidents seriously;
- Seeks to ascertain whether the situation is, in fact, bullying
- 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 incidents; and
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- Notification of/consultation with parents/carers;
- Clarification as to whether a situation constitutes bullying
- Offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims;
- Implementing effective follow up strategies; and
- Disciplinary action at the Principal's discretion including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

12. BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Lowther Hall recognises that the implementation of whole school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

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

- A structured curriculum and pastoral system, that provides age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including on line bullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year;
- Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies;
- Provision of information to parents/carers, to raise awareness of bullying as a school community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the school;

- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/carers, including comprehensive cross age programs;
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students and staff;
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/carers and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below);
- Regular risk assessments of bullying within the school are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed;
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate;
- Statements supporting the School's values and expectations of behaviour are included in Senior School students' school planner and on LowtherLink.

13. STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

All staff are responsible to:

- Model appropriate behaviour at all times;
- Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy;
- Ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded
 - On an official Lowther Hall Record of Contact
 - In accordance with the School's privacy and Record Management Policies
 - With details of
 - Who was involved
 - When the incident was reported/observed
 - All parties involved
 - To whom the matter was reported
 - What action was taken to resolve and follow up the incident/alleged incident
 - Name of the person recording the information;
- Ensure that any incident of bullying reported to them is IMMEDIATELY reported to the Deputy Head of School or the Head of School;
- Ensure that particular care is taken if any bullying involves vulnerable children
- Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent perpetrators or victims; and
- Acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with school authorities if they believe their child is being bullied.

14. AWARENESS RAISING

Anti-bullying posters may be posted in strategic locations in the school to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

Assembly and Pastoral times are used to facilitate increased awareness about identifying bullying behaviours and empowering all students to take the appropriate action.

Targeted education around the Bullying and Harassment Policy occurs in Years 5 to 12.

15. IMPLEMENTATION

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 incidents when reported;
- The creation of a 'no bullying' culture within the school community;
- Effective record keeping procedures; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

16. DISCIPLINE FOR BREACH OF POLICY

Where a staff member breaches the requirements of this policy Lowther Hall will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

A parent who breaches the policy may be asked to remove their child from the School.

17 RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

- Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Equal Opportunity and Respectful Workplace Policy
- Keeping Children Safe and Mandatory Reporting Policy
- The Lowther Hall Values Statement

18. COMMUNICATION OF THIS POLICY

This policy will be communicated to:

- Years 5 – 12 students annually
- Senior School students via the student planner
- New staff on induction
- Distributed to staff annually