



BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures and programs in place at The River School to ensure we provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment free from bullying in all its forms. Bullying, including cyber bullying is not acceptable in this school and will be dealt with seriously.	
Scope	This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents/ carers, students, and people visiting the school site. It deals with bullying behaviours within the school grounds, classroom, on the bus, and when representing the school in public, on camps and school excursions. This policy is to be read in conjunction with The River School Behaviour Management Policy, Behaviour Support Framework, Behaviour Expectations and Behaviour Consequences Flowchart.	
Responsibility	School Principal	
References	TRS Behaviour Management Policy TRS Behaviour Support Framework TRS Behaviour Consequences Flowchart TRS Behaviour Expectations (Rules) Bullying. No Way! Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/ Kids Help Line https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/bullying-school Australian Government online safety https://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/public-safety-and-law/online-safety The King's School Anti-Bullying Policy	
Status	Approved by the School Board	Supersedes Bullying Prevention Policy March 2018
Last Review Date	April 2019	Next Review Date April 2020
Review Cycle	Annually	Version ID BPP2019
Authorisation	Board Chair	Date of Authorisation April 2019
Policy Owner	AME Ltd Board	

1. Definitions

It is important that staff, students and parents have a shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at The River School.

1.1. What is Bullying?

“Bullying is **repeated** (or has the potential to be repeated), verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or a group.” Cyber bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones.

There are two broad categories of bullying:

Overt Bullying is *direct physical bullying* that may include hitting, tripping, pushing, offensive gestures, damaging property or standover tactics; and *direct verbal bullying* that may include name calling, insults, verbal abuse, teasing, shaming, putting others down, taunting and offensive or threatening comments.

Covert Bullying - *Indirect bullying* is harder to recognise and mostly inflicts harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem, that is, through psychological harm rather than physical harm.

Covert bullying behaviours may include:

- Lying and spreading rumours
- Threatening looks
- Using the guise of jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- Mimicking
- Maliciously excluding people from groups or encouraging others to socially exclude someone
- Ignoring
- Damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
- **Cyber-bullying** involving inappropriate text messaging, sending offensive or degrading images and/or comments by phone/internet/email, communicating under false pretences, forwarding of other students' private communication, establishment of websites to humiliate others.

*In fact, just the **fear of bullying** happening can create distress and harm. The ongoing nature of bullying can lead to the person/s being bullied feeling powerless and unable to stop it from happening.*

(Bullying No Way 2018 Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group)

1.2. What Bullying is not

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble or one-off unkind words or actions. 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, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should not be ignored or condoned (Refer to Behaviour Management Policy).

2. Responsibilities

The River School takes an informed and proactive approach to bullying through the establishment of programs to educate and inform students, staff and parents about bullying behaviours; and procedures to follow in the event that a student is being bullied. The River School has a whole school approach to bullying education and prevention through its *Positive Culture Group (PCG)*, which is a united, representative voice from School staff, parents and students. The PCG is a subcommittee of The River School Parents and Friends that meets, when required. It has endorsed its own vision and mission statement — see attachment 1.

2.1. Responsibility of Positive Culture Group

- Meetings chaired by P&F President and attended by School Principal
- Meetings are open to attendance by parents, students and school staff
- Meeting outcomes are documented and communicated to the School community
- Meetings adopt a no-blame no-name approach
- Discussion is proactive in sourcing, designing programs and strategies to inform and create awareness around bullying behaviours, supports available and preventative measures.
- Recommend suitable Professional Development for teaching staff so that they are educated in best practise with regard to bullying programs / awareness and what their responsibilities are in ensuring all students are SAFE, HAPPY and FREE to Learn at our School.

2.2. Responsibility of Teaching Staff (including classroom teachers, aides, relief staff, extra curricular teachers, support teachers)

- Explicitly teach and provide opportunities to practice our School's Virtue Program (Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Compassion, Service, Love, Contentment, Simple Living, Kindness and Courage).
- Teach and build understandings around the School's Neohumanist philosophy, which

fosters “love and respect for all, regardless of culture, religion, race or nationality, and for animals and plants and the earth’s ecosystems.” © 2015 Ananda Marga

- Create and maintain positive, nurturing relationships between students, students and teachers, and teacher and parents. Teachers are to be approachable and model calm, positive behaviours.
- Encourage students to problem solve using a Restorative Practice approach – solving conflict through conversation without shame.
- Be a safe and available person for students to help them report bullying behaviours. Offer immediate support and a clear outline what will happen now.
- Ensure students feel safe and secure; be observant of relationships and how students are interacting. Watch for early signs of distress in students.
- Use a Restorative Practice approach to bullying and be consistent when dealing with bullying behaviours.
- Listen to student and parent concerns, investigate any reports and deal with bullying situations in consultation with the Principal and /or Deputy.
- Provide follow up and ongoing support as required, to students who are affected by the bullying.
- Explicitly teach and provide opportunities for discussion around bullying behaviours, how to seek help and know what support is available, using a combination of School provided and teacher made resources.
- Educate all students with regard to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Attend Professional Development to stay abreast of best practise in Bullying identification, response and prevention.
- Ensure they are familiar with the School’s Bullying Prevention Policy.

2.3. Responsibilities of Students

- Practice our School’s Virtue Program (Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Compassion, Service, Love, Contentment, Simple Living, Kindness and Courage)
- Treat others as you would like to be treated
- Work towards solving problems yourself using a restorative approach, practise resilience and stand up for yourself in an appropriate way
- Include others in activities when you can so no one feels left out
- Take responsibility for your words and actions. Be honest and own up to mistakes
- Tell a trusted adult if you are being bullied
- If you notice something that is not right, let a teacher know
- Don’t be a bystander; if you see something is happening get help.
- Make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted

2.4. Responsibilities of the Principal

- Ensure annual review of the policy
- Ensure parents/caregivers are aware of the Bullying Prevention Policy, School Behaviour Management Policy, Framework and the Code of Conduct
- Communicate with, and provide support and guidance, for all relevant parties
- Report bullying behaviours to parents of all students involved
- Provide to the School Board, updates each term using data and trends in relation to bullying.

2.5. Responsibilities of Parents/Caregivers

- Be a good role model for your child and talk to your child in a positive manner.
- Monitor online activity, abiding by the age limit restrictions on social media sites.

- Talk to your child about any issues and about their day and let the School know if your child is upset.
- Support the School's Behaviour Management Policy and Framework, Code of Conduct and Whole School rules and consequences as outlined in the Behaviour Support Framework and Consequences Flowchart.
- Be prepared that your child might be the problem and work with the School to problem solve.
- Encourage your child to embrace the Neohumanist philosophy of our School "love and respect for all, regardless of culture, religion, race or nationality, and for animals and plants and the earth's ecosystems." © 2015 Ananda Marga
- Teach your child to be assertive in an appropriate way.
- Work with your child to understand there are two sides to a story.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with the School staff and administration.
- Report any concerns your child or you may have around bullying behaviours
- Report signs of bullying, which may include:

Unwillingness to attend school

A pattern of vague headaches, stomach-aches or feeling ill in the morning

Personal items or equipment have gone missing

Damaged clothing or bruising

Becomes withdrawn, refuses to talk about what is wrong

Expresses threats to hurt self or others

Asking for extra tuck-shop money or food

Hiding information on mobile phones or from social network sites

3. Prevention Programs

Creating caring communities, teaching social and emotional skills and taking time to develop positive relationships are proven, powerful deterrents to bullying. At The River School we endorse a whole school approach to bullying prevention incorporating a variety of programs and strategies including:

- Peer support/ buddy programs
- Educational programs to train and support students, staff and parents in identifying and preventing bullying
- The availability of a clear, written policy outlining how the school will respond to, and deal with incidents of bullying
- Alignment of the Bully Prevention Policy with the Behaviour Management Policy and Framework
- Support and follow up for both the student being bullied and the perpetrator
- Staff awareness so that there is a high level of vigilance, but not over-reaction
- High Alert Supervision in known problem areas of the playground
- A variety of lunchtime clubs available to students with teacher supervision e.g. music, art, dance, sport and social

- Explicit teaching of how to play, share and be inclusive and respectful of differences
- Explicit teaching of social and emotional skills to assist self knowledge and regulation, meditation and mindfulness
- Following a Restorative Practice approach to assist students work through conflict and repair relationships
- Daily virtues practise
- Regular class discussions, videos, stories, role plays and circle time
- Yr. 6 Student Leadership focusing on modelling appropriate behaviours and assisting younger students to feel safe and happy through the *Peace Ambassadors Program*.
- Explicitly teaching strategies to deal with bullying, including how to seek help and awareness of supports available if bullied
- Documentation of all bullying incidents and how they were handled.

4. Responses to Bullying and Intervention Strategies

The River School uses a *Restorative Practice* approach to conflict resolution and endorses the *Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group (Bullying No Way!)* effective school responses to bullying incidents:

- Solution-focused
- Relationship-based
- At the school level, the class level, the student level, and
- Based on strong links between the School and parents.

5. Reporting and Monitoring Bullying

Bullying is viewed as a major breach of the School rules and behavioural expectations and therefore follow up action will align with our School Behaviour Management Policy. The School's immediate response to any incidents of bullying will involve a member of staff dealing with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps will be taken:

5.1. Identification

A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problem to a teacher who notifies the Principal or Deputy Principal.

5.2. Initial interview

The Principal, Deputy or nominated teacher interviews the bullied student and perpetrator separately, and records the details of the incident in writing. If both parties agree to meet together, the Interviewer, using Restorative Practice dialogue (see Behaviour Management Policy), discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. They then work with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer supports students to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the bullied student feels safe and supported and the perpetrator is prepared to stop the bullying behaviour. The bullied student understands what support is available for them and that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame, or to punish; but to support the 'harmed' and make the perpetrator aware of School policies, taking responsibility for their behaviour and of the consequences if the bullying behaviour does not stop.

5.3. Follow-up

Follow up support is provided in the form of formal and informal check-ins, increased awareness and monitoring of student interactions in the playground and classroom. Notifying all teachers of students involved and being proactive in assisting the cessation of the bullying behaviours through revisiting activities to remind and teach students how to maintain positive relationships and repair relationships in a kind and compassionate manner.

5.4. Repeated Bullying

If the incident or similar bullying behaviour is repeated or the problem continues - both parties will be interviewed separately by the Principal or Deputy. Following individual meetings, the 'harmed' and perpetrator may meet together with the Principal or Deputy, if the 'harmed' feels safe enough to do so, and the perpetrator agrees to engage in restorative dialogue designed to make them aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects their bullying behaviour is having, and makes suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict.

Other students may be interviewed to provide supporting evidence if deemed appropriate and necessary.

The Principal or Deputy documents all interviews and notifies both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies and consequences that have been determined.

If a solution to a particular problem is not found, the School may consider the use of an outside person, such as a trained mediator, to assist in reaching a resolution.

5.5. Reinforce (as above), employ sanctions

If the agreed strategies and consequences do not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warning to cease bullying behaviour
- Implementing a Behaviour Support Plan (joint agreement with student, parents & school)
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- Internal Suspension
- External Suspension (1 – 10 days)
- Exclusion for a period of time to be determined
- Permanent exclusion

Note: If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in the school's Child Protection Policy then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

An important consideration for schools, teachers, parents and students is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. Schools need to constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and to remind students how to counteract bullying, as well as

offering programs to lift self-esteem and resilience; students need to be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders;

and parents need to be confident to approach the school with their concerns, and encouraged to work with schools in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

6. Cyber-Bullying

*Cyber bullying is causing harm via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices.*¹

Cyber bullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge “audience” and the bully can remain anonymous.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the awfulness of their behaviour.

Cyber bullying can be difficult for adults, who may not be as technologically savvy as their children, to detect and monitor. It is often outside the reach of schools as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones.

The School's Bullying Prevention Policy is equally applicable when using technology. Some examples of cyber-bullying, which are unacceptable at any time, whether at or away from School are listed below. In extreme cases, this kind of bullying may be referred to the Police.

- Sending a text message to another student containing threats, swearing or insults or inciting anti-social behaviour.
- Sending an email containing a destructive gossip / rumours about another student
- Creating a social media profile impersonating another student
- Sending / posting / uploading picture/s or video of students or teachers at School without their consent
- Threatening or swearing at an opponent via online games

7. Protecting Young People From Cyber-Bullying

As for other forms of bullying, there is no one approach that will always work for cyber-bullying. Schools need to educate students and families about cyber-bullying and about a range of Internet safety approaches to provide the best overall protection against cyber-bullying. Schools might supply parents with the following advice:

- For younger children parents might consider the use of filters, labels and safe zones so they can restrict the sites their child can access or the materials they can receive (see the *CyberSmart* site at <https://esafety.gov.au/> for advice about filters and other ways to restrict access to dangerous materials).
- Parents should 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.
- For all young people, parents should be 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 handle;
- Never give out or share passwords and personal information numbers (PINS);
- Don't believe everything you 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 when you are angry. Remind them that what they post 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 or (for older children) a trusted friend with them.

If a child reports he/she is being bullied on-line 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 erase or 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 is important that they understand that it's not their fault**; 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.

8. The Role of the School With Cyber-Bullying

Because cyber-bullying often occurs outside of School it is difficult for Schools to control. In most cases, however, cyber-bullying should be treated similarly to other forms of bullying. The most important thing schools can do is to educate students about cyber-bullying and the dangers online **and** talk about inappropriate online behaviour in the context of *Section 5* of this policy and the School's *Behaviour Management Policy*.

The Australian Government *Online Safety* site gives the following advice to young people about dangers online:

- Set your online profile to private or 'friends only'
- Have a different password for each social networking site so that if one password is stolen, not all of your accounts will be at risk
- Think before you post – expect that people other than your friends can see the information you post online. Remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed.
- Don't post information that would make you or your family vulnerable – such as your date of birth, address, information about your daily routine, holiday plans, or your children's school
- Regularly check your privacy and security settings on your social networking profile, never give away your account details, and regularly update your computer security software
- Use strong passwords and change them regularly – the personal information you put in your social networking profile may be used by scammers to guess your passwords
- Don't share your personal information in an email, SMS or on a social networking site with people you don't know and trust
- Don't accept a friend request or follow a request from a stranger – the best way to keep scammers out of your life is to never let them in.
- 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
- Remember, you will not get into any trouble by letting people know what you have stumbled across.

- 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.

Schools and Parents should access the information and resources available online

<https://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/public-safety-and-law/online-safety>
(copy & paste this link into your browser)

9. Additional Resources

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/kids>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/>

<https://www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>

Restorative Practice dialogue, resources and strategies

<http://www.rpforschools.net/>

<https://www.restorativepractices.org.au/>

ISQ Resources and links for Independent Schools

<https://www.isq.qld.edu.au/members/bullying?sectionurl=members>

Commonwealth legislation relevant to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence include:

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Act 1986*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Racial Hatred Act 1995*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984.*

Attachment 1

The River School POSITIVE CULTURE GROUP

Vision Statement

The River School Positive Culture Group actively supports an inclusive school culture of self-awareness, self-responsibility and emotional intelligence.

We are parents, teachers and students committed to growing an environment of kindness, empathy and compassion in our school and our community. We strive to foster a supportive school dynamic that is respectful of diversity and works collaboratively to empower our students with the knowledge to guide positive life choices.

Our Neohumanist values are the foundation from which we will nurture this culture and bridge gaps so that we may help build a sense of connection within our school and beyond.

Mission Statement

The River School Positive Culture Group will achieve our vision by creating a whole school systemic framework, drawing on our Neohumanist philosophy that promotes positive and respectful relationships. An emphasis on open dialogue and clear communication will support the successful implementation of our vision.

- We are working towards, and then further maintaining, a culture that addresses and prevents face-to-face bullying, cyber bullying and other digital abuse by promoting compassion, inclusion, equality and responsibility. Teaching our children how to identify bullying behaviour and effective solutions on how to respond to all forms of bullying is of primary focus as we endeavour to empower our children in social and emotional growth.
- We aim to identify and add to existing school resources that focus on respectful behaviours through website links, books, videos and performances. To engage all students and parents, we intend to provide avenues for information exchange including sourcing external expertise that fit within our River School philosophy.
- We will embed a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parents, students and staff and provide access to support services for those individuals that require it.
- As students, we must not be bystanders who witness assaults, harassment or threats and remain silent.
- As a school, we must act swiftly and redirect negative behaviours into positive and productive solutions.
- As adults, we must empower those harmed and assist those engaging in bullying to take responsibility and accept support to transform their behaviour.
- As a community, we must actively support our young people to journey beyond our school with the resilience and ability to contribute with confidence and integrity.