



Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

POLICY CATEGORY: STUDENT DUTY OF CARE

POLICY CONTROL INFORMATION

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Table of Contents

POLICY CONTROL INFORMATION	1
1. POLICY OBJECTIVE	3
1.1. Scope.....	3
2. POLICY SECTION	3
2.1. Introduction	3
2.2. Types of bullying and harassment.....	4
2.3. Principles.....	4
2.4. Guidelines.....	5
2.5. Implementation	6
3. POLICY COMPLIANCE	7
3.1. Policy Breach.....	7
3.2. Policy Compliance monitoring	7
4. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION	7
4.1. Worawa Aboriginal College policy and procedure linkage.....	7
4.2. Related legislation.....	8
4.3. Further information	8
5. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL	8

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Worawa Aboriginal College values highly the social, emotional and psychological wellbeing of all students and staff and strongly opposes any form of harassment or bullying designed to jeopardise the safety or security of any student, staff member or parent. This policy aims to outline the types of bullying and harassment that can sometimes occur in a College community and the guidelines and procedures to respond to this type of behaviour.

1.1. Scope

This policy applies to the following:

- Worawa Aboriginal College staff
- Students and boarders
- Partners, carers and guardians
- Visitors, volunteers and contractors
- Board of Directors and Committee Members

This policy applies to all College activities during and outside of College hours, all College and co-curricular programs, excursions and camps, interstate and overseas travel. The policy applies across the College campus.

Our policies are grounded in core values, beliefs and assumptions:

- The Worawa Way pedagogy model is based on the Aboriginal values of Relationship, Responsibility, Respect and Rigour that inform all aspects of College operations. Aboriginal spiritual beliefs in relationship to land and responsibility for Caring for Country are expressed in campus care and development. Along with the core academic program, emphasis is placed on nurturing and celebrating Aboriginal culture as a crucial aspect of student self-esteem and wellbeing. The cultural competence of staff is essential and includes knowledge of Aboriginal culture and respect for the beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal people including respect for the role of Elders as the holders of knowledge wisdom.
- Worawa Aboriginal College Board of Directors will set oversight and monitor policy that is necessary for it to meet all its obligations as the governing authority of our College.
- A collaborative approach is employed with wide consultation with stakeholders at appropriate levels.
- All policy development is designed to foster continuous development and improvement at Worawa Aboriginal College.
- Worawa Aboriginal College will only develop policies that are necessary for implementation of its specific mission and remain mindful of the broader policy environment in which Worawa Aboriginal College exists.

2. POLICY SECTION

2.1. Introduction

The National Safe Colleges Framework defines bullying as 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. In a situation where there is a power imbalance, one person or group has a significant advantage over another, and if this power is misused, this enables them to coerce or mistreat another for their own ends. In a bullying situation this power imbalance may arise from positional or authoritative power, the context (e.g. having others to back you up), from assets (e.g. access to a weapon) or from personal characteristics (e.g. being stronger, more articulate or more able to socially manipulate others).

Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, e.g. the internet or mobile devices. Conflicts or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying.

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

In short, bullying is a repeated pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour, which involves the misuse of power. Cyberbullying is bullying through the internet or mobile devices.

2.2. Types of bullying and harassment

The critical feature that distinguishes violence, harassment and discrimination from bullying is that bullying happens within social relationships, featuring repeated and harmful behaviours that stem from a misuse of power. Violence, harassment and discrimination can occur as part of bullying, but also can occur in one-off conflicts or between strangers.

The definition of bullying has three critical aspects - a repeated pattern, the misuse of power within relationships, and behaviour which causes harm; all three aspects need to be present in order for behaviour to be called bullying.

Bullying can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying can take place in person or online. Bullying - verbal or social - that happens online or via a mobile phone is referred to as cyberbullying.

By bullying we mean any repeated behaviours by one or more persons against another that may hurt, injure, embarrass, upset or discomfort that person. The behaviour is intentional, selective or uninvited.

It can be:

Physical: where fighting, pushing and shoving happens, spitting, invasion of personal space, gestures, forcing people against their will, etc.

Verbal: with someone being called names, being put down, talked about behind their back, or being picked on because of the way they look, or the things they do or are good at, insults, belittling comments. Hurtful comments made to or about a person in regard to physical appearance, size, background, ethnic origins, gender, or sexual orientation.

Visual: where offensive notes, drawings or photos are passed around about someone or posted on the internet, or where graffiti or damage is done to someone's books, bag, artwork, etc.

Psychological: victimisation, stand over tactics, extortion, threatening others, damage to other's property, theft, destroying or interfering with other's property, deliberate exclusion from activities, the setting-up of humiliating experiences.

Sexual: where someone is touched in a way that makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable, or when rude names, or jokes or comments are made about the way a person looks or lives their life.

Body language: where others turn their backs on someone, or use inappropriate gestures to someone.

Rumours: where untrue stories are made up and told to others about someone, or when stories are exaggerated about someone and spread around to others.

Technology: via telephone calls, tablets, mobile phones, email, websites, where verbal or written messages are sent which are insulting, untrue, intimidating or frightening. This can even include publishing photos of members of the College's community without their permission.

2.3. Principles

It is a foundational right of every person to be treated with respect. Bullying is deemed by the College to be a serious breach of expected behaviour. The following are our key principles of our Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy:

- Because of the insidious nature of bullying, the key factor in combating it is the preparedness of those bullied to reveal the fact to a trusted adult who can initiate a suitable response.

- In this light, students at Worawa Aboriginal College have the right to a healthy, happy and supportive environment. Worawa Aboriginal College students do not have to put up with bullying from other members of the community.
- Bullying is judged by its effects on the person being bullied, which can be significantly more serious than the offender may believe in doing the bullying. Psychological bullying is usually far more destructive than physical bullying and may have long term and very serious consequences.
- Every student plays a part in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of others – parents, staff, students and community members. Those who bully others often aim to impress or intimidate bystanders. The reaction of bystanders can either support or discourage bullying from happening. If bystanders do nothing, this can be seen as a form of silent approval. The actions of a supportive bystander can stop or diminish a specific bullying incident or help the bullied student to recover from it. A considered response to bullying can involve a long term process and success is not always immediate. Students, parents and staff need to cooperate fully with strategies suggested.
- However, where bullying is deemed to be of a continued or serious nature, appropriate immediate consequences will be put in place (e.g. suspension).
- Responses of staff to those reporting bullying will be sensitive and supportive. The student bullied should not be made to feel guilty.
- While deploring bullying in all its forms, the College will attempt to assist those who bully to change their behaviour by appropriate counselling and remediation.
- The College will strive to educate staff and students about the non-acceptability of bullying and bystander behaviour and seek to foster a culture that reflects this.

2.4. Guidelines

Students who experience bullying should:

- Inform a member of staff or a person at home in whom they have confidence, e.g. Teacher, Head of Boarding and Wellbeing
- Communicate in an open, honest and on-going way.
- Co-operate with strategies devised to address the issue.

All staff should:

- Be vigilant for signs of distress, changes in mood or patterns of behaviour, bruising, asking regularly for extra money, and damage to clothes or property, and take an interest in their son's social life.
- Be role models themselves in avoiding bullying behaviour
- Advise a senior staff member (e.g. Head of Learning and Teaching or Head of Boarding and Wellbeing) of bullying if a student feels too threatened to do so.
- Be willing to actively participate in and support the College's processes.

Observers/bystanders should support the bullied student by:

- Desisting from joining in or encouraging the bullying behaviour, or recording the bullying behaviour and posting the recorded incident on any form of social media, including, Instagram, Facebook, etc. Students who assemble to watch or remain in a position to watch any act of bullying or harassment may be deemed to be guilty of bullying as well.
- Walking away from the bully and taking the victim with them.
- Calling on the bully to stop their actions, without putting themselves in harm's way and without causing further aggravation to the situation.
- Reporting the matter to a staff member or adult with whom they feel comfortable.

The alleged bully should:

- Discontinue the bullying behaviour.
- Be helped to understand how his words and/or actions have been harmful and to learn from the experience, remembering the College's Student Behaviour Policy and its consequences.
- Co-operate with the strategies devised and expect his parents and subject teachers to be informed if appropriate.
- Be prepared to participate in a Restorative Practice Session, with appropriate adult support and supervision, to repair the relationship between herself and the victim.

The College will:

- Conduct regular surveys where students will be asked to respond to questions about bullying or harassment. The results will be used by the College to identify any potential problem times, places or age groups in an effort to ensure appropriate anti-bullying measures.
- Clearly communicate and enforce the Student Behaviour Policy.
- Offer on-site counselling and/or psychology services where appropriate.

2.5. Implementation

The staff member informed about an alleged bullying incident will make a suitable initial response which includes informing the members of Student Review Committee. Where applicable the following will occur:

- Initial meetings with both parties separately to record the essential details.
- Making an appropriate response to each party to reassure the complainant and to ensure her safety and to curb and prevent further bullying by the alleged bully.
- Where practical, ensuring both parties make a written statement of the incident.
- Fully briefing the next key person in the process (e.g. Head of Learning and Teaching or Head of Boarding and Wellbeing) and, in conjunction with them, devise and implement the appropriate response or strategy.
- Implementing as appropriate the strategies devised for both parties in cooperation with the Head of Learning and Teaching or Head of Boarding and Wellbeing.
- Ensuring that injured students are attended to in First Aid as soon as possible.
- Contacting parents/carers of all parties as soon as possible.
- Ensuring that all notes are filed on Compass.
- Restorative meeting, at the end of the process, if appropriate.

In serious cases, an immediate response may include counselling/mediation as a first response, and may require the isolation/suspension of the offending student.

If the situation remains unchanged a specific strategy will be developed for each case by Head of Learning and Teaching or Head of Boarding and Wellbeing, who may in conjunction with the Principal appoint a specific Case Management Team. Parents will be a part of the process as appropriate. There is a variety of strategies consistent with a restorative practices approach, which may be used e.g.

- Assisting both victim and bully to develop an action plan with a variety of responses to deal with various scenarios.
- Requesting subject teachers to alter or make a seating plan.
- Removing student/s from the yard.
- Assigning a mentor to victim or bully or both.
- Assigning different areas of the yard to the students involved in this incident.
- Referring either victim or bully or both to the Counsellor for additional support and assistance.
- Providing resources to parents of either party to assist them with their daughters.

- Parental involvement either by phone, letter or interview.
- Personalised Behaviour Modification Plan.
- Intensive Individual Counselling.
- Consequences set by the College.

If a student found to have been bullying fails to modify her behaviour appropriately after a first intervention, further steps will follow:

- The next incident will attract a letter to home which outlines the situation, and indicates the next steps if the student re-offends.
- A second incident will attract a second letter which warns the student that a third incident will automatically trigger a review of their enrolment at the College.
- A third incident will result in the student's enrolment being reviewed and may result in an exit from the College.

Staff need to recognise when a strategy is not working; there must be a follow-up system developed with a strategy to establish whether or not the bullying has stopped. In such cases, different strategies will be immediately devised.

Counselling is available to both parties at all stages of the process.

Staff will acknowledge positive gains in students' efforts (both bully and bullied) to change their behaviour.

The College will attempt in the context of its values, to raise awareness of rights and responsibilities of:

- Staff - through appropriate regular meetings where information is exchanged and specific concerns addressed
- Parents / Carers - through telephone and / or written communication.
- Students – through the Curriculum (e.g. in House Groups and cross-curricular activities) and through senior students as leaders in their active support for the policy.

3. POLICY COMPLIANCE

3.1. Policy Breach

All breaches, near misses and implementation risks related to this policy should be reported to executivedirector@worawa.vic.edu.au.

3.2. Policy Compliance monitoring

Compliance with this policy will be monitored by the Principal and Head of Boarding and Wellbeing and this may include independent audits and reviews.

4. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND LEGISLATION

4.1. Worawa Aboriginal College policy and procedure linkage

- Child Safety Code Of Conduct;
- Risk Management Policy;
- Incident Reporting Framework;
- Student Duty Of Care;
- Student Code Of Conduct;
- Student Diversity And Inclusion Policy;
- Student Safety And Wellbeing Policy;
- Student Behaviour Management;
- Student Supervision Policy And Procedure;

- Student Cyber Safety and Internet Usage Policy.

4.2. Related legislation

The following legislation, standards and regulations apply and this policy aligns with these mandated requirements:

- Ministerial Order 870;
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic);
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 (Vic).

4.3. Further information

Further information on this policy can be obtained from the Executive Director.

5. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

This Policy is rated high risk. This Policy will be reviewed annually or more frequently, if required, to keep up-to-date with changes to laws and government policies.

This Policy is to be reviewed by the Executive Director.

Any proposed changes to this Policy must be approved by the Board.