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| Policy Pertains to: | Board, all staff, students and College community. |

Version History

| Version | Date | Notes |
|---------|----------------|---|
| 1.0 | October 2017 | New CEN Policy |
| 2.0 | September 2019 | WWCC Policy modification & adoption |
| 2.1 | April 2024 | Policy modification, addition of procedures |

College Vision

In Christ, partnering with families in providing excellent academic and practical education, preparing students to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly before God.

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Important related documents:

Child Protection Policy
Welfare Policy
Discipline Policy
Student Code of Conduct

Enrolment Policy
Complaints Framework
ICT Policy

Relevant Legislation:

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977
Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998
Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)
Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (NSW)
Ombudsman Act 1974

Other References:

Registered & Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual, September 2023, most recent version on NESA website

NSW Govt, 'Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy'

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

www.ncab.org.au (National Centre Against Bullying)

www.cybersmart.gov.au

www.police.nsw.gov.au/community_issues/youth

<https://esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/social-media-services-safety-centres> (Office of e-safety Commissioner)

The Holy Bible, New International Version 1984, International Bible Society, Zondervan, Korea

1. INTRODUCTION

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 College community.

The College's Duty of Care provides for the College to take the necessary steps to protect students from physical, psychological or emotional damage arising from issues such as bullying, and to take the necessary steps to avoid foreseeable risks of such behaviour.

Cyber bullying most often occurs outside of school. The College makes every effort to teach students to use the internet in a safe and responsible manner. Parents ensure their child's safe and responsible use of the internet and mobile devices outside of school.

Bullying is serious. It may be a criminal offence if there is physical violence or threats, made either in person or by digital technology.

2. CHRISTIAN RATIONALE

The occurrence of bullying behaviour relates to a breakdown in relationships and the failure to love one another as Christ loves each person. God intends for us to live together in a community that acknowledges differences and accepts others because every person is made in His image. The Wagga Wagga Christian College community represents the Body of Christ, where every person is valued and has a unique part to play. *"So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it"*. 1 Corinthians 12:25-27 (NIV).

The College seeks to build a supportive, caring community, which aims to protect all people from behaviour by others, which may cause distress of any kind; and to foster the restoration of relationships of mutual regard and honour.

This policy aims to facilitate processes that will deter and prevent bullying; support and strengthen the victim; and address the cause, and suitable restitution, with the offender. The careful resolution of each incident will be for the benefit of each person involved, as they grow in discipleship; and of the whole College. *". . . so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith*

and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ". Ephesians 4:12b-13 (NIV)

3. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This policy applies in all cases of student bullying behaviour; including cyber bullying that occurs in the College; and off College premises, and outside of school hours where there is a clear and close relationship between the College and the conduct of the student.

1. DEFINITIONS

Bullying: "Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying." National definition of bullying for Australian schools (www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

Research indicates the following characteristics of bullying:

- Bullying involves one or more student's exerting power or dominance over another or others.
- Bullying is deliberate, unwelcome, uninvited and repeated.
- Bullying involves behaviour that is physical, verbal, cyber, psychological or social/relational, causing physical or psychological damage.
- Bullying includes a wide range of conduct that causes another person to feel embarrassed, offended, hurt, humiliated, insulted, ridiculed, angry or afraid.
- Bullying can have a serious long-term effect on the health and well-being of young people.

There are 4 main types of bullying:

Direct physical bullying

This includes punching, hitting, pushing, tripping etc., interfering with belongings.

Direct verbal bullying

This includes calling names, insults, verbal abuse or sexist, homophobic or racist comments.

Indirect bullying

This is the hardest to recognise and to deal with generally. It works by damaging someone's reputation or humiliating him or her.

It includes telling lies about a person, spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging another's social acceptance.

Cyber bullying: causing hurt via information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, social media, and through the use of mobile phones and other devices. It includes many elements of indirect bullying, but may also involve the use of images, comments and threats. It is illegal to threaten harm to another via the internet.

Harassment: on-going verbal or physical attacks on another person.

WHAT IS NOT BULLYING?

It is helpful to distinguish bullying from other negative behaviours or challenging relational situations. Often students and parents say that students are being bullied when they are experiencing friendship issues or other conflicts. The following common problems are not bullying:

Conflict

When students are in conflict it is clear that there is disagreement but there is no unequal power balance. Everyone is upset and looking for a solution. This will require intervention by teachers but is not bullying unless it develops into it because it stays unresolved over time.

Social rejection

Sometimes, students simply do not fit in. They are alone. They seem to prefer this. No one is bothering them. This is not bullying even though it is not ideal.

One-off episodes

If a student is pushed or verbally abused once, it is not bullying. It is aggression and should be dealt with as such.

Multi-target nastiness

If one person is nasty to a range of students once only, this person requires discipline, but it is not bullying.

The Bully ('perpetrator')

- is someone (or a group) who attempts to exercise power over someone else. Any student can be a bully. Stereotyping bullies can be misleading.
- often, bullies too, have real difficulties and we are responsible to educate and assist them.
- in many cases, bullies have themselves been victims of bullying

The Victim ('target')

- The victim is the bully's target. Any student can be a victim, although there are some students who are more susceptible to bullying from time to time.
- Students at particular risk include those who:
 - are new to the College
 - are different in appearance, speech or background from other students

- suffer from low self-esteem or are timid, nervous or anxious
- are 'show-offs' or loud-mouthed or demonstrate 'entertaining' reactions when bullied e.g. tantrums, loss of control.
- have special needs – students whose needs arise from obvious physical factors are rarely bullied. However, those whose needs are intellectual only are at much greater risk.

Observers ('bystanders')

- Those who witness harassment without taking any helpful action also contribute to the problem as they are condoning, if not encouraging, harassment.
- Positive bystanders, who support a victim of bullying and report the situation to teachers are of great benefit.

Procedural Fairness – the principles of procedural fairness guide fair and reasonable decision-making procedures when a decision may adversely affect the rights, interests or legitimate expectations of an individual. There are two basic common law rules:

- the 'hearing rule' – the right to be heard, which includes the right to:
 - Know the case against them, including specific allegations and any other information which be taken into account.
 - Know the way in which the issues will be determined
 - Respond to the allegations
 - Know how to seek a review of the decision in response to the allegations
- the 'bias rule' – the right to an impartial decision, which include the right to:
 - Impartiality in the investigation and decision making phases
 - An absence of bias in the decision maker

The College – Wagga Wagga Christian College

2. POLICY

Wagga Wagga Christian College is committed to providing an educational environment in which students are valued and feel secure. Wagga Wagga Christian College rejects all forms of bullying.

- a) The College does not tolerate, condone or trivialise bullying.
- b) All students and staff have the right to feel and be safe in the College grounds, and when travelling to and from the College.
- c) All students and staff have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity in an environment free from disruption, intimidation, harassment, victimisation and discrimination.
- d) No student, employee, parent, caregiver or community member should experience bullying within the learning or working environments of the College.
- e) All members of the College community contribute to preventing bullying by modelling and promoting appropriate behaviour and respectful relationships.
- f) Each member of the College community has a responsibility to ensure the safety of each other member of the community.
- g) Victims of bullying, and witnesses to bullying, are encouraged to report the incident.
- h) All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated according to principals of procedural fairness.
- i) Cyber bullying which is engaged in while not at school, which impacts upon the learning of any student, will be addressed by the College, in conjunction with parents. The appropriate response will depend on circumstances.

- j) The College will have a suitable program of education for the prevention of bullying.
- k) Serious incidents, or threats, of violence may be reported to the Department of Community and Justice (DoCJ), as required by law; and to the Police, depending on circumstances.
- l) The College will seek to provide pastoral support to the target (s) of bullying.
- m) The College will seek to provide pastoral support and behavioural support to the student(s) exhibiting bullying behaviours.

3. PROCEDURES

Creating a Supportive and Caring School Culture

School Curriculum will include age-appropriate programming:

- to educate students about bullying, social responsibility and building personal resilience
- to educate students to exercise digital responsibility in the appropriate use of technology
- to ensure that students understand what constitutes bullying
- to stop bullying behaviour
- to rebuild relationships based on a Biblical pattern
- to develop appropriate social skills and attitudes in the victims, perpetrators and bystanders of bullying; and empower students to resist bullying
- to promote and reinforce the Christian ethos of care and respect for each individual at Wagga Wagga Christian College

Student Wellbeing Programs which include various age-appropriate anti-bullying programs. This includes:

- In class programs
- Visiting presenters as needed targeting specific interventions
- Training around the Student Code of Conduct
- Various talks in assembly

Continued Professional Learning will include sessions each year about bullying:

- to help staff identify bullying when and where it occurs
- to provide clear procedures to deal with bullying
- to adopt classroom management techniques that discourage opportunities for bullying
- to present a vigilant watchfulness in playground duty and other supervision
- to support and restore those who have experienced bullying

Communication

The College communicates its values and practices for the prevention of bullying behaviour, and receives feedback, through a combination of the following:

- Anti-Bullying Policy published on the College's website
- Newsletter articles
- Information evenings
- Enrolment interviews
- Promotion of a safe, caring environment in school communications and meetings

- Incorporation of anti-bullying guidelines in the Student Code of Conduct
- Parent/ teacher meetings

Responding to a Report of Bullying Behaviour

- Take all reports, allegations or observations of suspected bullying behaviour seriously.
- Stop any altercations, violent or intimidating acts immediately.
- Ensure safety of all students involved, and care for anyone injured or upset.
- Inform the Classroom Teacher / Homecare Teacher in the first instance, relevant Stage / Wellbeing Coordinator (if unresolved) followed by Head of School (if warranted) of all allegations or incidences of bullying as soon as practicable.
- Acknowledgement (by staff) of the allegation of bullying, and initial assessment of student safety, must take place as a matter of priority.
- Pastoral support will be offered to the student.

Investigating Reports or Allegations of Bullying Behaviour

- Investigations into bullying allegations must be undertaken in a timely manner and should be carried out in such a way as to minimise the risk of escalation.
- Establish facts from victim, bully and bystanders.
- Conduct interviews in a manner intended to reduce the risk of making matters worse for the alleged victim; nor allow the perpetrators to take some action in revenge.
- Establish whether an alleged incident is isolated, or an ongoing pattern of behaviour (bullying).
- Emphasise that it is the College dealing with the behaviour, rather than students being brought into a confrontation.
- All incidents are to be documented on the student management system
- Inform appropriate staff about all incidents of bullying so they may be aware of any issues between students.
- Inform parents of victim and bully, and possibly parents of bystanders, throughout the process. Any serious consequences, and disciplinary action, will be communicated to parents. An interview will also be requested.
- The College Counsellor is available for support of all students involved in bullying incidents; with a view to changing inappropriate attitudes and building resilience.
- Should bullying continue, further action will follow in line with the College's Discipline Policy. This can include behaviour contracts, suspension or, in the case of continued bullying, removal from the College.
- Serious incidents involving violence, or threats of violence by any means, may be reported to the DoCJ, as required by law; and to the Police, if deemed necessary by the Head of School or Principal.
- The College may recommend further professional counselling as necessary.

Procedures for Teachers

If a student reports a suspected bullying incident the teacher will:

- Listen to both parties and provide support to the target of the bullying.
- Evaluate the nature and seriousness of the reported behaviour.
- If bullying is suspected, then the teacher will report the incident to the Stage / Wellbeing Coordinator or Head of School (if warranted).

If any teacher witnesses incidents of bullying anywhere in the College, they will:

- Intervene and deal with the incident by reminding the students of appropriate behaviour
- Discipline as appropriate
- Report the incident to the Stage / Wellbeing Coordinator or Head of School (if warranted).
- If behaviour is witnessed which, if repeated, could constitute bullying, it will be flagged for monitoring with the relevant Stage Coordinator and Head of School.

Stage Coordinator

If a report is received, the relevant Coordinator will:

- Monitor and investigate the report received and continually update the relevant Wellbeing Coordinator / Head of School
- Liaise with the staff and parents if necessary, suggesting a possible course of action.
- Implement appropriate resolution strategy with appropriate staff.
- Liaise with College Counsellor in referring students who may need counselling or coping strategies, including the victim and the perpetrator.

Procedures for Students

- Always be respectful towards other students, staff and members of the College community.
- Report any instances of being bullied to College staff and parents or carer.
- Students who witness, or know of, bullying should report it to a teacher.
- Where possible, take appropriate steps to discourage or prevent bullying.

Procedures for Parents

- Keep the College informed of concerns about behaviour, your child's health issues or other matters of relevance.
- Report bullying concerns to the College. It is important that parents allow the College to investigate allegations of bullying, and not intervene in the process.
- Understand that the whole story may be quite complex. Trust the College to resolve bullying matters according to the aims and procedures set out.
- If dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation and subsequent actions taken by the College, an appeal may be made as described in the College's Complaints Policy.
- Children bullied physically on the way home may be a matter for reporting to the Police.
- Report cyber bullying to your service provider, the internet site, or the eSafety Commissioner. Cyber bullying, may also be a matter for the Police.
- Discuss relevant issues with the College Counsellor if their child is referred.