



# RIVERMOUNT COLLEGE

*Realising the Potential Within*

## 8.03.01 ANTI-BULLYING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

The guiding principles underlying this policy are:

1. Every individual has value in a community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Most conflicts can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need help to solve conflict.
4. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

### SCOPE

This Policy applies to students of Rivermount College. Bullying of staff by other staff, parents/carers or visitors is dealt with in the Workplace Bullying Policy.

### RESPONSIBILITY

Principal reporting to the Board of Directors

### LEGISLATION & REFERENCES

[Education \(Accreditation of Non-State Schools\) Regulations 2017 \(Qld\)](#)

[Australian Education Act 2013 \(Cth\)](#)

[Australian Education Regulations 2013 \(Cth\)](#)

**Child Protection Policy 08.01.01**

**Disability Discrimination Policy 04.15.01**

**Code of Behaviour – Student 05.01.01**

**Code of Conduct – Staff 03.07.01**

**Behaviour Management Guidelines (Primary and Secondary)**

**Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure 03.18.01**

<b>Area:</b> 8.0 Legal and Compliance	<b>Policy:</b> 8.03.01 Anti-Bullying	<b>Current version:</b> C <b>Original Release:</b> April 2011	<b>Page 1 of 8</b>
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## POLICY STATEMENT

Rivermount College has a zero tolerance approach to bullying.

The College is committed to protecting students from bullying and responding appropriately when bullying occurs.

As part of this commitment, the College will implement the following actions:

- Raise awareness in the school community of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at the College; and
- Develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students.

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, the College will:

- Educate students and parents on how to respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying and how to report these to the College;
- Develop an appropriate mechanism for students and parents to report bullying;
- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to reports of bullying;
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying; and
- Take appropriate action, which might include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

The accompanying Anti-Bullying Procedure explains the bullying reporting mechanism for students and parents, and details how employees will respond to reports, including that all reports will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented.

### Victimisation

If any person who reports bullying is then subject to threat, harassment or any form of victimisation, he/she should report this immediately to the Head of School. The College will act to safeguard those who have:

- made a complaint
- intend to make a complaint
- act as a witness
- intend to act as a witness
- support a victim
- intend to support a victim

## DEFINITIONS

**Bullying:** is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general, it may be defined as:

- dominating or hurting someone
- unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power
- a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation

Bullying can occur at any age, across cultures, genders and socioeconomic groups. It can happen in the playground, toilet areas, to and from school or in the classroom.

- **Physical bullying:** this is when a person (or group of people) uses physical action to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

- **Verbal bullying:** repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.
- **Covert bullying:** such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that makes the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.
- **Psychological bullying:** for example threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.
- **Cyber-bullying:** using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically. Examples include:
  - sending mean text messages/SMS/emails
  - starting or spreading rumours about someone online
  - slamming other people's opinions online
  - posting or sharing embarrassing pictures or videos of someone without their permission
  - setting up fake profiles and posing as someone else
  - creating cruel websites as an attack on someone.

Cyber-bullying is different from other forms of bullying because:

- it is often difficult for adults, who are not as technologically savvy as their children, to detect;
- the offending post/message may no longer be visible;
- it is often outside the reach of schools as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones; and
- hurtful messages can be communicated to a very wide audience, around the world, with remarkable speed.

It is also a particularly cowardly form of bullying because the bully can effectively hide behind the anonymity of the internet and is able to reach the victim at home. Thus, the home is no longer a refuge for students bullied at school.

**What bullying is not.** Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, differences of opinion and isolated incidences of physical aggression. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is not.

**Bullying is not:**

- **Mutual conflict** where 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** – It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation.** A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion**. However, the College is committed to providing students with a safe and supportive school environment and single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will not be ignored or condoned.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The College acknowledges its responsibility to:

- Raise awareness of bullying and how the school will respond to it;
  - The College will educate students about bullying and in particular, cyber-bullying and the dangers online, and talk about inappropriate behaviour in the context of the College's values and Code of Behaviour.
- Take action to help prevent bullying;
- Implement a reporting mechanism for students and parents;
- Educate students and parents on how to respond to bullying and how to report it;
- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to bullying; and
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support and consequences.

Staff members have a responsibility to:

- Watch for early signs of distress in students. This could be evident in any aspect of College life.
- Familiarise themselves with and consistently apply this policy and related procedure.
- Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
- Offer the victim immediate support and help and outline what will now happen.
- Educate all students with regard to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with students, parents or other staff members.

Students should:

- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted counsellor, teacher or senior staff member.
- Actively support students they know are being bullied.
- Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.

Parents should:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child, such as, unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, equipment that has gone missing, request for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life.
- Report to the College's Wellbeing Coordinator or any other member of College staff if they know, or think, their child is being bullied.
- Keep a written record if the bullying persists: Who, What, Where and When?
- Advise their child to speak to the Wellbeing Coordinator or tell a trusted teacher.
- Tell their child that there is nothing wrong with them.
- NOT encourage their child to hit back or respond verbally.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with the College staff and administration.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The College has considered the steps it will take to prevent student bullying, including the following:

- **Increase Awareness** – The College will regularly raise awareness of student bullying by:
  - Displaying clear support and promotion of this policy by the Board and Executive Management
  - Promoting the Student Wellbeing team as the key personnel to support students and families if they are feeling unsafe and/or harassed in any form
  - Providing an email contact ([safe2b@rivermount.qld.edu.au](mailto:safe2b@rivermount.qld.edu.au)) as an additional means to request assistance
- **Training** – The College will regularly educate staff and students about bullying and the consequences of this behaviour.
  - The College will encourage reporting as acceptable and responsible behaviour.
- **Compliance** – The College will proceed with the Anti-Bullying Reporting procedures and the College's Behaviour Management Guidelines to address any incidents of bullying.

## COMPLIANCE AND MONITORING

All student bullying incidences will be recorded in the respective student records. All reports will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented.

Records may include:

- details of incident
- dates and names of parties concerned
- student bystanders and staff witnesses
- action taken by staff

## REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT BULLYING

For any incidents of bullying, a member of staff will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issue has been dealt with, the following steps may be taken as deemed necessary by the Head of School or his/her delegate:

### **1. Identification**

A student and/or parent reports bullying incidents/problem to the Wellbeing Coordinator or trusted staff member. The staff member will escalate the issue accordingly to report to the Head of School.

### **2. Initial interview**

The Head of School or his/her delegate interviews the victim and bully separately, and records the details of the incident in writing in the Student Notes. (All documentation related to the incident will be scanned/attached to the student file.)

The interviewer makes both parties aware of the zero tolerance policy and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The interviewer works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy is to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the College policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

### **3. Follow-up Interview**

If the incident is repeated or the problem continues - both parties may be directed to make a formal statement. The Head of School or his/her delegate may interview the victim and bully to discuss the problem; make the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having; and make suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict.

The Head of School or his/her delegate communicates to both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences that may flow from a repeat of bullying.

### **4. Reinforce (as above), employ sanctions**

If intervention by the Head of School, or others, does not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Detention

- Exclusion from certain areas of the College premises
- Internal suspension
- Major fixed term suspension
- Help from a qualified counsellor
- Permanent exclusion (Principal)

All members of the College community must be aware that overcoming bullying is neither simple or quick. Staff at Rivermount College through established programs will constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable, will remind students how to counteract bullying and will offer programs to lift self-esteem and resilience. Students will be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully others and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders. Parents can feel confident to approach the College with their concerns and are encouraged to work with the College staff so that their children are protected.

## CYBER-SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

Despite the best efforts of parents and the College, young people are likely to overcome attempts to restrict or censor their use of the internet. Teaching students about ethical and legal use of technology is, therefore, essential.

Please refer to the College *Cybersafety Agreement* and the *Acceptable Use of ICT Services Policy* in regards to internet use.

For Primary and young Secondary School students, parents may wish to consider keeping the computer in a public area of the house, such as the family room, so they can see what sites are being accessed and the type of messages their child is receiving.

Parents might also consider the use of filters, labels and safe zones to restrict the sites their child can access or the materials they can receive. (See <http://www.esafety.gov.au/> for advice about filters and other ways to restrict access to dangerous materials.)

For all young people, parents are advised to talk to their children about the ways they can protect themselves when using information technologies. For example:

- to be careful who they give their telephone number to or their online username;
- don't believe everything they read online – just because someone tells you they are fifteen, it doesn't mean they are telling the truth;
- never send a message to others in anger. Remind them that what they write becomes available in cyberspace and cannot be taken back;
- never open a message from someone they don't know;
- be polite in all online or text message dealings; and
- never arrange to meet someone they have met online unless they take their parents with them.

If a child reports he/she is being bullied online, parents should advise them:

- Not to respond to cyber-bullying messages as this is only likely to encourage the bully. Bullies want them to respond;
- To report the bullying to parents and to their teachers;
- Not to delete messages from cyber-bullies even if they really don't want anyone else to see what is written – these messages may reveal clues about who has written them;

- Never be ashamed to tell someone if they receive a frightening message. It's not their fault that there are some very strange people in the world; and
- To report that they have received a bullying message to their ISP (Internet Service Provider). If the message is forwarded to the provider, it may be able to trace the sender.

The Australian Government Office of the eSafety Commissioner website gives the following advice to young people about dangers online:

- Always be alert when on the internet. While there are some excellent sites to visit there are also some bad ones like pornography, animal cruelty and hate sites.
- If something appears on your screen that disturbs you, tell your friends, a teacher or parent, or contact Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 for advice on what to do.
- Remember, you will not get into any trouble by letting people know what you have stumbled across.
- If you hear or see your friends getting into places that look unsuitable, remind them of the potential dangers and advise them on how to get out of the site.
- Keep all personal information to yourself (including photos, your name, the name of your school, the name of your family members and your phone number). Strangers might use your personal information in a way that you never intended them to.
- Chat rooms are great ways to talk to people but be aware that some people in them are not who they say they are. Talk to your parents or teachers about stranger danger.
- Not everything you read on the internet is true. Be smart and make decisions for yourself on what you think is right and wrong.
- Be careful downloading free games or files. People can trick you into clicking on a link that sends you to an unsafe zone or makes your computer download a virus.
- Only give your mobile phone number to your family and friends and if you start getting upsetting or annoying text messages, tell a teacher or parent.
- Always seek help from adults or friends. Parents might not know as much about the internet as you, but they know about life and together you can work out any problem that you might encounter when online.