



Purpose

Mildura Senior College and Mildura English Language Centre (College) are committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment and culture; which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and which encourages resilience, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the school community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- To ensure that everyone within the school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff, whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed, and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at the College.
- Explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the school community.
- To build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour.
- Ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour).

When responding to bullying behaviour, the College aims to:

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

The 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 the Mildura Senior College and Mildura English Language Centre (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 College's Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Inclusion and Diversity policy.

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

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.

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	1
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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.

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

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 College will follow the guidelines as set out in our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, Student Engagement Policy, and/or 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. The 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. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. The College will use 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.

Implementation

The College's Bullying Prevention Policy will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community. This policy will also be available on the College's website.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package and new staff will receive documentation as part of the school's induction process and staff handbook.

The school leadership team and the teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, by thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	2
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Constructive strategies to deal with harassment will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills; counselling and behaviour modification. Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will comply with the school's Wellbeing and Engagement Policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines.

If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to an appropriate person in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.

Student education programs will be planned to raise student awareness about bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and its impacts, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of responsible and caring attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in Pathways, leadership, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by external providers or experts. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current DEECD materials.

Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff. Specialist resources will be provided, such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues.

Bullying Prevention

Mildura Senior College and Mildura English Language Centre (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 the 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.
- A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.
- All new students and staff will be informed of the Bullying Prevention Policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the College.
- 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.
- We have a supportive and easily accessible Wellbeing support team who students are encouraged to speak to if they are experiencing any form of bullying or harassment. Our Wellbeing Team will help address the issue in an effective manner and ensure students wellbeing is top priority.
- We participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. We also participate in other days such as LGBTQI celebration days and Harmony Day to ensure social inclusion for all. Celebrating diversity further creates a supportive and safe environment for students and sends a clear message that everyone is accepted in our school community, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation.
- All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.
- Our College will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.
- There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, guidelines and procedures as set out in our Bullying Prevention Policy.

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	3
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For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

Incident Response **Reporting Concerns**

- Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our College.
- 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 the College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
- We encourage students to speak to a staff member to discuss their concerns.
- Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at the College should contact their student’s Sub School Leader or Assistant Principal. If you are unsure of who this may be, contact the College on 03 5021 2911 and the front office will direct you to the appropriate personal.

Investigations

A student’s Sub School Leader alongside with the support of the College’s Assistant Principals are responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they may:

- Speak to 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.

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

1. Record the details of the allegations and ensure that those notes are kept and stored securely.
2. Inform the Student Wellbeing Team and/or a member of the Principal Team. The Principal, Assistant Principal or Sub-School Leader will raise a level 3 chronicle on Compass, noting the allegation.

All communications with the students Sub School Leader, 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 a Sub School 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 the Wellbeing Team, Teachers, Principal Team, and the Department of Education and Training specialist staff etc.

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, our school will consider:

- The severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student.

<i>Reviewed date:</i>	04.07.2019	<i>Review #</i>	1	<i>Page #</i>	4
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- 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.

A Sub School Leader 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 College's Wellbeing Team.
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the College's Wellbeing Team. The development of a behaviour contract may be considered.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student.
- 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.
- A Behaviour Support Plan / Safety Plan may be required for affected students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including structured learning activities.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement Pathways group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.
- 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.

Mildura Senior College and Mildura English Language Centre (College) 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.

All staff are responsible for maintaining up to date records of investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Resources

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

- 1.08 Complaints policy
- 1.12 Duty of Care Policy
- 1.18 Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- 1.19 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- 1.29 Inclusion and Diversity Policy

DET Website:

- DET Workplace Bullying Policy
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/workplacebullying.aspx>

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 <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>
- Kids Helpline <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Bullying. No way! <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	5
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- Headspace Mildura 03 5021 2400
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner <https://www.esafety.gov.au/>
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/australian-student-wellbeing-framework#/>

Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed on an 1-2 year basis, or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses 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
- regular 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 in consultation with the school community.

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<i>Document Owner:</i>	<i>Assistant Principal (Wellbeing)</i>	<i>Reviewed date:</i>	<i>04.07.2019</i>
<i>S:\Admin\Policy Docs\Policy Register\1.02 Bullying Prevention Policy</i>		<i>Review Cycle:</i>	<i>1-2 years</i>
<i>Principal Approval:</i>			

<i>Reviewed date:</i>	<i>04.07.2019</i>	<i>Review #</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Page #</i>	<i>6</i>
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APPENDIX A

What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

Am I bullying or harassing someone?

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?

- "I will ignore it and it will go away."
If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.
- "I don't want to cause trouble."
Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.
- "Am I to blame?"
Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.
- "Am I imagining things?"
Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

- Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

Bullying can involve:

- Grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving.
- Publicly excluding a person from your group.
- Knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk.
- Teasing a person because of their looks.

Cyber-bullying can involve:

- Flaming – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- Harassment – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- Denigration – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- Outing – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- Exclusion – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- Cyber-stalking – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	7
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Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit

Subtle (the most common) they include:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another’s sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person’s private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another’s body
- offensive name calling

Explicit (obvious) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc.
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?

- Tell the person you don’t like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Discuss the matter with a Sub School Leader, Wellbeing Team or a teacher that you feel comfortable with.
- The College will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially.

How will your complaint be dealt with?

- Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.
- School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are in the College’s Bullying Prevention Policy.

Reviewed date:	04.07.2019	Review #	1	Page #	8
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