

# Bullying and Harassment Policy- Y Community School

## 1. Purpose:

This policy outlines the approach taken at Y Community School to preventing and responding to bullying and harassment. The primary purpose of the policy is to ensure we provide a safe supportive environment for students which supports them to reengage in education. It seeks to define and provide information as to what is and is not considered bullying and harassment at the school.

## 2. Scope:

This policy applies to the staff and students at the school. It covers interactions between students and between staff and students and includes any volunteers or employees of other areas of Y Whittlesea who may be attending the school in their capacity as employees of Y Whittlesea.

**Please note:** This policy does not apply to employees or clients of Y Whittlesea working in other areas of the organisation. School staff are further covered through the Y Whittlesea Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy which covers all staff of Y Whittlesea.

## 3. Definitions:

- **'The Y' or 'Y' or 'Y Whittlesea'**: refer to YMCA Whittlesea Inc and YMCA Whittlesea Youth and Community Services Ltd.
- **Staff:** Any person performing duties on behalf of the Y Community School be they an employee, volunteer, trainee, or contractor.
- **School:** Refers to the Y Community School noting that the legal entity through which the school is registered is YMCA Whittlesea Youth and Community Services Ltd.
- **Bullying:** Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation, or social acceptance on more than one occasion.
- **Harassment:** is any verbal, physical, or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.
- **Racism:** Racism or race discrimination is when someone is treated unfairly, including bullying, because of race, skin colour, ancestry, nationality, ethnic background, or any characteristic associated with a particular race. Racism includes but is not limited to bullying and harassment. All instances of racism will be dealt with in line with this policy.
- **Parent:** The term parent is used to refer to parent(s), and legal guardians. In the case of students who are adults or who have been deemed to have independent status the parent refers to the student and they should sign documentation their own right. There may be instances where a disengaged young person resides with an adult carer who does not have legal status as their legal guardian. In this instance, where all reasonable attempts to contact a parent have been undertaken, and an Informal Carer Statutory Declaration has been completed, that carer may sign documents in the place of the parent.

## 4. Policy:

Y community school provides a safe and supportive environment of students who have previously been disengaged from education. In many instances our students have had prior negative experiences with peers including bullying and harassment. Our school has no tolerance for any behaviours which constitute bullying or harassment whether they be physical, verbal, psychological or online.

To minimise the occurrence and respond appropriately to bullying and harassment a school-wide approach will be adopted. This will include:

- All new students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.
- All complaints of bullying or harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.
- Preventative programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving will be included in the school's activities on a regular basis.

- The school will promote a culture of inclusiveness by celebrating and promoting specific events and days such as NAIDOC week, Harmony Day, Day of People with Disability, IDAHOBIT day etc.
- Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues / strategies.
- for dealing with these issues.
- Instances of bullying and harassment will be dealt with through the processes outlined in the Students Engagement and Management Policy.

#### 4.1 What is bullying and harassment:

Bullying and harassment involve behaviours that make a person feel uncomfortable, intimidated, unwelcome or fearful. They involve an imbalance in power either short term or permanent where one person's power is used in a negative way towards another. They are usually repeated and deliberate.

Bullying and harassment occurs whenever there is a perceived difference or power imbalance or when a person is victimised because of another person or groups perception that they have not presented or acted as they should. This can include, but is not limited to, bullying or harassment as a result of age, gender, disability, race, sexual preference, social group and appearance attempts to coerce a person to act in a particular way.

Common forms of bullying include:

- Direct physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- Direct verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- Indirect bullying – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours,
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate someone,
  - mimicking,
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone,
  - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance,
  - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress
- Cyber bullying - Consists of psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic media such as mobile phones, web-logs and websites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.
- Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.

It is important to recognise that not all behaviours and interactions that upset someone constitute bullying and / or harassment. The school will use ongoing information and educational processes to ensure that students understand this and are clear as to what does and does not constitute bullying and harassment. Three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying include:

- Mutual conflict - In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- Social rejection or dislike - Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
- Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

#### 4.2 Responding to reports of bullying and harassment:

Staff need to be aware of the potential for, and impact of, bullying and harassment among students. All reports by students that indicate the possibility of a student having experienced or witnessed bullying or harassment must be taken seriously. This includes instances where the student discusses an issue with staff

without explicitly making a complaint about bullying or harassment. Staff should also maintain vigilance when supervising students and be aware of any observed instances of bullying and harassment.

Where a staff member becomes aware that bullying or harassment have occurred either by direct report or indirect observation they should:

- Where they observe such behaviour occurring intervene to stop the behaviour.
- Engage in a private conversation with the person believed to be the subject of bullying or harassment or refer them to staff member who has a positive relationship with that student. The purpose of this conversation is to ensure the student's perspective is heard.
- In instances where the incident is a first occurrence and of relatively low impact, they should engage in restorative discussions with the students involved. These will focus on all students understanding of appropriate behaviour and on how the students will interact in the future.
- In instances which are repeated or where the incident is significantly harmful, they should refer this to either the campus wellbeing leader or the campus principal as soon as practicable.
- All details of the incidents and follow up should be recorded in the school's student management software.

When responding to incidents of bullying or harassment staff need to be aware of the individual needs and sensitivities of the students involved and take these into account when responding. Where students have a significant prior history of trauma and / or previous bullying and harassment staff should consult with the campus leadership as to the most appropriate approach. All staff involved should be aware of the potential to cause further harm and seek to avoid this wherever possible.

Staff should be aware that students who experience racism may have experience ongoing racist behaviours from others over an extended period and in some communities, particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, there may be long term intergenerational trauma associated with this. Staff are required to address any instances of racism proactively and sensitively and to model a culture of inclusiveness and tolerance. The approach taken in responding to these instances should be restorative and educative to ensure that those engaging in racist behaviour are educated as to the historical disadvantage faced by minority groups and the impact of treating people as "other" than themselves. Repeated instances of racist behaviour must be referred to the Campus principal or Wellbeing Leader.

The same considerations may apply to students who belong to groups who have traditionally experienced discrimination such as those with a disability or who identify as LGBTQI.

### **4.3 Campus leadership:**

The role of campus leadership is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students is prioritised, students are educated as to appropriate prosocial behaviours, and that where instances of bullying or harassment occur a restorative approach is used to restore relationships and ensure safety.

The campus principal and wellbeing leader will maintain oversight of bullying and harassment incidents and, in line with the School Wide Positive Behaviour Support approach, will:

- ensure that support programs and interventions are in place to support students who have experienced significant and or repeated bullying or harassment.
- ensure that support programs and interventions are in place to assist those who regularly engage in bullying or harassment to understand the impact and change behaviours.

### **5. Related policies:**

- YCS Student Engagement and Management Policy'
- YCS Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy (Y Whittlesea staff).

### **6. Legislative and Industry Requirements:**

- [Link](#) to Legislative Compliance Register

### **7. Consequences of breaching this policy:**

All elements of this policy must be adhered to, and any breach will be dealt with in accordance with the [YMCA Whittlesea Disciplinary and Termination Policy](#).

### **8. Variations:**

Y Whittlesea reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

### 9. Policy owner:

The Executive Manager Schools is responsible for keeping this policy current - including making amendments as required, and regular reviews as scheduled.

### 10. Document Control:

Review of this policy will be undertaken every 2 years, or prior as required by law, in consultation with appropriate Y People.

Policy available on Y-MAC>Communication>Manuals and Files>Policies and Procedures

This document is due for review on 1/04/2026.

Version:	Description of Amendment	Amended by	Approver and date	Release Date
1.1	Strengthen definition and inclusion of racism	Paul van Breugel	Paul van Breugel 17/11/2023	1/12/2023
1.0	Creation of Policy	Paul van Breugel	Executive Management Team 19/6/23	1/11/2023