

What is bullying?

To effectively prevent bullying it's important for everyone (school leaders, teachers, students, whānau and community) to have a shared understanding of what bullying is.

Whether bullying is physical, verbal, emotional or online (cyberbullying), there are four factors that can be used to identify bullying.

- Bullying is deliberate – intentionally causing physical and / or psychological harm to another person.
- Bullying involves a power imbalance – an actual (or perceived) unequal relationship between those being bullied and those who bully. For example due to physical size, age, gender, social status or digital capability and access.
- Bullying is usually not a one-off – it is repeated over time, with the threat of further incidents leading to fear and anxiety. People may bully one person many times, or different people each time.
- Bullying is harmful – there is short or long-term physical or psychological harm to the target (eg, as a result of coercion or intimidation).

When it's not bullying

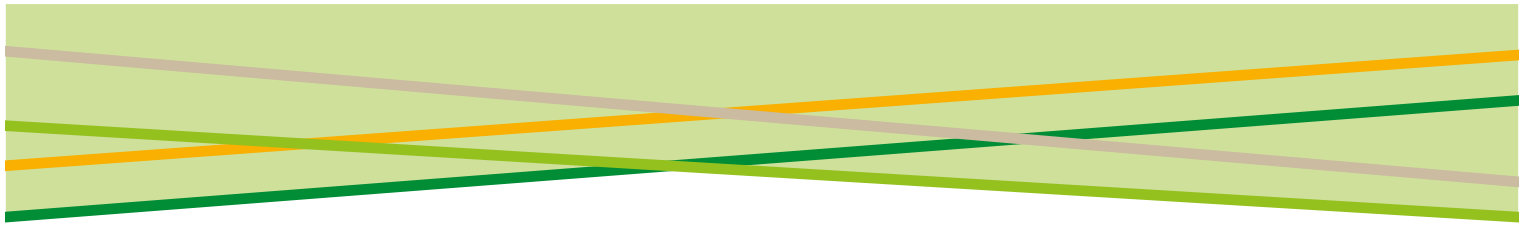
Bullying is one particular form of aggressive behaviour. Not all verbal or physical aggression is bullying. For example, if a student offends someone by making unintentionally sexist or racist remarks, it is not bullying.

Is it bullying, fighting or hassling?

Often the term bullying gets used to describe other behaviour, such as hassling between friends which sometimes can go a bit far, or an aggressive reaction from a student who has been involuntarily provoked by another. Here are some key questions which help show the difference between bullying, fighting and hassling.

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Looking at the interaction...	Hassling / teasing	Fighting / aggression	Bullying
Does it go both ways?	Usually both students are hassling each other	Not usually – one tends to initiate it	No, one student is targeting the other
Does it look like they're having fun?	Usually takes place between students who are familiar with, and like each other	No, one is the aggressor	No, one person is in distress
Is it well-meaning?	Yes, it's mostly good natured hassling	Not usually – it is often intentional, but can also be an involuntary reaction to something	No, one student is deliberately harming the other
Is it a one-off?	No, it's usually ongoing, because the students hang out together regularly.	Often a single incident	No, it happens repeatedly over time
Is it between equals?	Yes	Possibly	No, there is a definite power imbalance

