



Anti Bullying Policy

Definition of Terms

Bullying is unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in the definition of bullying:

- *deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying*
- *cyber-bullying*
- *Identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs*

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with The Institute's Code of Behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour. This would also include the unauthorised capture/playing/posting of images/video footage or audio recording.

Negative behaviour that does not meet this definition of bullying will be dealt with in accordance with The Institute's Code of Behaviour.

This Policy concerns bullying on the school campus.

The Bruce College has a duty of care to ensure that all students and staff have a safe working and learning environment in which they are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. Bullying will not be tolerated and all incidents of bullying will be carefully recorded and fully investigated, with appropriate follow up action taken.

Students and staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have a responsibility to promote a safe learning environment for all, and have a duty to report incidents of bullying or situations where vulnerable students may be at risk. In doing so, they are acting responsibly to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others.

Procedure for implementing this policy

1. Responsive Element: – Pastoral Care dimension – Code of Behaviour dimension

Responsive Element: Investigation procedures

Responsibility for the implementation of this policy is vested in the Principal, Deputy Principal and Year Heads of Bruce College. This includes responsibility for the investigation of and the dealing with incidents of bullying. The Principal may delegate responsibility for investigating or dealing with a particular incident to a senior member of staff, taking into account the particular circumstances of the incident in question. Bruce College's procedures for investigation, follow-up and recording of bullying behaviour and the established intervention strategies used by The Bruce College for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour are as follows:

- *In the event of a student feeling bullied they may approach any member of staff. Should any member of staff be so approached they must bring it to the immediate attention of the Principal, Deputy Principal or relevant Year Head. At this point the Principal, Deputy Principal or relevant Year Head will immediately commence an investigation.*
- *If a student is experiencing bullying but does not feel able to approach a member of staff directly he/she could ask a friend or relative to contact Bruce College on their behalf. He/she might prefer to ask their family doctor to make the initial contact.*
- *In some cases a student may wish to make Bruce College aware of their situation through an advocacy agency, for example: A student experiencing bullying may not wish to make a complaint but would like to talk to someone in confidence. The Guidance Counsellor is available for such conversations.*

Informal Process

- *The first step in any informal resolution of a complaint should be to establish the facts of the complaint, the specific issues complained of, when they occurred and to consider whether or not they fall within the definition of bullying.*
- *If bullying is established, the aim would be to eliminate it informally (if appropriate) with the consent of parties involved. This could include a non-judgemental (mediation approach). This would include clarification of what constitutes bullying, agreement by the person complained of, that they accept that their behaviour was inappropriate and that the conduct will not be repeated, or an explanation to the complainant about what occurred from the point of view of the person complained about which disposes of the complaint*

Formal process

- *This involves a formal complaint and a formal investigation. The purpose of the investigation is to determine the facts and to establish whether the complaint of bullying is well founded.*

Key steps:

- 1. The complainant should make a formal complaint in writing, signed and dated, and give it to the Principal, Deputy Principal or relevant Year Head.*
- 2. The complaint should provide precise details of alleged incidents of bullying, including dates and names of witnesses where possible.*
- 3. Where this is not possible, a written account should be taken of the complaint and signed by the complainant.*
- 4. The complainant should be assured of support and given a copy of the anti-bullying policy.*
- 5. The person/persons against whom the complaint is made should be notified in writing that a formal allegation of bullying has been made. He/she should be advised of the aims/objectives of the formal process. He/she should be assured of The Bruce College's commitment to investigating the matter in an objective and unbiased manner, with due regard to confidentiality, and the rights of all concerned. He/she should be given the opportunity to respond in writing.*
- 6. The investigation should be completed as quickly as possible. The investigator should investigate the complaint and the response to the complaint and present his/her findings to the Principal who will then issue preliminary findings to the complainant and the person(s) complained of for comment. The Principal will seek the advice of the Academic Council before issuing findings on the case. Following receipt of such comments, the Principal will then make a decision as to whether or not the complaint of bullying has been established and will decide on appropriate action. The Principal's decision should be communicated in writing to both parties.*
- 7. Every effort will be made to complete the process within a 20 day period.*
- 8. If the complaint is upheld, then it is a disciplinary matter and will be considered a serious breach of The Bruce College's Code of Behaviour and dealt with at Stage 4 of the Disciplinary procedure by the Principal, Deputy Principal or relevant Year Head.*
- 9. If a complaint is not upheld, no further action will be taken.*
- 10. If a complaint is found to have been maliciously made, disciplinary procedures will be applied. This is also considered to be a serious breach of Bruce College's Code of Behaviour and dealt with at Stage 4 of the Disciplinary procedure by the Deputy Principal.*

Monitoring of Students

The Academic Council confirms that appropriate monitoring policies and practices are in place to both prevent and deal with bullying behaviour and to facilitate early intervention where possible.

Prevention of Harassment

The Academic Council confirms that The Bruce College will, in accordance with its obligations under equality legislation, take all such steps that are reasonably practicable to prevent the sexual harassment of students or staff or the harassment of students or staff on any of the nine grounds specified i.e., gender, including transgender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Bruce College reserves the right to update or amend this policy at any time.

Date of Policy: May 2024