

Wellington Christian School Policy



ANTI-BULLYING

RANGS Reference	3.6.2
Date of Last Review	March 2015
Board approval required	Yes
Owner	Head of School

RATIONALE

WCS seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students and to respond in a caring and procedurally fair manner for all concerned when bullying is reported or alleged.

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

The Bible very clearly commands that Christians must act lovingly towards others, regardless of whether love is deserved. To be followers of Christ, one must be willing to love, forgive, feel empathy, protect and be willing to serve others in all contexts. In Mark 12, Jesus teaches His followers about the greatest commandments:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (verse 30) and
“Love your neighbour as yourself” (verse 31)*

Jesus states that there are no other commandments greater than these. To love God with all your being implies that you will treat others well. To love God is to live a humble, gracious, servant-hearted life that self-sacrificially seeks the betterment of others (i.e. Philippians 2:1-4, Colossians 3:5-9). The second command to ‘love one another’ is to love unconditionally.

If loving God and loving others is to be at the centre of the Christian life, and therefore Christian education, bullying cannot be tolerated.

In 1 Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul enunciates the elements of love.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes; always perseveres.”

Bullying is the antithesis of love: it is often spiteful, impatient, unkind and envious. Bullying is selfish. Bullying tends to hide the truth and refuses to protect those in need.

If the command to love is paramount, and that love is characterized as it is in 1 Corinthians 13, then it is clear that the Bible mandates a no-tolerance approach to bullying in a Christian environment. As such, an anti-bullying stance should be at the centre of caring for students at Wellington Christian School.

We expect every member of our Community to give and receive care and respect. This reflects that we are all created in God’s image: created uniquely and with dignity. When we are bullied, or when we bully

others, the School Community is damaged. For Wellington Christian School, bullying involves acts of behaviour that diminishes and/or devalues a person's sense of worth and identity.

Bullying cannot be tolerated because it:

- is not **Christlike** behaviour
- does not build a **positive** and **caring community**
- is the opposite to the **attitudes and values** found in the **Bible**

THE LEGAL MANDATE

WCS has the legal mandate to implement policies and procedures to provide a safe and supportive environment in which students can learn. A safe environment is one where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel secure. Harm relates to several potential aspects of school including violence, physical threats, verbal abuse, threatening gestures, sexual harassment and racial vilification. A supportive environment fosters the social, academic, physical, emotional and spiritual development of students.

The WCS anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the following policies: Student Welfare and Child Protection Policy. It reflects general principles adopted to deal with complaints or grievances, with specific reference to processes for raising and responding to matters of concern identified by students, teachers /staff or parents. As such, it follows procedural fairness. Procedural fairness refers to what are sometimes described as the 'hearing rule' and the 'right to an unbiased decision'.

The 'hearing rule' includes the right of the person against whom an allegation has been made to:

- know the allegations related to a specific matter and any other information which will be taken into account in considering the matter
- know the process by which the matter will be considered
- respond to the allegations
- know how to seek a review of the decision made in response to the allegations.

The 'right to an unbiased decision' includes the right to:

- impartiality in an investigation and decision-making
- an absence of bias by a decision-maker

SUPPORT SERVICES

Various agencies support Wellington Christian School's endeavour to provide students with a safe and supportive learning environment.

School Liaison Police:

Orana LAC School Liaison Police Officer's Telephone 6883 1568 or 0437 884475

Other support services available to our school community (See Appendix 1).

PART 1: WHAT IS BULLYING?

As defined by the NSW Education and Communities legislation 'Bullying: No Way!', 'Keep them Safe' and the 'National Safe Schools Framework', bullying is:

"...repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender or spiritual beliefs."

Bullying usually involves **an abuse of power** – it can be planned, spontaneous or unintentional. It results in the diminishment of another person.

Bullying can be seen in a variety of forms. These are:

- Physical** This can be defined as: fighting, pushing, shoving, intimidating gestures, invasion of personal space done by one person or group to another and the mistreatment of an individual or group's possessions.
- Group** This can be defined as: one group of people ganging up against another group and/or individual, the isolating or rejecting of an individual or group from a larger group, or the exclusion of one group or individual from a community event.
- Verbal** This can be defined as: mocking, name calling, putting someone down, offensive language directed at or about another individual, gossip or slander. This can be realized in either a vocal or written fashion.
- Victimisation** This can be defined as: the deliberate picking on, targeting, excluding, threatening to "get", the use of stand over tactics, employed against one individual by another individual or group.
- Sexual** This can be defined as: unwanted sexual invitation or inferences, touching or brushing against another in a sexual manner, writing or drawing or commenting about an individual's body sexually, sexually oriented jokes, name calling, comments about someone's private life (either verbally stated or written), or any comment about sexuality which makes another person feel targeted or victimized. This can include any bullying conducted due to one's sexuality, sexual preference or transgender nature.
- Discrimination** This can be defined as: any kind of exclusion or isolation conducted against an individual or group on the basis of race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, academic, home and family structures (i.e. parental marriages and divorces and foster homes) and religious preference.
- Spiritual** This can be defined as: any act or word that is targeted against another individual or group on the basis of spiritual or religious arrogance or superiority. This may come in the form of self-righteous behaviour, intimidation, exclusion, gossip through prayer points, denominational snobbery or any form of judgmental action.
- Disability** This can be defined as: any form of discrimination, exclusion, harassment or humiliation of those with mental, physical, medical or psychological disabilities and difficulties. This extends to those with behavioural and learning difficulties and those who come under the educational or literacy and numeracy support categories.
- Cyber Bullying** This can be defined as: any material posted (in any form – photos, print) on a website or sent on the internet or any technological device which identifies, bullies, embarrasses or harasses individual students, groups, parents and families, staff or others in the school community. This applies at both at and away from the geographical school location.

It can include:

- Annoying/repeated phone calls
- Harassing, offensive or obscene emails
- Threatening emails or text messages
- Defamatory, embarrassing or personal information on message boards or chat rooms

- Posting information, photos or videos without the victim's permission with the intent to cause hatred
- Inappropriate digital and social networking
- Transmitting inappropriate material over an electronic device

PART 2: OUR RESPONSE TO BULLYING

Wellington Christian School has a no-tolerance approach to bullying. From both a legal and biblical perspective, bullying has the potential to destroy and harm individuals and communities. Therefore, we aim to prevent bullying from occurring wherever possible, and to respond appropriately and equitably to incidents when they arise.

In our responses to bullying, we seek to:

- Protect individuals
- Protect groups (students, teachers, and parents)
- Follow procedurally fair investigations
- Teach wisdom by rebuking and diminishing foolishness
- Enforce our code of conduct
- Assist, guide and admonish the bully and protect and support the victim
- Teach, model and live the Christian perspective on love
- Help all students understand and act with empathy and compassion
- Discipline where necessary with the goal of life transformation
- Offer and assist in facilitating redemption and reconciliation where possible and appropriate

PART 3: PREVENTING BULLYING

Wellington Christian School aims to prevent bullying from occurring by utilising and practising a variety of strategies. We do this by focusing on the three main groups of people that comprise our school community; the staff, the parents and the students.

A. Staff

General strategies employed by the staff to prevent bullying include:

- Support the school in resolving bullying situations.
- Pedagogically enacting a Christian education in the context of classroom nurture, assemblies, camps and everyday teacher-student relationships.
- A purposefully designed curriculum where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, tolerance and respect are encouraged.
- Role modelling examples of how to relate to one another with love and acceptance. This can either come in the form of staff-student and staff-staff practice, as well as staff-student mentoring.
- Staff have an awareness of the signs of insecurity, discomfort and suspected incidents of bullying.
- Staff make effort to reduce opportunities for bullying by proactively managing students in the classroom, playground, excursions, camps and other off-site activities.
- Staff arrive at class and to playground supervision on time in order to limit the opportunity for students to be unsupervised.
- The School Leadership ensures that all staff (including casual staff) are trained to quickly act on bullying situations by following the appropriate procedure(s) (see Responsive Strategies).
- Within the limitations of privacy and confidentiality, the School Leadership communicate to staff individual needs of students through management plans. These aid to protect and assist students in the classroom and playground.
- Staff explain the legal ramifications and consequences of cyberbullying.

B. Parents

Parents play a significant role in the prevention of bullying. It is essential that the school works in partnership with parents in the disciplinary and welfare process. Parents can assist in the following ways:

- Support the school in bullying situations.
- Explain that conflicts between children are not necessarily bullying.
- Clearly state to children that bullying, in any form, is never acceptable.
- Help children understand what bullying is and how it manifests itself.
- Teach a Christian understanding of the need to be loving to all around us.
- Help students understand the legal ramifications and consequences of bullying.
- Discussing the school's policy on a zero tolerance toward bullying.
- Be alert to any signs of distress or anxiety, unwillingness to attend school, missing equipment, damaged clothing or bruising. If any of these signs become visible, parents are to contact the school.
- Listen to their children.
- Contact the appropriate staff members on a regular basis to monitor their child's progress.
- Reassure children who are being bullied, of their value.
- Ensure that there are no bullying behaviours displayed in the home - either by siblings, parents or other members of the extended family.
- Do not encourage children to "fight back" or "hit them back". Educate children about the need to tell a responsible adult.
- Attend any parent education seminars the school runs throughout the year where bullying and other welfare and discipline issues are discussed.
- Read material distributed by the school concerning bullying (i.e. Parent Information Letters, the school newsletter)
- Know Child Protection groups and contact numbers that exist to prevent bullying (such as Kid's Helpline, BeyondBlue, Bullying: No way!)
- Monitor their children's online activity across all media. Keep a copy of any evidence and supply it to the school.

C. Students

Students are often those who are the first to witness bullying in any context, and thus they also have a role in helping to prevent bullying. Students are encouraged to employ the strategies below and learn from some of the Welfare Education programs that are conducted throughout the school year. Students can assist in the following ways:

- Support the school in resolving bullying situations.
- Students need to be aware that bullying is not acceptable in any form and that there are serious consequences, both in the school community and in society.
- Students need to challenge or report bullying. They need to break the code of silence and tell a parent or a staff member.
- Students need to be able to walk away from a situation where they are being bullied rather than responding in a negative way. That student must then tell a trusted adult who can help them.
- Students are encouraged to know that if they have been or are being bullied, that it is not their fault, or that people care for their safety. Talk to a trusted teacher, a senior student (such as a Peer Support Leader or Prefect), or their parents.
- Students should encourage others to make a stand against bullying in an appropriate way.
- Students should embrace the opportunity to attend, learn from and discuss during the Welfare Education programs that are run during the year.
- Place posters up around the school which advocate against bullying.
- Know Child Protection groups and contact numbers that exist to prevent bullying (such as Kid's Helpline, BeyondBlue, Bullying: No way!)

PART 4: PREVENTION STRATEGIES

There are a variety of suggested strategies to prevent bullying. (See Appendix 2)

PART 5: RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES TO BULLYING INCIDENTS

General Process

In the event of a bullying situation, the following are strategies which will be employed to respond to the situation. The principles of procedural fairness must govern the response process. Procedural fairness includes making available to students and parents or caregivers the policies and procedures under which disciplinary action may ultimately be taken. It also includes providing details of an allegation relating to a specific matter or incident. This will usually involve providing an outline of the allegations made in witness statements and consideration of witness protection.

Step 1: Personnel involved and immediate response

- a) In the event of a situation arising, either in the form of being noticed by a teacher, witnessed by a student, reported by a parent, the incident is referred to the relevant Head of Primary/Secondary as soon as possible. At the discretion of the Head of Primary/Secondary, and depending on the confidentiality and seriousness of the situation, other staff may be involved to assist in the following process.
- b) If the situation is volatile, all parties are immediately separated and contained to promote safety and protection.
- c) Parents of the students involved will be informed about a matter of serious concern.
- d) The suggested process for investigation will be explained to the parents.

Step 2: Reporting

When a bullying situation becomes apparent, it is to be reported to the Head of Primary/Secondary as soon as possible. Where appropriate, a written report is requested. It can be done either in the form of a letter or email. Parents are encouraged to contact the Head of Primary/Secondary. They may compose a letter or email info@Wellingtoncs.com.au or use the 'Contact Us' link on the Wellington Christian School website. All modes of communication will be kept confidential and treated with due care and diligence.

Except for a general inquiry, classroom teachers who become aware of a possible bullying situation cannot conduct a personal investigation without the approval of the Head of School. A procedurally fair investigation process must occur before a decision is made and sanctions are carried out.

All alleged bullying situations must be referred to Head of School but in the event of a mandatory reporting situation these reports must be made directly to the School Principal.

Step 3: Investigation

Once a report has been made, the situation has been temporarily neutralized and all parties are safe, an investigation can begin. Normally this will involve a management plan. Depending on the nature of the alleged bullying, the investigation will be led by the Head of School. Generally, this is the longest part of the process and has no time constraint.

The Process:

- a) An investigation commences with the unbiased judgement and hearing rule firmly established as guiding principles. Confidentiality and witness protection will also be provided during the process.
- b) An investigation plan is devised. (See Appendix 3).
- c) General principles of the investigation process include:
 - i) Students will be offered a support person during the interview.

- ii) It will be reinforced that no conclusion has been made prior to the interview. The process aims to gather information about a situation. Therefore, procedural fairness is provided.
- iii) Parents of students involved will be regularly updated about the development of the process.

Step 4: Explanation of the Findings of the Investigation

- a) An interview is arranged between the Investigator, Adjudicator and the parents of alleged victim. The process and findings of the investigation are discussed. If the allegation is sustained, a variety of supportive measures will be provided for the victim.
- b) An interview is arranged between the Investigator, Adjudicator and the parents of the alleged bully. The process and findings of the investigation are discussed. If the allegation is sustained, the proposed consequences will be discussed with the parents and the student. The student involved is made clearly aware of why their behaviour was wrong, why it cannot be continued and how they will prevent it in the future. Ideally, the student should be able to articulate why they are receiving a consequence.
- c) In extremely serious cases of a proven allegation, either related to excessive violence, long-term verbal or emotional abuse, sexual misconduct or serious cyber bullying, the police will be contacted and they will lead the investigation. In these cases, the school will inform parents of their right to contact the police.
- d) In the event of a police investigation, the school will provide all records pertaining to the investigation.

Step 5: Discipline

Once an unbiased judgement is established by the adjudicator and all parties given the right to be heard, a consequence is issued. The discipline chosen will depend on the severity of the incident. Every endeavour to protect the privacy of the bully will be done. Without divulging unnecessary details, to protect all parties involved, it is sometimes necessary to inform staff about a specific management plan for student interactions in classrooms and in the playground.

Step 6: Appeal Process

In the event of a parent being dissatisfied with the process or outcome of the investigation, the parent is to be directed to the school's Grievance policy.

Step 7: Process of Reconciliation

Once discipline has been completed and an adequate amount of separation time has been given, the relevant parties will be provided with an avenue to begin a reconciliation process. This will only occur if both parties and their parents grant consent.

If reconciliation is unwanted, then students are to be indefinitely separated and monitored closely. Class compositions may be altered to ensure this is the case. Even if a reconciliation process occurs and seems successful, students are still monitored by the teaching staff.

In serious cases, long-term plans will be put in place to protect all parties and help prevent bullying from recurring.

PART 6: BULLYING REGISTER

WCS maintains a Bullying Register that contains records of all bullying investigations.

APPENDIX 1

COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT

OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

Following is a short list of some services and options that may be helpful. Please note that inclusion in the list does not imply endorsement by the school and families will need to make their own enquiries. However, we hope this helps:

Psychological & Mental Health Support

ATAPS Children's Mental Health Service

ATAPS is funded by the Commonwealth Dept of Health & Ageing and is managed locally by Western Sydney Medicare Local. This service is provided free of charge to parents of children up to 12 years experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties. The program allows GPs, paediatricians and school counsellors to refer children to participating local mental health professionals. If your child requires support beyond the school counselling service, your GP may be able to arrange referral to a local ATAPS provider.

Better Access (Medicare)

Through the Better Access program (Medicare) GPs can create a referral and Mental Health Care Plan for which clients may be eligible to receive a rebate from Medicare for up to ten sessions per calendar year from registered mental health providers. Your GP is the person to discuss this option with. It can be helpful when booking in with your GP to let them know that you would like to discuss obtaining a Mental Health Care Plan so that they can allow adequate time to discuss emotional/behavioural concerns, present circumstances and best treatment options.

Crisis/Urgent Assistance

In the event of an emergency, dial 000.

If someone you care about is suicidal, you can take them to accident & emergency at your local hospital. For students, you can take them to the Accident & Emergency Dept. at the Children's Hospital, Westmead.

Phone Support

Mental Health Line: 1800 011 511

This is a state-wide 24 hour mental health telephone access service. Carers can also use the Mental Health Line for advice about a person's clinical symptoms, the urgency of the need for care and local treatment options.

Kids Helpline (ages 5-25)

To talk to someone about anything that's going on in your life. Kids Helpline has phone counselling 24/7 as well as online text chat

1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelp.com.au

Eheadspace (ages 12-25)

To talk to someone and discuss advice about tough issues

1800 650 890 www.eheadspace.org.au

Parentline: Free, professional help for parents & carers of children 0-18 years who live in NSW.

1300 1300 52. www.parentline.org.au

Web-sites

Australian Parenting Website: <http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

Australian resource for parenting newborns to teens

Resourcing Parents: <http://www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au/>

Resourcing Parents provides parenting education information to parents and carers of children aged 0-18 years. The calendar of Parenting Education programs is current and the site is funded by the NSW government to support families

Youth Beyondblue: www.youthbeyondblue.org.au

Beyondblue's dedicated site for young people. Information, resources & support for young people dealing with depression and/or anxiety.

Biteback: www.biteback.org.au

The Black Dog Institute's site for young people

Local Family Support Services & Family Counselling

Interrelate: 138 Darling Street, Wellington NSW. Phone: 02 6815 9650. Fax: 02 6815 9610 or 1300 736 966 www.interrelate.org.au

We have tried our best to ensure that this information is up to date and accurate, however, we apologise if there is any change.

APPENDIX 2

WHOLE SCHOOL PROGRAMS & EVENTS TO PREVENT BULLYING

- A Parent Education Evening with various experts, including our school's counselling team, senior welfare staff, our Police Liaison Officer or a specialist on bullying prevention.
- A K-6 Anti- bullying Day organised by staff.
- A series of novels about bullying available for students to borrow from the library.
- Posters about bullying around the school grounds.
- Devotions - Focus on caring for one another incorporating strong links with biblical teaching.
- PDHPE units. For example, Friendship and Conflict Resolution
- Cybersafety Agreements - Class teachers discuss these in detail.
- Assemblies - Talks on the variety of ways students can care for one another.
- The use of relevant literature that address bullying and appropriate relationship.
- Strong relationships between teachers and students, enabling teachers to effectively monitor student issues.
- Excellent pedagogy to ensure safe and supportive classes.

APPENDIX 3

THE BULLYING INVESTIGATION PLAN

An investigation plan is devised. This is a logical progression of actions that aims to be thorough and objective.

1. Identification of the person who will make the final adjudication. (Usually the Principal).
2. Selection of investigator/s to minimise a conflict of interest. Investigations must be neutral, impartial and objective and seen to be so.
3. Collection of preliminary information including the notification documents such as a written complaint.
4. Notification to the parents of the student alleged to have bullied the complainant.
5. Collection of information.
 - a. Names of people to be interviewed listed, including the complainant.
 - b. Selecting a person to write a transcript of the interview.
 - c. Selecting open ended interview questions to ask during interviews.
 - d. A time frame set in which to conduct interviews
6. The order of people to interview determined
7. The interview times determined
8. Obtain other relevant evidence, photos, documents, printed cyber activity.
9. After the initial interview stage, complete a review of the Investigation Plan. A revised plan of the investigation may be prepared.
10. Interview the student alleged of bullying the complainant.
11. Review evidence.
12. Write report.
13. Submit to the person adjudicating the allegation.

Related Policies & Procedures	Person Responsible