

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact the Victorian School of Languages (03) 9474 0500.

PURPOSE

The Victorian School of Languages (VSL) 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 so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the VSL community
- make clear that no form of bullying at VSL will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at VSL to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting 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 targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at VSL

When responding to bullying behaviour, VSL 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 VSL 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 VSL aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. The VSL 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 *Student Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policies. Students are required to respect and embrace cultural and ethnic diversity. No student or student group is to be marginalised and made to feel unsafe.

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

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.

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.

For further information about bullying, refer to the Department's [Bullying Prevention and Response](#) policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

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 our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and/or this *Bullying 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. The VSL 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.

Discrimination is behaviour that treats someone unfavorably 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. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*.

BULLYING PREVENTION

The VSL has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at the VSL 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.
- We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community
- We foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- Information is communicated to staff (bulletins, staff meetings etc.) each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- 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.
- Class teachers are constantly reminded of their responsibility of ensuring that a safe environment is provided both in the classroom and at recess.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy

INCIDENT RESPONSE

Reporting concerns to the VSL

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff or another trusted adult 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 VSL are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their teacher, administration staff or Area Manager. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at VSL should contact the Centre Supervisor (Child Safe Co-ordinator) who is a senior administration officer at each Centre.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in the **Bullying Incident Report (Appendix A)**; and
2. the next step is to contact the relevant, relevant staff involved, Area Manager, Assistant Principal, Principal

The Area Manager together with the Child Safe Coordinator is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Child Safe Coordinator 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 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 Child Safe Coordinator and/or Area Manager 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 Bullying Incident Report and Incident Follow up and relevant notes is to be completed in a timely manner and filed at: VSL Centre Office (**Appendix B**)

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 Child Safe Co-ordinator 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 relevant Area Manager, teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal and 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, the VSL will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances 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.

The Child Safe Co-ordinator may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling & wellbeing support, including referral to Area Manager, School Leadership Team to:
 - the target student or students
 - the students engaging in the bullying behaviour
 - 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.
- Facilitate a Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare an Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement language cohort targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours
- Implement proportionate 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.
- Arrange and keep minutes of any meetings between the Child Safe Coordinator and Area Manager with the parent and the child involved in any incident. To agree in various actions or code of conduct that is to be followed and the consequences if it is not.

Each VSL Centre has an appointed Child Safe Coordinator whose picture is displayed on each Centre' noticeboard. Usually this coordinator is a senior member of the Centres administration team. They are responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

The VSL 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.

COMMUNICATION

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

- Available publicly on our school's website www.vsl.vic.edu.au
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Included as annual reference in school Area newsletter
- Discussed at student forums as required
- Made available in hard copy from school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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

- *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*
- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
- *Complaints Policy*
- *Duty of Care Policy*
- *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*

Our school also follows Department of Education and Training policy relating to bullying including:

- [Bullying Prevention and Response](#)
- [Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- [LGBTIQ+ Student Support 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:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

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 to inform this review will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- collating the minutes and the outcome of various parent/student/child safe coordinators/Area Managers meetings and reporting the correspondences of such meetings to the Principal/Assistant Principals
- Staff surveys
- Attitudes to School Survey (PoLT)
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the relevant Area Manager, the Centre Child Safe Coordinator, Assistant Principals, Principal and School Council.

Policy last updated	May 2024
Consultation	School Council – xxx TBC
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	2026



BULLYING INCIDENT REPORT FORM (Appendix A)

Date of Incident: _____ **Time of Incident:** _____ **Repeat infraction?** YES NO

Location of Incident (circle all that apply):

Hallway Toilets Classroom Playground Car Park To/From School Excursion School Event

Text/Phone/Internet/Social Media Other: _____

Name of victim(s): _____ **Name of student(s) bullying:** _____ **Name(s) of witnesses/bystanders:** _____

Type of Bullying:

- Verbal
- Physical: Result in injury? YES NO
- Reported to Area Manager/Supervisor? YES NO Reported to Police? YES NO
- Relational

Bullying Behaviours (circle all that apply):

Shoved/Pushed	Hit, Kicked, Punched	Threatened	Stole/Damaged Possessions
Excluded	Taunting/ridiculing	Writing/Graffiti	Told Lies or False Rumours
Staring/Leering	Intimidation/Extortion	Demeaning Comments	Inappropriate touching
Cyber-bullying using:	Text messages	Website	Email Other: _____

Racial, Sexual, Religious or Disability Circle one and describe: _____

Reported to school by (circle all that apply):

Teacher Student Bystander Victim/Target Parent Bus Driver Anonymous Other: _____

Describe the incident:

Physical Evidence? Notes Email Graffiti Video/audio Website Other: _____

Actions Taken:

Consequences: _____

Remediation: _____

Referral for additional support services: _____

Contacted Home School: _____

Parent Contact: Date _____ Time _____ Person making contact: _____

Result: _____

Today's Date: _____ **Reported by:** _____ **Signature:** _____

Bullying Incident Follow-Up

Follow-up Conference

Date:

Time:

- Principal _____
 Area Manager _____
 Supervisor _____
 Teacher _____
 Student _____
 Parent _____
 Parent _____
 Witnesses _____
 Child Safety Coordinator
 Other

According to student, situation is:

Better

Worse

No difference

Comments:

Parent Contact: _____	Date: _____	Time: _____	Person making contact _____
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Additional Actions / Notes

Appendix B: VSL Centre Office locations

Area	Centre Office location	Centre Office location	Centre Office location	Centre Office location
Central	University High Music Wing Room 158	Brunswick A Block Ground floor	Collingwood VSL Office. The first room on the left in the reception foyer	
Country 1	Matthew Flinders Helen Fraser Campus office	North Geelong General Office	Point Cook General Office	Werribee Foyer
Country 2	Bendigo Building B Pod. Between B6 and B7. Lockable storeroom with no student access.	Croydon Building C Staff room – Level 1	Shepparton VSL Store room - Administration Building – FG.07 VSL office Saturday morning – Biyala, Murray (Teal) entrance	Wodonga A Wing Lockable cabinet outside A3
Distance Ed	Thornbury DE Office, Level 2	Seminars Portable First Aid Kit that teachers take to seminars		
East 1	Doncaster VSL office. Located between Room C9 and C10. (In the portable classroom block)	Blackburn VSL office between D7 and D6. (Right behind the Dunlop Building and next to the STEM building)	Box Hill P01 (Right behind the Box Hill High School, Performing Art Centre)	
East 2	Glen Waverley Between Staff Centre & Science/Tech Building.	Carwatha Room at far end of school library.	Mildura School library	
North	Thomastown Admin General Office Building. Next to staff room.	Epping Admin/staff General office room.	Lalor VSL Portable- Staff carpark (Next to general office portable)	Roxburgh Park Admin & Staffroom building-
North West	Keilor Downs VSL Area Office First Aid in Main Reception	Hume Central Year 8 Building VSL Office	Mt. Ridley Willandra building Main reception	Taylors Lakes Main Reception Area
South	Mentone JLC Building First Aid Kit in VSL office	Brentwood Room K9 First Aid Kit in VSL office	Keysborough Junior Building First Aid Kit in VSL office	Traralgon Office Building First Aid Kit in VSL office
South 2	Westall Area office B25 in B block opposite staff room	South Oakleigh Saturday – work out of the Staff room. Area office: storeroom in front of A3	McKinnon VSL office in F01.5 (as it is between F01 and F02).	
South East	Dandenong 'A' building, main administration block	Hampton Park Reception of Hampton Park SC and meeting room opposite reception	Berwick Main staff room behind Berwick College reception	
West 1	Footscray FHS General Office	Altona North Bayside SC General Office	Sunshine Conference Room opposite General Office	Ballarat Rm 102 Admin Building
West 2	Caroline Springs (Creekside College) Area 4 – VSL Admin Office facing entry, VSL Office and storeroom on the right	Melton (Staughton College) Staff Room	Truganina (Truganina P-9 College) Room 93 Area J	