



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school and a Registered Training Organisation (RTO Code: 22732), delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificates. It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 15-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education.
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe environment for them

Rationale

Plenty River College is committed to child safety and will comply with **Ministerial Order (MO) 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises**. The College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying and harassment will not be tolerated. Our 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.

When responding to bullying behaviour, the College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive;
- find a constructive solution for everyone;
- stop the bullying from happening again; and
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying and harassment so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the College community;
- make clear that **no form of bullying or harassment at Plenty River College will be tolerated**;



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

- outline the strategies and programs in place at PRC, to build a positive College culture that includes respect and tolerance, and prevent bullying behaviour;
- ask that everyone in our College community be alert for signs and evidence of bullying or harassing behaviour, and to report it to College staff;
- ensure that all reported incidents are appropriately investigated and addressed;
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour; and
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at the College.

Scope

This policy applies to the College Board, all College staff, students, volunteers, contractors, visitors and the wider College community. This policy applies to all College activities, including camps and excursions.

Definitions

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| Bullying | <p>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.</p> <p>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. (National definition for Australian schools).</p> <p>Bullying has three main features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• it involves a misuse of power in a relationship• it is ongoing and repeated, and• it involves behaviours that can cause harm. |
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Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

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| | <p>Bullying can include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>direct</i> physical bullying, such as hitting, tripping, pushing, or damaging property. 2. <i>direct</i> verbal bullying such as name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, and verbal abuse. 3. <i>indirect</i> bullying such as 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. |
| Cyberbullying | Bullying or harassment using digital technology, including email, mobile phones and social media tools. It involves sending intimidating, threatening or embarrassing messages, including the posting of personal information, pictures or videos. |
| Expulsion | Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from College due to serious misconduct while at, or travelling to and from, College or a College activity. Expulsions is an action of last resort and may only be applied by the Executive Principal. |
| Harassment | A form of bullying that seeks to vilify, victimise and discriminate against a person based on their personal characteristics such as race, gender or ethnicity. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment. |
| Inappropriate behaviours | <p>These are behaviours that can cause distress, but may not constitute actual bullying, include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mutual conflict. This involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. 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. • single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression, which are not acceptable behaviours at College. • social rejection or dislike. This is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others. |



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

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| Parents | Includes parents, guardians, step-parents and/or carers as listed in the College Enrolment Form |
| Procedural fairness | Acting with fairness, giving the individual concerned the opportunity to be heard, and ensuring that decisions are made without bias. |
| Student Support Team | The Student Support Team comprises youth welfare workers and education support workers. Other specialists such as the College psychologist or external case managers may also be included or consulted. |
| Suspension | Suspension is the temporary removal of a student from College classes or activities for serious misconduct at, or travelling to, College or a College activity. Suspensions may only be applied by the Executive Principal. |

Responsibility

1. The College Board is responsible for authorising this and other policies to protect College students from injury or harm through bullying and harassment.
2. The Executive Principal is responsible for:
 - implementing policies, procedures and processes to prevent bullying and harassment;
 - approving student suspensions and expulsions from the College.
 - investigating and responding to allegations of bullying, and for maintaining appropriate records.
3. The Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader, Teachers, including casual relief teachers, have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from harm from themselves and others. They must report bullying behaviour to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader, and reinforce a culture of positive behaviour, including respect and tolerance.
4. The Student Support Team must report bullying behaviour to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader, and reinforce a culture of positive behaviour, including respect and tolerance.
5. The wider College community has a responsibility to recognise and report bullying and harassment, and to contribute to a positive College culture.



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

Implementation

Plenty River College has zero tolerance for bullying and harassment in whatever form it takes, and whenever and wherever it occurs within the College community. Research confirms that, in addition to physical harm, bullying may cause short and long-term psychological harm and distress. At College we value and respect all students regardless of their background, physical or intellectual attributes, gender, race or ethnicity.

The College has a number of programs and strategies in place to foster a positive and inclusive culture in which students feel free to speak up, and to encourage behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect. These include:

- clear, positive behaviour expectations for students and examples of unacceptable behaviour and student rights;
- the appointment of youth welfare workers to support students;
- encouraging students to develop positive relationships, look out for each other, and talk to teachers, education support workers and youth welfare workers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed;
- a social and emotional learning curriculum that involves students in discussions about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and promotes student resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving;
- training programs for teachers, education support workers and youth welfare workers to provide practical strategies for bullying prevention, including classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour; and
- a strong partnership with families and the broader College community that encourages bullying awareness discussions, and ensures that everyone works together to improve the safety of students.

Responding to incidents of bullying and harassment

The College takes all reports of bullying seriously and will investigate all allegations of bullying and harassment. Students, parents and staff members are encouraged to report any bullying behaviour they have experienced or witnessed as soon as possible. Reports of bullying and harassment can be made in confidence to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader, or a trusted College staff member.

When a College staff member is notified of alleged bullying behaviour they must:



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

1. record the details of the allegations in an incident report; and
2. inform the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader, who will complete an investigation.

Some allegations of inappropriate behaviour may not constitute bullying, even though they may cause distress. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to the Assistant Principle, and the issue will be resolved according to the College **Student Behaviour Management Policy PP005**

Investigations

The Assistant Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. The Principal may appoint a delegate to investigate the allegations. 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 the College about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour. Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and must be referred to Victoria Police (Brodie's Law).

When investigating, the Assistant Principal or delegate must take the following into consideration:

- the immediate safety, protection and needs of the victim (who must not be blamed);
- the need to resolve the issue quickly so that it does not become more serious;
- confidentiality requirements, such as the protocol of whom should be informed, at what stage of the investigation, and what permissions may be required;
- how the investigation should proceed if the complaint was anonymous;
- how to ensure procedural fairness;
- the impact of the incident on others;
- how parents may contribute to the response;
- the likelihood of repeated bullying behaviour occurring, and whether the bully has a history of bullying;
- whether disciplinary action is appropriate;
- the use of mediation between parties or restorative justice strategies; and
- the development of individual student management plans for the victim (e.g. coping strategies) and bully (behaviour management).



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

In completing an investigation, the Assistant Principal or delegate may:

- speak to 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 parents of the students involved;
- speak to the teachers of the students involved;
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference; and
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

Responses to bullying behaviours

When sufficient information has been collected to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, the Assistant Principal /Curriculum Leader must determine the College response considering:

- the age and maturity of the students involved;
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact on the victim;
- whether the student engaging in bullying behaviour has displayed similar behaviour before;
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context;
- whether the student engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour; and
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- counselling support for the victim, the student engaging in bullying behaviour, and affected students, witnesses or friends of the victim;
- a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved, to repair damage, bring about a sense of remorse and restorative action (for the student engaged in bullying behaviour), and forgiveness (from the victim);
- mediation between some or all of the students involved to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

grievance (where students engage voluntarily and with a demonstrated willingness to engage in mediation);

- an individual student behaviour management plan to restrict contact between the victim and the student engaging in bullying behaviour;
- ongoing monitoring of the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time, with follow up action taken if necessary;
- disciplinary consequences for the student engaging in bullying behaviour, including suspension and expulsion. For more information please refer to the College's Student Behaviour Management Policy.

The Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour. Where possible and appropriate, all parents will be provided with updates on the management of bullying incidents

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed on a 1-2-year basis, or earlier as required, following analysis of College data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students and parents;
- regular student bullying surveys;
- regular staff surveys; and
- assessment of other College data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying and the effectiveness of the responses implemented.

Communication

1. This policy will be communicated to the College community either through the College website, College newsletter or via request.
2. College staff will be informed of their duty of care obligations through:
 - attending the College induction program for new staff;
 - receiving a copy of this policy at the first staff meeting at start of the College year;
 - the College Teacher Handbook (for teachers); and



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

- training programs and professional development activities on bullying prevention.

Relate Forms

- Bullying / Harassment Incident Report FT003
- Behaviour Management Plan FT004

Related Policies

- Accident and Incident Reporting
- Camps and Excursions
- Complaints and Grievances
- Critical Incident and Emergency Management
- Digital Technologies and Social Media
- Duty of Care
- External Providers
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Student Behaviour Management
- Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion

Relevant Legislation

- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (Vic)



Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy -PP016

Revision Record:

| Document Number: | PP015 | Developed by: | Compliance |
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| Policy Owner: | Executive Principal | Approver Name & Role: | PRC Board |
| Evidence of Approval: | Board Meeting | Version No: | V2025.02 |
| Review Due To: | Internal Audit/Review | Date Approved: | 20/10/2025 |
| Next Review Due: | 20/10/2026 | | |
| Department: Compliance and Governance | | School Standards: STD-Care,Safety and Welfare of Students | |
| | | RTO Standards: Guideline 6 – Child Safe Standards | |
| Date | Version | Revision description | |
| 16/09/2021 | V2021.01 | Initial Policy | |
| 20/10/25 | V2025.02 | Minor updates – Introduction section has been re worded to include the RTO details and the Certificates offered by School. Updated the Title to the Assistant Principal. Communication channel has been clarified. Replaced the Appendix and updated it as related form and logs. Updated Related policies. Added version control and policy is now available in the new template | |
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