

**Intended Use**

This Policy outlines definitions of bullying and responsibilities of school staff, students, parents and community members for responding to student welfare needs.

1.0 Introduction

The Riverina Anglican College provides a safe and supportive environment by having in place policies and procedures that provide for student welfare.

1.1 General

The Riverina Anglican College is committed to creating a safe and caring environment in which all students can achieve success, socially as well as academically. Underpinning our daily operation are the key expectations and values of respect which engenders a school culture of tolerance, acceptance and recognition. The Riverina Anglican College does not tolerate bullying or harassment and explicitly prohibits harassment and victimisation of students for any reason.

Any bullying incident which comes to the attention of student and staff or parents, should be dealt with according to the policy and as outlined in the Behaviour Management Policy. Managing the incident swiftly and consistently enforces the school's zero tolerance of such behaviour and promotes a safe learning environment for students and staff. At the same time the school will always endeavour to act in a way which is consistent with its restorative practice approach to student behaviour management as outlined in the College Behaviour Management Policy.

Unfortunately, in schools sometimes, things happen that no one either wants, expects or accepts. It is what a school does about them that is the measure of the quality of the school.

The policy is advertised and explained in a high profile manner in school life: on the school's website, in newsletters, assemblies, classroom teaching opportunities, Wellbeing programs and the like. Letters, other avenues of communication and interviews occur with parents and caregivers to ensure the policy is understood, upheld and implemented.

2.0 Definition**2.1 Bullying**

Bullying is a repeated behaviour; that may be physical, verbal, and/or psychological; where there is intent to cause fear, distress, or harm to another; that is conducted by a more powerful individual or group; against a less powerful individual or group of individuals who is/are unable to stop this from happening.

Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation, exclusion and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders.

Schools exist in a society where incidents of bullying behaviour may occur. Preventing and responding to bullying behaviour in learning and working environments is a shared responsibility of all staff, students, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community.

All members of the school community contribute to the preventing of bullying by modelling and promoting appropriate behaviour and respectful relationships.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'.

These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, age, family status or economic status.

2.2 What Bullying Is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

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-episode acts -

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.

2.3 Examples of Bullying Behaviour

| | DIRECT | INDIRECT |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hitting, slapping, punching • kicking • pushing • spitting, biting • pinching, scratching • throwing things | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • getting another person to harm someone |
| Verbal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mean and hurtful name-calling • hurtful teasing • demanding money or possessions • forcing another to do homework or <i>commit</i> offences such as stealing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • spreading nasty rumours • trying to get other students to not like someone |
| Non-Verbal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • threatening and/ or obscene gestures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliberate exclusion from a group or activity • removing and hiding and/ or damaging others' belongings |
| Cyber | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • filming someone without their knowledge or permission • updating someone else's social networking status without their permission • pretending to be someone else on the phone • sending images of a sexual nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • telling someone else the words you want them to type as a message • explaining to someone how to engage in bullying via a website the other person may not be familiar with • watching someone engaging in cyber bullying and not trying to stop the bullying |

2.4 Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Indications of those at risk of bullying may include the following:

- Isolation and lack of friends
- Unusual physical characteristics, voice/ accent or name
- Lack of school uniform or unusual physical appearance
- Volatile, sulky or tearful behaviour
- Unusual behaviour which may not be age or peer appropriate
- Persistent lateness
- Family/ community conflict
- Frequent illness and absenteeism
- Poor communication and/ or poor coordination
- Preference for adult company

Signs that may indicate a student may be being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to attend school
- Displaying personality changes
- Being frightened of travelling to and from school
- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Frequently complaining of feeling unwell
- Reluctance to enter playground or attend school
- Beginning to do poorly in school work
- Having possessions destroyed or go missing
- Refusing to say what is wrong, or using improbable excuses to explain any of the above.
- Dishevelled appearance

These signs and symptoms are for the whole school community to act upon. Everyone is encouraged to respond and report where they have concerns about the bullying of a student.

2.5 Bullying and the Role of Bystanders

Bystanders play a significant and pivotal role in the management and addressing of bullying.

- Bystanders are present most of the time (around 85%), where adults are rarely present.
- Most young people feel uncomfortable but very few know what to do to stop it happening.
- Bullying behaviour is reinforced where people watch but do nothing.
- When bystanders do intervene, the bullying is more likely to stop quickly most of the time.

The solutions involve not only students but also school staff and parents. Members of the whole school community may be involved in bullying, may be being bullied or know that bullying is happening.

ALL members of our school community (staff, parents, community members and students) can EACH be part of the problem - or part of the solution. Together we can continue to make our school a safe, caring and happy place.

2.6 Cyberbullying

It should be noted that instances of cyberbullying are common through technology use outside of regular school hours. Cyberbullying includes bullying others through personal internet sites, internet chat rooms, social networking websites, text messages, mobile phone calls, mobile phone photographs, home phone calls, electronic imagery, film and the like. If such behaviour occurs online inside of school hours, and/or through the utilising of school based email systems, and/or between students at The Riverina Anglican College outside of school hours, there are clear protocols and consequences which will be strictly enforced by the school as outlined in the school's ICT Policy.

Students should be vigilant on computer use in the home, adhering to published conditions and age restrictions surrounding use of social networking sites. The school strongly discourages the use of computer games that are not age-appropriate due to the potential psychological harm that these games can cause to young brains that are still developing.

Parents are encouraged to supervise and monitor their child's use of technology as closely as is possible and is age-appropriate, and consider insisting on being added as a 'friend' on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat etc. Technology used by students in the Primary School should be in a 'publicly' visible position in the house and not in the student's bedroom. Students from Years 7-10 may also require vigilant supervision of their use of technology. Technology used in a 'publicly' visible area is an effective way of monitoring older students' online communication as well.

The school encourages parents and caregivers to involve the relevant telecommunication agencies or police if the need arises. Police should be involved in any out of school hours' matters. Parents and children need to attend the local Police station to make statements and give reports to Police. The school cannot do this for you on your behalf, but will cooperate fully with the local police in any investigation or follow up.

The absolute proof of the person responsible for 'cyberbullying' is often problematic for us all granted the numerous variables possible (e.g. not seeing who types what, deliberate sabotage of others' e-mail accounts, sharing or theft of e-mail account passwords, edited transcripts of electronic conversations, etc.) but the instant removal of your child's interaction and 'visiting' of these known 'cyberbullying' avenues is recommended.

2.7 Sexting

Sexting is the distribution of highly suggestive or even sexually explicit photos by young people of themselves to their friends, often without a real understanding of the consequences. Sexting can lead to public humiliation, cyberbullying, or even sexual assault.

The easy availability of new technologies and social networking sites can turn what can seem an innocent joke or flirtatious fun into a potentially devastating experience – with young people most at risk.

The message to young people is – don't post images of yourself and don't distribute any sent to you.

It is illegal to take sexual photos of children and young people and it is also an offence to pass them on.

Parents are encouraged to get advice on sexting through the 24-hr parenting advice line, Parent Line 1300 1300 52. The line is staffed by highly trained and experienced counsellors.

For more advice on parenting and sexting, visit www.parentline.org.au.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Procedures for Reporting Bullying or Cyberbullying

All staff, parents and students are encouraged to report suspected or observed instances of bullying or cyberbully to someone such as the relevant Head of Year, Deputy Principal - Wellbeing, Chaplain or counsellor for investigation/action.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE STUDENTS AFFECTED BY, WHO HAVE ENGAGED IN OR THOSE WHO HAVE WITNESSED BULLYING OR CYBERBULLY BEHAVIOUR

The aim of interventions related to bullying or cyberbullying is to support the student or students being bullied, the student or students bullying, and any bystanders who may have seen what was happening. Our interventions are motivated with a view to prevention, development of coping skills, resilience and confidence.

We believe that when talking with young people about bullying it is more understandable to describe bullying as a series of descriptive behaviours, rather than one broad term that has many negative connotations, especially when discussing cyberbullying.

When restoring incidents of bullying, all parties are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, and ensure the confidentiality of any issues that may arise. Teachers and School Leadership will use restorative practices when working with students to seek a permanent solution.

Teachers and counsellors should use Restorative Questioning when managing a bullying incident as outlined in the school's Behaviour Management Policy.

Counselling support and regular teacher 'check ins' for students being affected by bullying at The Riverina Anglican College is paramount to ensuring a successful resolution for all parties involved; as is liaising with parents/carers.

3.2 Consequences

Will depend on the severity of the bullying and whether it is a first instance or an on-going behavioural concern. The school's focus is on dealing with underlying issues as well as the behaviour. The procedures are outlined in the school's Behaviour Management Policy which can be found on the College website.

3.3 Roles of all Partners – School Staff, Students, Parents/ Caregivers and the School

School staff have a responsibility to:

- respect and support students
- model and promote appropriate behaviour
- have knowledge of school and departmental policies relating to bullying behaviour
- respond in a timely manner to incidents of bullying according to the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.

In addition, teachers have a responsibility to:

- provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact on individuals and the broader community.

Students have a responsibility to:

- behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity
- behave as responsible digital citizens
- follow the school's Anti-Bullying Policy
- behave as responsible bystanders and report incidents of bullying according to their school Anti-Bullying Policy.

Parents and caregivers have a responsibility to:

- support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible online behaviour
- be aware of the school Anti-Bullying Policy and assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour
- support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the school Anti-Bullying Policy
- listen to their child. Remain open-minded. Ask questions gently. Reflect on what has been done so far. Help their child understand what will be done according to the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. Discuss bullying with their child(ren) and establish that it is not an acceptable practice regardless of how trivial they think the problem may seem.
- be as concerned if their son/ daughter is a bully as they would be if they were a victim
- report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur
- NEVER try to deal with the bullies themselves
- NEVER telephone or message or add to online social networking forums involving the perceived bully
- NEVER visit another child's parent/guardian or visit the house of another child
- NEVER approach the alleged bully outside school time, at the immediate end of school or in the community (e.g. Local shopping centre) or arrange for others to approach them
- NEVER encourage a physical response

Interventions by parents– however well intentioned - typically make matters worse or more difficult to resolve. They can also backfire badly to sometimes involve Police action directed at the parent or caregiver. Working with and through the school is the most successfully proven method of quicker and greater harmony and resolution. Patience and persistence is required in matters of significant volatility.

Once parents have a clear picture of the situation and some idea about how they and their child would prefer to handle the situation, initially contact the school (through your son/ daughter's Head of Year, Deputy Principal - Wellbeing. Tact and discretion from all can assist in a more successful, lasting resolution.

Suspension will result for ANY student who becomes physical in line with the College protocols.

All members of the school community have the responsibility to:

- model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community
- support the school's Anti-Bullying Plan through words and actions
- work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

School Liaison Police

School Liaison Police (SLP) work with the College and the community to address issues that may be of particular interest to The Riverina Anglican College as well as general issues relating to incidence of crime that are taking place in the local and school community.

Wagga Wagga SLP can be contacted at 02 6922 2651. The Deputy Principal – Head of Wellbeing will contact the local SLP for assistance with any College matters.

Youth Liaison Officers

Youth Liaison Officers (YLO) are the administrators of the Young Offenders Act for NSW Police. As part of their duties, they are responsible for delivering cautions and referring children and young people to youth justice conferences. Wagga Wagga YLO can be contacted at 02 6922 2599. The Deputy Principal – Head of Wellbeing will contact the local YLO for assistance with any College matters. The Youth Liaison Officer role also involves implementing strategies to reduce juvenile crime including: crime prevention and safety talks at schools, juvenile crime reduction programs; and networking with other agencies. They are the primary point of contact between NSW Police and Juvenile Justice.

4.0 NATIONAL SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

This policy endeavours to align with the nine elements of the National Safe Schools Framework. These elements are:

1. Leadership and commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

5.0 Evidence of Compliance

The Riverina Anglican College has implemented policies and procedures in relation to:

- codes of conduct for members of the school community, with specific reference to:
 - rights and responsibilities of students and staff within the school community
 - behaviour management
 - anti-bullying including contact information for School Liaison Police and/or Youth Liaison Officers and other support services available to the school community.

Date of Policy: Effective 5 March 2019, March 2020

Review Date: March 2021

The College will review this Policy and associated documents within twelve months and reissue a further version if necessary. Any suggested improvements should be forwarded to the Principal.

Complaints that form the basis of less serious allegations (i.e. non-reportable conduct) will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant College policy.