

STUDENT ANTI- BULLYING POLICY

# PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to promote a culture of safety and respect to proactively protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately should bullying occur.

The guiding principles underlying this policy are:

1. Every individual has value in the community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Most conflicts can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need to engage actively to resolve conflict.
4. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

# SCOPE

This policy applies to students and families of Balance Foundation Ltd. including subsidiaries Balance Tae Kwon Do, Balance Martial Arts and any other subsidiary. Bullying of any person by another is reported under the Workplace Bullying Policy.

# RESPONSIBILITY

Instructor reporting to a member of the Board of Directors.

# POLICY STATEMENT

Balance Foundation Ltd. is committed to fostering a culture of safety and respect for all, protecting all persons from bullying and responding appropriately when bullying occurs.

As part of this commitment, the Board will:

* Raise awareness in the organisation of what constitutes bullying, how it impacts people and how the Foundation will respond; and
* Develop and promote positive social behaviours, respectful relationships and the skills of resilience and tolerance amongst students.

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, the Board of Directors will:

* Educate students and parents on how to respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying and how to report these to the organisation,
* Employ an appropriate mechanism for students and parents to report bullying,
* Educate instructors on how to appropriately respond to reports of bullying,
* Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying; and
* Take appropriate action, which may include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

The accompanying procedure explains the bullying reporting mechanism for students and parents, and details how employees will respond to reports, including that all reports will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented.

## Victimisation

If any person who reports bullying is then subject to threat, harassment, or any form of victimisation, he/she should report this immediately to the Head of School. The College will act to safeguard those who have:

* made a complaint
* intend to make a complaint
* act as a witness
* intend to act as a witness
* support a victim
* intend to support a victim

# DEFINITIONS

**Bullying**: is a systematic and repeated abuse of perceived power in interpersonal interactions with the intent to cause harm, distress, or a risk to wellbeing. It may include:

* causing, or threatening to cause, physical or emotional harm
* hurtful teasing or humiliation
* coercion
* social exclusion
* aggressively dominating or intimidating
* preying on a person’s vulnerabilities

Bullying does not discriminate across age, culture, gender identity and socioeconomic groups. It can happen in any sector of our community, both in the physical and online landscapes.

* **Physical bullying**: employs physical action to bully, such as hitting, kicking, poking, tripping or pushing. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.
* **Verbal bullying**: repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic, sexist, or racist remarks and verbal abuse.
* **Covert bullying**: such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that makes the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.
* **Psychological bullying**: includes threatening, intimidating, manipulating, coercing or stalking someone.
* **Cyber-bullying**: using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully in any manner. Examples include:
	+ sending intimidating or nasty text messages/SMS/emails
	+ starting or spreading rumours about someone online
	+ devaluing or harassing other people’s opinions online
	+ posting or sharing embarrassing or compromising pictures or videos of someone without their permission
	+ setting up fake profiles and posing as someone else to harass, intimidate or otherwise cause harm to another

Cyber-bullying is different from other forms of bullying because:

* + it is often difficult for adults to detect;
	+ the offending post/message may no longer be accessible;
	+ it is often outside the reach of the organisation as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones; and
	+ harmful messages can be communicated to a very wide audience with remarkable speed.

It is also an insidious and cowardly form of intimidation as the bully is able to hide behind the anonymity of the virtual platform and is able to reach the victim at home. Thus, the home is no longer a refuge for people who are being bullied.

**What bullying is not.** Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, differences of opinion and isolated incidences of physical aggression. Bullying is ongoing, and there is often an imbalance of perceived power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is not.

## Bullying is not:

* **Mutual conflict** where 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** – It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
* **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation.** A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion.** However, the organisation is committed to providing students with a safe and supportive school environment and single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will not be ignored or condoned.

# RESPONSIBILITIES

The Balance Foundation Ltd. acknowledges its responsibility to:

* Raise awareness of bullying behaviours and how the organisation will respond.
* Take affirmative action to promote a culture of respect and resilience to help prevent bullying behaviours.
* Aim to participate in national awareness programs (eg ‘Bullying. No Way!’)
* Educate about what constitutes bullying behaviour including, cyber-bullying and the dangers present online.
* Talk about inappropriate behaviour in the context of the Fundation’s values and the Code of Behaviour.
* Employ and promote an effective reporting mechanism for students and parents.
* Educate students and parents on how to respond to bullying.
* Educate employees on how to appropriately and effectively respond to bullying.
* Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support, consequences and feedback.

Instructors have a responsibility to:

* Watch for early signs of distress in students. This could be evident in any aspect of the Foundation’s activities.
* Familiarise themselves with and consistently apply this policy and reporting procedure.
* Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
* Offer the victim immediate support and help and outline what will now happen.
* Educate all students regarding their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
* Model positive behaviour in all interactions for all.

Students should:

* Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others.
* Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted teacher, counsellor or senior staff member.
* Actively support students they know are being bullied.
* Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.
* Engage in positive interactions with others and model appropriate interactions at all times.

Parents should:

* Watch for signs of distress in their child, such as: unwillingness to attend Balance Foundation events, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, equipment that has gone missing, requests for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.
* Report to relevant instructor if they know their child is being bullied.
* Keep a written record if the bullying persists: Who, What, Where and When?
* Advise their child to tell a trusted instructor.
* Reassure their child that it is not their fault.
* NOT encourage their child to hit back or respond verbally.
* Ensure they model positive behaviour in interactions they have with all members of the community.

# IMPLEMENTATION

The Board of Directors shall take the following steps to prevent and respond to student bullying:

* **Increase Awareness** – The Board of Directors will regularly raise awareness through the:
	+ Promotion of this policy during enrolment interviews and staff inductions.
	+ Distribution of the policy via the Student and Staff Handbooks, the College website and intranet portals.
	+ Promotion of the Wellbeing Team as the key personnel to support students and families if they are feeling unsafe and/or harassed in any form.
	+ Promotion of national bullying campaigns.
	+ Provision of the email (safe2be@rivermount.qld.edu.au) as an additional means to request assistance.
* **Training** – Members of the Board will regularly educate staff and students about bullying, strategies to counteract bullying and the consequences of this behaviour.
	+ The organisation will promote reporting as acceptable and responsible behaviour.

# COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

All bullying incidences will be recorded in the respective. All reports will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented in accordance with the organisations Behaviour Management Guidelines.

Records may include:

* details of incident
* dates and names of parties concerned
* student bystanders and staff witnesses
* action taken by staff’xxxx

**REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS (PARENTS)**

***What can you do if you are being bullied?***

Persons who believe that they are bullied should make it known that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. If the bullying continues, or if you are unable or unwilling to handle the matter, you should speak to your instructor or a senior student of Balance Foundation Ltd. or any other adult with whom you feel comfortable speaking to.

Remember, everyone has the right to be treated as a worthwhile individual; everyone has the right to be free from bullying.

If you believe that you are being bullied, you can:

* tell the person who is bullying you that you don't like it and that you want it to stop;
* speak to your parents;
* speak to your instructor or one of the adult/parent senior students and/or instructors listed below:

|  |
| --- |
| Andrew Hooley |
| Karina Britton |
| Christine Postlewaight |
| Craig Postlewaight |
| Harry Roberts |
| Matthew Suter |
| Nan Bahr |
| Rita Suter |

You may also call Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 to seek professional support and assistance.

## What will happen when you speak to an adult of Balance Foundation Ltd. about bullying?

* The adult member will listen to what you have to tell them. They will write down what your complaint is and ask you questions about the behaviour about which you are complaining. They will probably ask questions about behaviour which may have occurred before this incident so as to get some background information.
* They will report this information to the Branch Instructor, Senior Instructor and Master Instructor.
* An instructor or adult/parent student delegate will interview the perpetrator of the bullying by himself or herself and talk about what affect their behaviour is having on you. They will try and find out if there is a reason why this behaviour is taking place.
* They may then wish to talk to both the perpetrator and the victim together so that each of you can express your feelings and reasons.
* They will then try to have you both propose solutions to the problem, so that you both feel as if the bullying will cease.
* The instructor or adult/parent student delegate will then make an appointment to speak with you again approximately one week later to assess the situation. An instructor will then talk with all people concerned about the current situation.
* If the bullying continues either in the same form or a different form, it is essential that you tell your instructor or one of the senior adult students of this. Do not wait before bringing this to someone’s attention.

# RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT BULLYING

In any incident of anti-social or negative behaviour, a Balance Foundation Ltd. instructor will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issue has been dealt with, the following steps may be taken as deemed necessary by the Head of School or his/her delegate:

## Identification

A student and/or parent reports the bullying issue to the instructor. Alternatively, the instructor or senior adult student identifies a pattern of behaviour between the perpetrator and target.

They will document the concerns and report this to the Senior Instructor, Branch Instructor or Master Instructor.

## Initial Interview

The instructor or adult/parent student delegate interviews the victim and perpetrator separately, and records the details of the incident in writing. (All documentation related to the incident will be scanned and added to student confidential notes in White Belt).

The interviewer makes both parties aware that Balance Foundation Ltd. does not condone bullying and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The interviewer works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately. The strategy is to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

## Follow-up Interview

If the incident is repeated or the problem continues - both parties may be directed to make a formal statement. A member of the Board of Directors may interview the victim and bully to discuss the problem; make the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having; and make suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict.

They communicate with both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences that may flow from a repeat of bullying.

## Reinforce (as above), Employ Sanctions

If intervention does not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

* Official warnings to cease offending
* Exclusion from specific activities and events
* Support from a qualified counsellor
* Suspension from training for a specified period
* Downgrading of Belt rank
* Exclusion

All members of the community must be aware that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick to resolve. Throughout the Balance Foundation Ltd. training program we will reinforce that bullying is not acceptable, will remind people how to counteract bullying and will offer programs to lift self-esteem and resilience. All persons will be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully others and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders. Parents should feel confident to approach the Instructional team with their concerns and are encouraged to work with them so that their children are protected.