BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy please contact ncat@education.vic.gov.au

PURPOSE

The Northern College of the Arts & Technology (NCAT) 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 a shared understanding amongst all members of the NCAT community
- make clear that all forms of bullying at NCAT will not be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at NCAT 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 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 targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour))
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at NCAT.

When responding to bullying behaviour, NCAT 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.

NCAT 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 NCAT aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. NCAT 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 Wellbeing and Engagement Policy and Student Code of Conduct.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions as well to any online, digital or mobile phone activity during or after school hours.

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.

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.

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

   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

5. *Homophobic or Transphobic bullying* consists of any overt or covert intimidation or harassment of any kind of students because they may be gay, bisexual or transgendered.

6. *Harassment* is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person. Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit. *Harassment* can also constitute bullying if it amounts to a pattern of behaviour or course of conduct towards another person that is demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person.

7. *Sexual Harassment* is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person where this makes the person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, and where that reaction by them is reasonable in the circumstances.

There are three basic categories of sexual harassment – subtle, explicit and criminal action. *NONE IS ACCEPTABLE AND NONE IS TOO TRIVIAL TO WARRANT COMPLAINT.*

Subtle forms of sexual harassment tend to be the most common.

They include:
/ Offensive leering and staring
/ Suggestive comments about a person's physical appearance or sexual preference
/ Offensive comments or jokes
/ Questions or comments about another's sexual morality
/ Physical contact – eg purposefully brushing up against another's body
/ Offensive name calling

Explicit forms are easier to identify as they are often overtly offensive or intimidating behaviour
They include:
/ Pinching, patting, touching, embracing
/ Repeated requests to go out with someone especially after prior refusal
/ Offensive jokes and comments
/ Sexually provocative remarks
/ Displays of sexually graphic material
/ Requests for sexual favours

Criminal Action may include some of the above but also includes:
/ Indecent exposure
/ Sexual assault
/ Attempted or actual rape
/ Sending obscene letters or making obscene phone calls
/ Sexting

Other distressing behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to college staff and our college will follow the Student Wellbeing & 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 and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

BULLYING PREVENTION

NCAT 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 NCAT 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.

- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.

- The college has an LGBTQI Support group

- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

- 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.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

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 Form Teacher, Coordinator, VET Coordinator, Youth Support Officer, Program Leader or a teacher that you feel comfortable with.
- / The College will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

The whole college community is responsible for highlighting discrimination and bullying when it occurs. If a student you know or a fellow student is suffering at the hands of a bully it is your responsibility to inform a Coordinator or teacher.

Parents should notify the College if they have any concerns regarding bullying.
Teachers observing any form of bullying must make a report to the Student Coordinator or Area leader.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students, teachers and parents reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by NCAT are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in in writing and
2. inform the relevant Student Coordinator, Area Leader or Assistant Principal providing them with a copy of the allegations.

The Student Coordinator, Area Leader or, if not available, the Assistant Principal, is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Coordinator/Area Leader/Assistant Principal may:

- speak to the students 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.

All communications with the Student Coordinator/Area Leader or Assistant Principal 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. Records of the bullying allegations and subsequent investigation are kept in an incidents register located in the Assistant Principal's office.

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 the Coordinator/Area Leader or Assistant Principal 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 Student Coordinator/Area Leader/Assistant Principal or Youth Support Worker.

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, NCAT will consider:

- 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 student/s engaging in the bullying demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Coordinator in conjunction with the Assistant Principal 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 NCAT Youth Support Worker Mental Health Practitioner, SSS or external provider.

- Offer counselling support to the student or students engaged in bullying behaviour, including referral the NCAT Youth Support Worker, Mental Health Practitioner, SSS or external provider.

- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the NCAT Youth Support Worker, Mental Health Practitioner, SSS or 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 is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.

- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.

- Prepare a Safety Plan restricting contact between target and students engaged in bullying behaviour.

- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary

- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaged in bullying, 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.

- In the case of external VET students the VET Coordinator will contact the Home School Coordinator in the first instance and with the Home School Principal if the incident is serious. Depending on the severity of the incident, the NCAT Principal may place the student on a learning Agreement, Learning contract or terminate the enrolment of the external VET student to ensure the health, wellbeing and safety of other students.

Please note that the College will respond to incidents of bullying and harassment whenever they come to our notice even if the incidents occur outside college hours or outside the college grounds if they relate to school issues.

Serious bullying, including some forms of sexual harassment and serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information on cyberbullying, see: Brodie's Law.

NCAT 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.

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

COMMUNICATION

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

- Provided to staff at induction and included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff meetings/briefings as required
- Made available publicly on our school website
- Included in the Student Handbook and main points covered at the enrolment interview
- Included as annual reference in school newsletter
- **Available publicly on our school's website**

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
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity **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
- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub
- Office of the eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Student Wellbeing Framework

EVALUATION
This will be reviewed on a biennial 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 Attitude to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey
- assessment of school based data

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with the Student Leadership Team, College Leadership Team and Coordinators and NCAT College Council.

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	May 2022
Consultation	Staff Parents and Students emailed 16/05/2022
Approved by	School Council 25 May 2022
Next scheduled review date	May 2024