

Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Violence Policy for Belconnen High School

Policy Statement

Belconnen High School will work in partnership with parents and carers and the community to allow students to live in, and contribute positively to, a rapidly changing society and to act as responsible, independent children, young people and self-sufficient adults who care about others and their environment.

Bullying, harassment and violence are unacceptable. They erode students' rights, lower their morale and self-esteem, are potentially physically and psychologically damaging, and they interfere with the effectiveness of the learning environment. The Belconnen High School community has agreed on a set of values which include the rights and responsibilities of all members of the community.

Aim of the policy

The aim of the Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Violence Policy of Belconnen High School is to promote an environment free of bullying, harassment and violence.

Definitions

Bullying is the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group.

Bullying can take different forms:

- **Verbal** : name calling, put downs, spreading rumours, teasing, jokes, threats, intimidation
- **Physical** : unwanted physical contact, slapping, hitting, punching etc
- **Social** : excluding someone, intentionally setting up wrong meeting times, telling others to stay away from a person or group and threatening consequences
- **Psychological** : non-verbal messages such as staring, eye-balling, gestures etc
- **Cyber bullying** : inappropriate messages on the internet via Facebook, MSN etc, instant text messages, photos sent via the net or phone, unwanted email messages, in chat rooms and SMS, and any other electronic method of communication

Bullying can be recognisable or hidden. Bullying is about power. A person or a group engages in bullying behaviours towards another person to establish or maintain a position of power over them.

Harassment is negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another person. It may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between two people or groups or may continue over time.

Violence is evident in incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, and/or physically assaulted. Violence is also evident where a person or group deliberately damages property, including school property. Violence is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

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Management of Bullying, Harassment and Violence Education

Belconnen High School informs its community about our policies and strategies as they relate to the management of bullying, harassment and violence. We educate our students about bullying, harassment and violence via programs, curricula, targeted information sessions and guest speakers and in our teaching practice. Staff, students and the community are educated about reporting

bullying, harassment and violence and how to work together to deal effectively with such incidents. Students and parents are encouraged to be closely involved in dealing with bullying, harassment and violence, so that appropriate support can be given to those students involved in any incident.

The staff of Belconnen High School are trained in and model appropriate behaviour.

- Staff recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, harassment and violence.
- Staff respond appropriately in conflict situations (awareness of the conflict cycle, mediation and conflict resolution techniques, restorative practices).
- Staff are aware of school policy and government legislation.

Complaint management

Complaints will be responded to quickly and are thoroughly and confidentially investigated. Belconnen High School follows the ACT Department of Education and Training's policies and guidelines within the *Safe and Supportive Schools Policy and Safe Schools P-12* framework as well as legislated guidelines to ensure a safe and unprejudiced working and learning environment. Incidents of bullying, harassment, violence and other conflicts can be reported to members of the Student Services team or other staff. Reports of bullying may be made by parents/carers, students or school staff members. Initial reports may be made verbally, however all reports are required to be submitted in writing, usually via an Incident Report form. Reports may be made anonymously to protect the identity of the victim or the person making the report. However, in working towards a solution it is important to make an opportunity available for all those involved in the issue to speak about it in a confidential and safe environment.

When a complaint is made naming a student who has been involved in bullying behaviour the student is approached respectfully and confidentially.

- The student is informed of the complaint
- The student is given an opportunity to respond to the complaint
- The student is treated fairly, confidentially and impartially by a staff member
- The student is informed of consequences of their actions if the report is found to be accurate.

Support to Victims of Bullying Harassment or Violence

Belconnen High School will provide counselling and affirmative support to students who have been bullied, harassed or subjected to violence.

Response to Perpetrators of Bullying, Harassment or Violence

Students who are found to have participated in bullying, harassment and violence typically require non-punitive and restorative approaches, based on mediation and resolution principles.

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The school will work with students who demonstrate bullying behaviour and their families in order to provide ongoing educational, psychological and other support to help them learn different ways to respond to stressful events. The school will offer support such as counselling, outside agency help, alternative pathways, flexible arrangements within the school setting and other measures as deemed appropriate. This is designed to help students involved in bullying to learn appropriate behaviour within a supportive environment.

Repeated and recurring bullying, harassment and violence may lead to school wide consequences, including external suspension. Serious incidents may be reported to police. The Director will be informed as authorised by departmental guidelines. Violence is dealt with by means of school wide consequences determined by the severity of the offence. It may lead to external suspension. Where bullying, harassment and violent behaviour are specifically sexual or racist in nature, the Belconnen High School and Department of Education and Training's policies relating to these issues will be considered together with policy.