



## Anti-Bullying Policy

Highfields takes incidences of bullying very seriously and considers all forms of bullying to be unacceptable.

### **Bullying**

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Bullying behaviour can be:

- **physical** 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.
- **social** which is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **psychological** which is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **cyber** which is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones. Examples include harassment in the form of messages, sharing gossip or images.

Bullying should not be confused with:

- **instances of mutual conflict** where there is an argument/disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation.
- **one-off acts** of aggression or meanness including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

### **Signs of Bullying**

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. 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,

- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence,
- beginning to bully siblings,
- acting unreasonably.

### **Whole School Anti-Bullying Strategies**

At Highfields we believe creating a culture where bullying does not flourish, is the most important of strategies a school can employ.

To support the creation of this culture where the building of mutually supportive and caring relationships can develop and individual differences and diversity is respected, the following strategies are in place to provide key information to children, families and staff, and effectively teach the skills and understandings that will lead to eliminating bullying behaviour.

These strategies include:

- professional development for staff in bullying prevention and response strategies,
- providing information to families to raise awareness of bullying, and how to whom, they can raise concerns,
- providing information to Highfielders about the meaning of the word 'bullying' through targeted teaching and learning within the Grow Your Mind Program.
- reinforcing in our school community that no form of bullying is acceptable,
- encouraging the school community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying,
- reporting instances of bullying to a staff member,
- ensuring that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up,
- supporting the victim, perpetrator and other individuals involved,
- seeking parental and peer group support and co-operation,
- addressing inappropriate behaviour not deemed to be bullying under the student code of conduct and discipline policies,

These strategies

- are taught across key learning areas and through the Grow Your Mind Program,
- include clear statements from the Principal and staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying,
- are reinforced consistently through school practices that promote respectful relationships.

These strategies will

- empower the whole school community to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying and harassment,
- contribute to the general health and wellbeing of all students.

### **Classroom strategies to prevent bullying include:**

- staff vigilance in classrooms and playground, toward detecting bullying behaviours and possible 'hot spots' where bullying may occur,
- teaching skills and strategies specifically related to bullying in the PDHPE curriculum and other KLA's as applicable,

- teaching students positive ways of resolving conflict,
- provision of group work and activities which encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

**Strategies employed by staff include:**

- encouraging students to report incidents of bullying when they occur,
- listening and responding to complaints of bullying,
- consistently reinforcing positive behaviour,
- encouraging and modelling tolerance and acceptance,
- being on time to playground duty and be active in moving around and in monitoring play,
- communicating with other staff members about any students who require close observation in the playground,
- being observant to signs of student distress,
- taking steps to address the source of distress,
- recording incidents of unacceptable behaviour in the *Incident Folder*,
- communicating with parents as necessary, and
- informing the Principal.

**Strategies employed by students include:**

- refusing involvement in bullying situations,
- thinking through behaviour before acting. Different situations require different responses. Ignoring behaviour and walking away may work in one circumstance and in another, using words may be required,
- reporting to staff.

**Strategies to be employed by parents:**

Parents play a key role in the support of both the victims and the perpetrators of bullying. The School seeks to work in partnership with parents in the disciplinary process. Parents can assist in the following ways:

- Letting their child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable.
- Actively listening to their child and taking their feelings and fears seriously.
- Raising concerns with teaching staff or Principal.
- Seeking assistance from the School in encouraging their child to respond to incidents of bullying.
- Working in collaboration with the School if their child is identified as the perpetrator in a bullying incident.

## **Reporting Bullying**

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

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

- bullying is not tolerated at Highfields,
- their concerns will be taken seriously.
- Highfields has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.
- Bullying incidents can be advised to the School verbally (or in writing) by informing a trusted teacher or the Principal.

## **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,
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected,
- 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,
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents to include:
  - notification of/consultation with parents,
  - implementing effective follow up strategies,
  - disciplinary action, at the Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

This is not an exhaustive list of possible actions. Actions taken by the School may depend on the circumstances. The School will determine the most appropriate action to take in response to allegations and incidents of bullying.

This policy has been made for the purpose of complying with section 47 of the *Education Act 1990* (NSW) and of the NESA for the registration of the school.

## **Reviewed**

March 2025