



# GEELONG HIGH SCHOOL

## Bullying Prevention Policy 2023

This Policy has been reviewed and endorsed by the Principal:	December 2023
This Policies next review and endorsement is due in one year:	2025

### PURPOSE

Geelong High School 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 Geelong High School 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 Geelong High School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Geelong High School 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.

Geelong High School 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 applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.  
This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies including

*Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy,*

- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy,*
- *Duty of Care Policy* and
- *Statement of Vision and values*

### 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.

*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 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 Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

*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.

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.

## **BULLYING PREVENTION**

Geelong High School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. Through our Positive Education initiative we strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect. Our vision states that we are committed to developing caring and respectful relationships. Our core values are – Respect, responsibility, Effort, Service, Excellence, Creativity, Positivity and Teamwork.

Bullying prevention at Geelong 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.

- Geelong High School was one of the first Victorian Government schools to implement Positive Education across the school. Positive Education aims to build a sense of optimism and a growth mindset and to encourage students to know and draw upon their character strengths when tackling challenging situations. Positive Education is taught explicitly in years 7 & 8 and in the year 9 GPEP (Positive Engagement program) and all other year levels do activities related to Positive Education during the year.
- The school has a strong House system led by House Leaders who have oversight of student wellbeing. Student are encouraged to resolve disputes and issues through a Restorative Practices approach.
- The House Leaders are supported by our Wellbeing staff – who are all qualified Social Workers
- The school is also part of the Doctors In School program and so has access to a GP one day per week
- The school has access to a psychologist one day per week and a Mental Health Practitioner four days per week.
- The school can also call on staff from within the region for specialist services and in times of crisis.
- The school can access external support services such as Headspace, SOCIT
- The school has a group to support students from the LGBTQI+ community.
- The school is part of the Safe Schools coalition.
- We are an accredited eSmart school.
- We participate in the Geelong Cybercats program that promotes safe and responsible use of social media.
- The school has implemented a Student Use of Mobile Phones policy to restrict the use of mobile phones during the school day.
- 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. We do this through phone calls home, emails and alerts placed on Compass.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour. The school has implemented the state-wide Respectful Relationships program to compliment the work done in Positive Education
- The Respectful Relationships program encourages positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- 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 Wellbeing and Engagement* policy.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

Reporting concerns to Geelong 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.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their House Leader or classroom teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, ES staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Geelong High School should contact the school on 5225 4100 and ask to speak to their child's House Leader or any member of our Wellbeing staff.

## **Investigations**

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

1. record the details of the allegations in Compass and
2. inform the relevant House Leader,
3. The House Leader is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the House Leader may:
  - speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/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 House 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.

## **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When the House 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, 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, Geelong 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 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 House 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, external provider such as Headspace.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, external provider.

- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, 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. Mediation (or restorative practice) 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. This is a non-punitive multi-stage strategy that addresses group bullying.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator student/s, 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. The police may also be notified.
- 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 student/s such as restricted access to parts of the school grounds.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including resilience programs, anger management etc.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Other strategies as deemed necessary and appropriate.

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

Geelong High School 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 Geelong High School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

## **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 processes.
- Included in our staff handbook/manual.
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required.
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions.
- Included in transition and enrolment packs.
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter.
- Discussed at student forums/through communication tools.
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/health/mentalhealth/Pages/bullying.aspx>

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachers.aspx>

Vision & Values:

[http://www.geelonghigh.vic.edu.au/About\\_Us](http://www.geelonghigh.vic.edu.au/About_Us)

Wellbeing & Engagement:

[http://www.geelonghigh.vic.edu.au/Student\\_Wellbeing\\_Student\\_Engagement\\_Policy](http://www.geelonghigh.vic.edu.au/Student_Wellbeing_Student_Engagement_Policy)

## **EVALUATION**

This will be reviewed on an 1-2 year 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
- student bullying surveys
- staff surveys (Staff Opinion Survey)
- AToSS (Student Attitude to School Survey)
- Parent Opinion Survey
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.
- Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with students, parents groups, school council