

Summary of the Independent Cultural Review

A summary for middle school students

What is this?

In 2025, the Ballarat Grammar Board asked an organisation called Intersection to conduct an independent review of the school's culture: how people treat each other, how safe everyone feels, and whether the school's values show up in everyday life. More than 600 people took part, including middle school students. This is a short summary of what we found, what the school will do, and what you can do.

Strengths

- A strong sense of community and belonging for many students.
- A wide range of co-curricular opportunities and teachers who genuinely care and go above and beyond.
- A culture of service, and a school that values you as a whole person, not just your grades.

What needs to change

- **Uneven consequences.** Consequences for poor behaviour appear unfair and inconsistent. Students told us they feel like they don't hear back when they report bad behaviour, so they stop reporting.
- **Friendship groups.** Popularity, who you are friends with and what your hobbies are shape the feeling of belonging. Students seen as different face more exclusion, teasing and bullying.
- **Bullying and discrimination.** Students across all year levels told us about how bullying or being mean was sometimes dismissed or minimized by other students, and in some cases even adults at the school.
- **School values.** The values are taught well in junior school but aren't being talked about as much in middle school, which is when peer pressure is strongest.

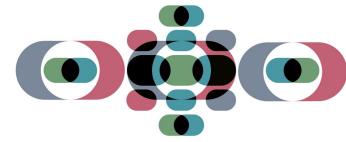
Day students and Boarding students

The review looked closely at boarding. Boarders described real friendships, a family feeling and staff who care. But the review also found problems: hazing, bullying and intimidation that went on for too long without adults noticing or acting, and a culture of silence where students learned to keep quiet about what's happening.

The review also heard about the divide between boarders and day students: eating separately, stereotypes on both sides, and students treating each other as two different schools rather than one.

The school is going to make some big changes over the next few years. Whether you board or not, this matters for you:





- If you are a boarder, look out for younger boarders the way you would want someone to look out for you. What happens in boarding should never have to stay in boarding. Speak up if you see something that's not right.
- If you are a day student, help close the divide. Invite Boarding students into your group and get to know them better.

What the school will do

- Have one clear behaviour framework, with consequences that apply fairly to everyone.
- Include values and respectful relationships education in every year from 7 to 12, including how to be an upstander.
- Create better reporting systems with real follow-through, so you know what happens after you speak up.
- Make sure there are real ways for students to influence decisions, including a Student Advisory Group with direct access to the Principal.

What you can do to make this school a better place

- Be an upstander. When you see teasing, exclusion or a racist comment, do not laugh, do not scroll past, do not stay silent. Saying something, or getting help, changes what is considered acceptable at the school.
- Be a change maker. Just because older students may have made things hard for you in the past, doesn't mean you should keep doing the same thing. You can be the year level that breaks the pattern.
- Widen your circle. Who you hang out with, who you pick for a team and who you invite along all help people to feel like they belong at this school. You can make a real difference in someone's day.