

# Wellington Christian School Policy

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## ANTI-BULLYING

RANGS Reference	3.6.2
Date of Last Review	June 2018
Board approval required	Yes
Owner	Principal

### RATIONALE

Wellington Christian School 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. 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 diminish and/or devalue 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.

Forgiveness and restoration are important aspects of working through bullying in a Christian school and students and parents will be encouraged to forgive (Matthew 6:24, Mark 11:25). Restoration of relationship and reconciliation are also important goals in this process. While often difficult and complex, it is obedient to Christ to practice this (Matthew 5: 23-24, Matthew 5: 44, Romans 12: 18-21, Colossians 3: 12-15).

## **PURPOSE**

This policy applies in all cases of student bullying behaviour, including cyber bullying, that occurs in the school; and off school premises, and outside of school hours, where there is a clear and close relationship between the school and the conduct of the student.

## **THE LEGAL MANDATE**

Wellington Christian School has a 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 Wellington Christian School Anti-Bullying Policy operates in conjunction with the Student Welfare Policy 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'S SLP Telephone (direct line) 02 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:

<b>Physical</b>	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.
<b>Group</b>	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.
<b>Verbal</b>	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.
<b>Victimisation</b>	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.
<b>Sexual</b>	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.
<b>Discrimination</b>	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.
<b>Spiritual</b>	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.
<b>Disability</b>	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.
<b>Cyber Bullying</b>	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 both at and away from the geographical school location.

It can include:

- Annoying/repeated phone calls
- Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures electronically
- Using modern technologies to engage in the social exclusion of someone and in hate group recruitment

- Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages or pictures about someone on the internet
- Identity fraud or other harm
- Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising pictures of themselves
- Covertly filming, recording or taking pictures of someone and posting the images on the internet to cause hurt
- 'Outing' and disseminating confidential or defamatory information about someone
- 'Flaming' and multi-messaging to clog up a person's electronic system and to cause them distress
- Using aliases and pseudonyms in chat rooms and on social networking sites in order to harass and upset
- Engaging in cyber-stalking and the invasion of privacy

### **Indicators of Bullying**

Students who are being bullied or harassed may not want to talk about it with their teachers, friends or with the school psychologist. They may be afraid that it will only make things worse or they may feel that it is wrong to 'tell tales'.

Parents and teachers have an important part to play in helping the school and the student deal with bullying. A change in behaviour in students may be a signal that they are being bullied or they have some other concern. Some signs that a student may be being bullied:

- unexplained cuts, bruises or scratches
- damaged or ripped clothing
- vague headaches or stomach aches
- refusal to go to school
- asking for extra pocket money or food
- tearfulness, anxiety or difficulty sleeping
- 'hiding' information on mobile phones, emails or in comments on their social networking pages

## **PART 2: OUR RESPONSE TO BULLYING**

Wellington Christian School is committed to providing an educational environment in which students are valued and feel secure. Wellington Christian School rejects all forms of bullying.

- (a) The school does not tolerate, condone or trivialise bullying.
- (b) All students and staff have the right to feel and be safe in the school grounds, and when travelling to and from school.
- (c) All students and staff have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity in an environment free from disruption, intimidation, harassment, victimisation and discrimination.
- (d) No student, employee, parent, caregiver or community member should experience bullying within the learning or working environments of the school.
- (e) All members of the school community contribute to preventing bullying by modelling and promoting appropriate behaviour and respectful relationships.
- (f) Each member of the school community has a responsibility to ensure the safety of each other member of the community.
- (g) Victims of bullying, and witnesses to bullying, are encouraged to report the incident.
- (h) All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated according to principles of procedural fairness.

- (i) Cyber bullying which is engaged in while not at school, which impacts upon the learning of any student, will be addressed by the School, in conjunction with parents. The appropriate response will depend on circumstances.
- (j) The school will have a suitable program of education for the prevention of bullying.
- (k) Serious incidents, or threats, of violence may be reported to the Commission for Children and Young People, as required by law; and to the Police, depending on circumstances.

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: RESPONSIBILITIES**

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

<b><i>RESPONSIBILITIES</i></b>	<b><i>EVIDENCE OF COMPLIANCE</i></b>
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	
Implement the policy within the school	PD Program & Calendar
Review the policy in line with Policy Review timetable	Policy Review Schedule
Report to relevant authorities	Records of investigations
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	
Oversee appropriate follow up after investigation	Records of investigations
<b>PRINCIPAL</b>	
Investigate reports and incidents of bullying	Records of investigations
Communicate anti-bullying policy and procedures to teachers	PD Program Staff meetings
Ensure anti-bullying curriculum in teaching programs	Program Registration & Review
Assist class teachers in maintaining anti-bullying behaviours in class	
Ensure students involved in bullying are supported eg. School Psychologist	

**TEACHERS**

Include anti-bullying content in PDHPE programs

Teaching Programs

Devotions program

Promote and enforce anti-bullying behaviour standards within the school

Awareness of the signs of suspected incidents of bullying in students

Promoting a culture of inclusion both in and out of the classroom.

Arriving at class/playground supervision on time

**TEACHERS and OFFICE STAFF**

Awareness of the signs of suspected incidents of bullying in students

Promoting a culture of inclusion both in and out of the classroom.

Respect and support students

Staff Code of Conduct

Model and promote appropriate behaviour

Respond in a timely manner to incidents and reports of bullying

Records of investigations

Support students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact

Teaching Programs

**STUDENTS**

Understand what bullying behavior is

Being aware that bullying is not acceptable in any form

Walk away from a situation where they are being bullied rather than responding in a negative way.

Behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity

Student Code of Conduct

Behaviour Management records

Behave as responsible digital citizens

Behave as responsible bystanders

Report incidents of bullying

**PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS**

Support their children to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible on-line behaviour

Monitoring their children's online activity across all media

Assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour

Being alert to any signs of distress or anxiety, unwillingness to attend school, missing equipment, damaged clothing or bruising

Support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying

Report incidents of school related bullying behaviour to the school

Work collaboratively with the school to resolve incidents of bullying when they occur.

Parent Teacher meetings/  
Information nights

**SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Model and promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual differences and diversity within the school community

Code of Conduct

School publications

Student/ Parent end of year  
satisfaction surveys

## **PART 4: PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

There are a variety of strategies to prevent bullying.

These include a range of curricular and co-curricular strategies, school-wide and year group focused strategies, regular programs and responsive strategies depending on circumstances.

## **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.

### **5.1 Personnel involved and immediate response**

- 5.1.1 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 Principal as soon as possible. At the discretion of the Principal, and depending on the confidentiality and seriousness of the situation, other staff may be involved to assist in the following process.
- 5.1.2 If the situation is volatile, all parties are immediately separated and contained to promote safety and protection.
- 5.1.3 Parents of the students involved will be informed immediately about a matter of serious concern.
- 5.1.4 The suggested process for investigation will be explained to the parents.

### **5.2 Reporting**

When a bullying situation becomes apparent, it is to be reported to the Principal 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 Principal. They may compose a letter or email [admin@wellingtoncs.com.au](mailto:admin@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 Principal. 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 the Principal especially in the event of a mandatory reporting situation.

### **5.3 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 (Refer Bullying Procedures). Generally, this is the longest part of the process and has no time constraint.  
The Process:

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 An investigation plan is devised. (Refer Anti Bullying Procedures).
- 5.3.3 General principles of the investigation process include:
  - 5.3.3.1 Students will be offered a support person during the interview.
  - 5.3.3.2 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.
  - 5.3.3.3 Parents of students involved will be regularly updated about the development of the process.

#### **5.4 Explanation of the Findings of the Investigation**

- 5.4.1 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.
- 5.4.2 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.
- 5.4.3 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.
- 5.4.4 In the event of a police investigation, the school will provide all records pertaining to the investigation.

#### **5.5 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.

#### **5.6 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.

#### **5.7 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. The School will make reasonable effort to promote/encourage reconciliation for the parties concerned.



In a Christian School community, it's important to be prepared to forgive and be reconciled.

In order to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for all, and that bullying ceases, monitoring of relationships will occur after a bullying incident to ensure no re-occurrence. The nature of this will be mutually negotiated and depend of the individual circumstances.

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***

***If your child requires support beyond the School Psychology service, the following options are available:***

##### **Better Access (Medicare)**

The Better Access program (through Medicare) allows people to access up to ten sessions with a Psychologist for mental health treatment. There is still usually a fee to pay, but part of the cost will be covered by Medicare. To access this service, you will need to see your child's GP, who will create a Mental Health Care Plan and make the referral. The school psychologist is available to further explain this process, and can provide a letter to your child's GP outlining concerns in the school environment. A list of local psychologists can also be provided by the school psychologist. 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.

##### **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) Wellington**

Ph: 6881 4000

CAMHS provides cost-free mental health support to children and adolescents up to 17 years of age experiencing moderate to severe behavioural and emotional difficulties. Children can be referred by their parents by calling the number listed above. Alternatively, the school psychologist or your child's GP can complete a referral. Please note that only moderate to severe presentations will be seen by CAMHS, so not all students will be eligible for this service.

##### **Headspace Dubbo**

Ph: 5852 1900

Headspace provides cost-free mental health support to adolescents aged 12-25 years. Service providers include Psychologists and Mental Health Social Workers. An appointment can be made by phoning the number listed above.

##### **National Association of Loss and Grief (NALAG) Wellington**

Ph 6882 9222

NALAG provides counselling support to people of all ages who have experienced some form of loss or grief (e.g., death of a friend or family member, parental separation etc). NALAG also runs support groups. An appointment can be made by phoning the number listed above.

##### ***Crisis/Urgent Assistance***

**In the event of an emergency, dial 000.**

In cases where someone is suicidal, either phone an ambulance or take them to accident and emergency at your local hospital.

##### ***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)**

Available to children and adolescents to talk to someone about anything that's going on in their life. Kids Helpline has phone counselling available 24 hours per day, as well as online text chat 1800 55 1800 or [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

**Eheadspace (ages 12-25)**

Available to adolescents to talk to someone about anything that's going on in their life. Telephone counselling and online chat is available. 1800 650 890 [www.eheadspace.org.au](http://www.eheadspace.org.au)

**Parentline:** Free, professional help for parents and carers of children 0-18 years who live in NSW. 1300 1300 52. [www.parentline.org.au](http://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](http://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](http://www.biteback.org.au)

The Black Dog Institute's site for young people

**Local Family Support Services & Family Counselling**

Interrelate Family Centres Ph: 6815 9650

138 Darling Street Wellington

[www.interrelate.org.au](http://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.*

Related Policies & Procedures	Person Responsible
Student Welfare Policy	Principal
Child Protection Policy	Principal
Anti Bullying Procedures	Principal
Cyber Safety Policy	Principal