

# 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

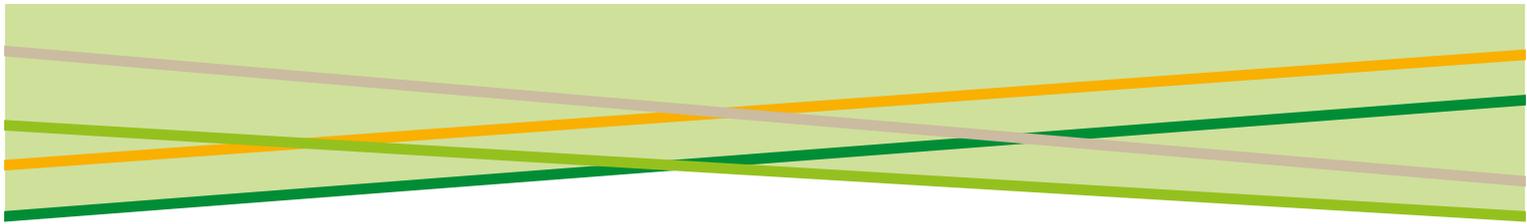
Bullying is one particular form of aggressive behaviour. Not all verbal or physical aggression is bullying. For example, if a student offends someone by making unintentionally sexist or racist remarks, it is not bullying.

## 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  |
|--|---|---|---|
| <b>Does it go both ways?</b>                 | Usually both students are hassling each other                                   | Not usually – one tends to initiate it  | No, one student is targeting the other            |
| <b>Does it look like they're having fun?</b> | Usually takes place between students who are familiar with, and like each other | No, one is the aggressor  | No, one person is in distress                     |
| <b>Is it well-meaning?</b>                   | 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 |
| <b>Is it a one-off?</b>                      | No, it's usually ongoing, because the students hang out together regularly.     | Often a single incident   | No, it happens repeatedly over time               |
| <b>Is it between equals?</b>                 | Yes   | Possibly  | No, there is a definite power imbalance           |

