



# RIVERMOUNT COLLEGE

*Realising the Potential Within*

## 5.14.01 STUDENT BULLYING POLICY AND REPORTING PROCEDURE

### PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to promote a culture of safety and respect to proactively protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately should bullying occur.

The guiding principles underlying this policy are:

1. Every individual has value in the 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 to engage actively to resolve 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 issues of student bullying to another person at the College, whether student or staff. Bullying of staff by other staff, parents/carers or visitors is reported under 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 \(Cth\)](#)

[The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

**Code of Conduct – Staff 03.07.01**

**Complaints Handling Policy and Procedure 03.16.01**

**Code of Behaviour – Student 05.01.01**

**Disability Discrimination Policy 08.01.02**

**Child Protection Policy 08.03.01**

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

Area: 8.0 Legal and Compliance	Policy: 5.14.01 Anti-Bullying	Current version: E Original Release: April 2011	Page 1 of 10
Reviewed by Compliance Officer: January 2025	Approved by Executive Committee:	Approved by Board of Directors: April 2011	Next Review: 2026 (annual review cycle)

## POLICY STATEMENT

Rivermount College is committed to fostering a culture of safety and respect for all, protecting students from bullying and responding appropriately when bullying occurs.

As part of this commitment, the College will:

- Raise awareness in the school community of what constitutes bullying, how it impacts people and how the College will respond; and
- Develop and promote positive social behaviours, respectful relationships and the skills of resilience and tolerance 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;
- Employ 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 using the principles of procedural fairness; and
- Take appropriate action, which may include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

The accompanying 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 an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).<sup>1</sup>

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

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<sup>1</sup> , Bullying No Way! Australian Education Authorities, 2023, *Understanding Bullying National Definition*, viewed 28 May 2024, <<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/understanding-bullying>>

**Verbal bullying** includes name calling or insulting someone about their physical characteristics such as weight or height, or other attributes including race, sexuality, culture, or religion.

**Physical bullying** includes hitting or otherwise hurting someone, shoving or intimidating another person, or damaging or stealing their belongings.

**Social bullying** includes consistently excluding another person or sharing information, images or other digital content that will have a harmful effect on the other person.<sup>2</sup>

**Cyberbullying** is bullying conducted with the use of technology, like mobile phones or the internet. It can happen on a social media site, game, app, or any other online or electronic service or platform. It can include posts, comments, texts, messages, chats, livestreams, memes, images, videos and emails.<sup>3</sup>

Cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying because:

- it is often difficult for adults to detect;
- the offending post/message may no longer be accessible;
- it is often outside the reach of the College as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones; and
- harmful messages can be communicated to a very wide audience with remarkable speed.

Examples include:

- repeatedly posting personal or private information, pictures, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone (e.g. trolling, flaming, outing/doxing)
- deliberately excluding another from an online text/chat group conversation;
- repeated threats of harm/intimidation or continual inappropriate comments (e.g. cyberstalking);
- pretending to be someone else on a site and/creating fake accounts in their name (e.g. masquerading);
- Photos, messages or pages that don't get taken down even after requests have been made to remove these;
- using artificial intelligence (AI) to generate harmful content.

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

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<sup>2</sup> Bullying No Way! Australian Education Authorities, 2023, *Types of Bullying*, viewed 28 May 2024, <<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/understanding-bullying/types-of-bullying>>

<sup>3</sup>eSafetyCommissioner, 2024, Report Cyberbullying, viewed 28 May 2024, <<https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/cyberbullying>>

## 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 behaviours and how the College will respond.
- Take affirmative action to promote a culture of respect and resilience to help prevent bullying behaviours.
- Aim to participate in national awareness programs (e.g. 'Bullying. No Way!')
- Educate students about what constitutes bullying behaviour including, cyber-bullying and the dangers present online.
- Talk about inappropriate behaviour in the context of the College's values and the Code of Behaviour.
- Employ and promote an effective reporting mechanism for students and parents.
- Educate students and parents on how to respond to bullying.
- Educate employees on how to appropriately and effectively respond to bullying.
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support, consequences and feedback.
- Where appropriate, take disciplinary action to address cyberbullying:
  - that is undertaken on the College premises, at a College activity or by means of use of College technology; or
  - that occurs outside the College but which adversely affects the good order and management of the College (e.g. where the conduct has created, or would likely create a risk of, substantial disruption within the College).

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 reporting 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 regarding their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Model positive behaviour in all interactions with students, parents or other staff members.

Students should:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying, towards others.
- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted teacher, counsellor or senior staff member.
- Actively support students they know are being bullied.
- Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.
- Engage in positive interactions with others and model appropriate interactions at all times.

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, requests for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.
- Report to the classroom/PSC teacher 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 tell a trusted teacher or speak with a member of the Wellbeing Team.
- Reassure their child that it is not their fault.
- NOT encourage their child to hit back or respond verbally.
- Ensure they model positive behaviour in interactions they have with all members of the College community including staff, students and other families.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The College shall take the following steps to prevent and respond to student bullying:

- **Increase Awareness** – The College will regularly raise awareness through the:
  - Promotion of this policy during enrolment interviews and staff inductions.
  - Distribution of the policy via the College website and intranet portals.
  - Promotion of key personnel to support students and families if they are feeling unsafe and/or harassed in any form.
  - Promotion of anti-bullying strategies and delivery of the pastoral care/PSC program

- Provision of the email ([safe2be@rivermount.qld.edu.au](mailto:safe2be@rivermount.qld.edu.au)) as an additional means to request assistance.
- **Training** – The College will regularly educate staff and students about bullying, strategies to counteract bullying and the consequences of this behaviour.
  - The College will promote reporting as acceptable and responsible behaviour.
  - The College Counsellors and Heads of School will coordinate awareness programs, external training and resources.

## 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 in accordance with the College's Behaviour Management Guidelines.

Records may include:

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

## REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR STUDENTS (PARENTS)

### *What can you do if you are being bullied or feel unsafe?*

If you feel bullied, harassed or subject to inappropriate behaviour, you should make it known that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. If the behaviour continues, or if you are unable or unwilling to handle the matter, you should speak to your classroom or PSC teacher, or any other adult working in the school with whom you feel comfortable speaking to.

Remember, everyone has the right to be treated as a worthwhile individual; everyone has the right to an education free from bullying.

If you believe that you are being bullied, you can:

- tell the person who is bullying you that you don't like it and that you want it to stop;
- speak to your parents;
- speak to your teacher or any of the staff members listed below:

Primary School	Secondary School
Classroom teacher	PSC or any other teacher
Counsellor	Counsellor
Dean of Lower/Upper Primary	Year Level Coordinators
Head of Primary School	College Deans
Head of Primary School	Head of Secondary School

You may also email [safe2be@rivermount.qld.au](mailto:safe2be@rivermount.qld.au) to seek assistance from the College.

### **What will happen when you speak to a staff member about bullying?**

- The teacher/staff member will listen to what you have to tell them. They will write down what your complaint is and ask you questions about the behaviour about which you are complaining. They will probably ask questions about behaviour which may have occurred before this incident so as to get some background information.
- The Teacher/staff member will report this information to the Head of School.
- The Head of School or delegate will interview the perpetrator of the bullying by himself or herself, and talk about what affect their behaviour is having on you. They will try and find out if there is a reason why this behaviour is taking place.
- The Head of School or delegate may then wish to talk to both the perpetrator and the victim together so that each of you can express your feelings and reasons.
- The Head of School or delegate will then try to have you both propose solutions to the problem, so that you both feel as if the bullying will cease.
- The Head of School or delegate will then make an appointment to speak with you again approximately one week later to assess the situation. The Head of School will then talk with all people concerned about the current situation.
- The Head of School may involve a College counsellor to provide support and work towards a resolution.
- If the bullying continues either in the same form or a different form, it is essential that you tell the teacher of this. Do not wait for one week before bringing this to someone's attention.

## **COLLEGE RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT BULLYING**

In any incident of anti-social or negative behaviour, 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 the bullying issue to the classroom/PSC teacher. Alternatively, the teacher identifies a pattern of behaviour between the perpetrator and target.

The teacher will document the concerns and report this to the Head of School and where required, a College Counsellor.

### **2. Initial Interview**

The Head of School or his/her delegate interviews the victim and perpetrator 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 that the College does not condone bullying 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
- Exclusion from certain areas of the College
- Detention
- Support from a qualified counsellor
- Internal/external suspension (probationary enrolment notice authorised by the Principal)
- Permanent exclusion (authorised by the Principal)

All members of the College community must be aware that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick to resolve. Throughout the school program, the College will reinforce 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 should feel confident to approach the College with their concerns and are encouraged to work with the College staff so that their children are protected.

## **RESOURCES**

[Student Wellbeing Hub](#)

[Bullying. No Way!](#)

[Be You](#)

## 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* regarding internet use at the College and on school-owned devices.

For Primary and younger 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.

While the College monitors and filters content accessed on school devices, parents may also consider the use of filters and parent controls on personal devices. (Visit <http://www.esafety.gov.au/> to learn ways to be safer online.)

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

- Do not give your usernames, passwords, home address (even suburb), name of school or telephone number to anyone.
- 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 in anger. Be polite in all your online communication and text messages.
- Never open a message from someone you don't know.
- Never arrange to meet someone you met online unless your parents come with you.

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.
- Take a screenshot of messages from cyber-bullies or save them 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. Being a victim to an online bully or predator is not their fault.
- 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's eSafety Commissioner website gives the following advice to young people:

- 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. 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.