

Student Bullying Policy

Policy No. 14

Approved by School Board
September 2022



Rationale

At Kerang Christian College we do not tolerate bullying in any form. All members of our College community are committed to ensuring a caring and safe environment, which promotes personal growth and a positive self-esteem.

We believe all members of our College community have the expectation and right to a safe environment and to be treated fairly with respect and courtesy. We believe these rights have concurrent responsibilities that include accepting others and treating them with dignity and respect.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is when someone is subjected to behaviour that is hurtful, threatening or frightening. It is usually a conscious, planned and a repeated act. It can cause distress at the time or has the potential to be a threat in the future. It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, gesture, telephone, online, extortion and exclusion.

Forms of Bullying (*but not limited to*)

Physical Bullying: Including fighting, pushing, spitting and shoving, pinching, gestures, invasion of personal space or any other unwelcome physical act.

Verbal Bullying: Includes name calling, teasing, offensive language, spreading rumours about others or putting people down or belittling them, their abilities or achievements (behind their backs), picking on people or making degrading or ridiculing comments about their culture, race, physical appearance, gender, religious or social background.

Gesture Bullying: Includes non-verbal threatening gestures, glances which can convey threatening and frightening messages, offensive notes or material, graffiti or damaging other people's property by interfering, stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it.

Phone Bullying: Victims of mobile phone bullying can receive abusive phone calls or text messages from someone who uses threats of violence to scare them. Phone bullying can also include using mobile phones to send photos and images designed to tease, offend or put down others. Mobile phones also have the ability to video others and this footage can also be used to bully others.

Cyber Bullying: Involves students who repeatedly use electronic means with the intention to harass or cause discomfort. Cyber bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, mediums such as mobile phone text messages, emails, phone calls, internet chat rooms, instant messaging and social networking.

- Extortion Bullying: Including standover tactics, bullying others into giving up possessions, picking on others, threats to “get people”, forcing others to act against their will, making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse.
- Exclusion: Includes being left out of activities on purpose.
- Sexual Bullying: Includes taunts about body parts and development; teasing about sexual orientation; notes or pictures depicting sexual content.

What do we do to prevent bullying?

As a school community we endeavour, through a variety of approaches and in collaboration with all the parties concerned (staff, students and parents), to prevent bullying.

All members of the College community have a responsibility to respond to incidents of bullying.

This requires staff to...

- Be role models in word and action, model assertive rather than aggressive approaches to interpersonal interactions.
- Be observant to signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying.
- Make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by patrolling the playground carefully during yard duty.
- Arrive at class and yard duty punctually.
- **Not dismiss classes early**
- Take steps to help victims, listen to concerns, offer support and, if necessary, assistance.
- Follow designated procedures (Refer to “Intervention Procedures”- further steps section).
- Take heed of parental concerns.

This requires students to...

- Refuse to be involved in any bullying incidents. Don’t stand by and watch – fetch help. If you know of serious bullying, tell a trusted staff member. The victim may be too scared to tell.
- If bullying occurs where and when you are present, if appropriate, take some forms of preventative action. Show that you and your friends disapprove.
- Report the incident or suspected incidents, even if you are not directly involved (see “Intervention Procedures” below).
- If you are being bullied, report it immediately. You will be protected from any further bullying and you will allow the bully to be identified and receive support.
- If you know of anyone who bullies, or is a victim, report them immediately. Both the bully and the victim need help. Your action of reporting will lead to a better quality of life for both parties.
- Reporting is not ‘dobbing on your mates’. It is essential for the complete harmony of the Kerang Christian College Community. Stand up for what you know is right. Help minimise bullying!

The College recommends that parents...

- Watch for signs of distress in their children. e.g.: unwillingness to attend school, damaged clothes, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment.
- Advise your child to tell his/her teacher or other trusted staff member about the incident.
- If possible allow your child to report and deal with the problem him or herself.

- Inform the school if bullying is suspected.
- Do not encourage your child to retaliate. This may compound the problem.
- Parents and the offending students are required to attend interviews at school if a continuance of the offence occurs.

Other Preventative Strategies...

Ensure that once a year an awareness raising campaign is carried out by:

- Staff to students (in classroom and curriculum).
- School to parents (via newsletter).
- Staff to staff (through staff meetings and other communication).
- Reviewing this policy.

When staff, students and parents work together, we create a more caring, tolerant and Christian environment at Kerang Christian College.

Intervention Strategies

If you feel you have been or are being bullied begin with:

- Ignoring it. Show outwardly that it doesn't upset you; or
- Confront the bully and as calmly as possible, state that their behaviour or action is unwanted and that you want them to stop and to leave you alone eg. "I don't like it when" Be assertive, look and sound confident; or
- Talk it over with others, such as friends and parents, who may help to make constructive plans; or
- Take the matter to your class teacher, a trusted teacher or other significant adult, where the issue will be dealt with effectively and confidentially; or
- **Report the Bully.** Bullies will not stop if they think they can get away with it. This is not dobbing. You have the right to talk it over in confidence and ask that it not be reported further.

Protocols for dealing with incidents of Bullying and Harassment

Please note – due to the various and at times extenuating circumstances that are part of any behavioural incident, the following are to be read as guidelines only.

The College has a 'no-blame' approach to dealing with bullying and also incorporates Restorative Practice. The aim of the Kerang Christian College Bullying policy is to have the bullying behaviours cease, rather than just taking punitive measures against the perpetrators, although that does not preclude punitive action should the bullying behaviours be extreme or persist.

For any incidents of possible bullying, a member of staff will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps should be taken:

Step One:

Find out the facts

All students identified as being involved in a bullying / harassment incident for the first time will be interviewed by the staff member who observed the incident or to whom it was reported. The staff member will discuss the incident with the students involved, focusing on acceptable behaviour, and will report this to the Head of School and inform the Home Group Teacher. The staff member will document the incident on the School Management system as well as in an Incident Report if necessary.

Step Two:

Head of School or principal or delegate to interview persons involved

This includes the main perpetrators, colluders, bystanders or witnesses. This will allow all to be heard. At this stage the emphasis is on corrective change rather than punishment eg. If a student's bag is damaged in the bullying incident, the offender takes action to repair or replace the bag.

Note: colluders may be those involved in helping the bully or bystanders who witness the bullying episode but make no attempt to report or stop the bullying.

Step Three:

Explain the problem

The problem is explained to perpetrators and colluders and the Head of School clearly states that bullying will not be tolerated. Relevant sections of this Policy may be read and reiterated to make expectations clear.

Step Four:

Share the responsibility

Don't attribute blame, but restate that the perpetrators and colluders can do something about it. Teachers ask about ways the victim may be made to feel better and what action/s are not acceptable now and in the future. A further meeting is arranged to see how things are going.

Step Five:

Meet the perpetrators and colluders again

Reconvene a meeting in a timely manner later to discuss progress of the process. If the bullying has continued, the next step will be for the Principal or his/her delegate to deal with the incident. The parent/s of the student displaying bullying behaviour are invited to the school and informed of the situation and the school's concern with it.

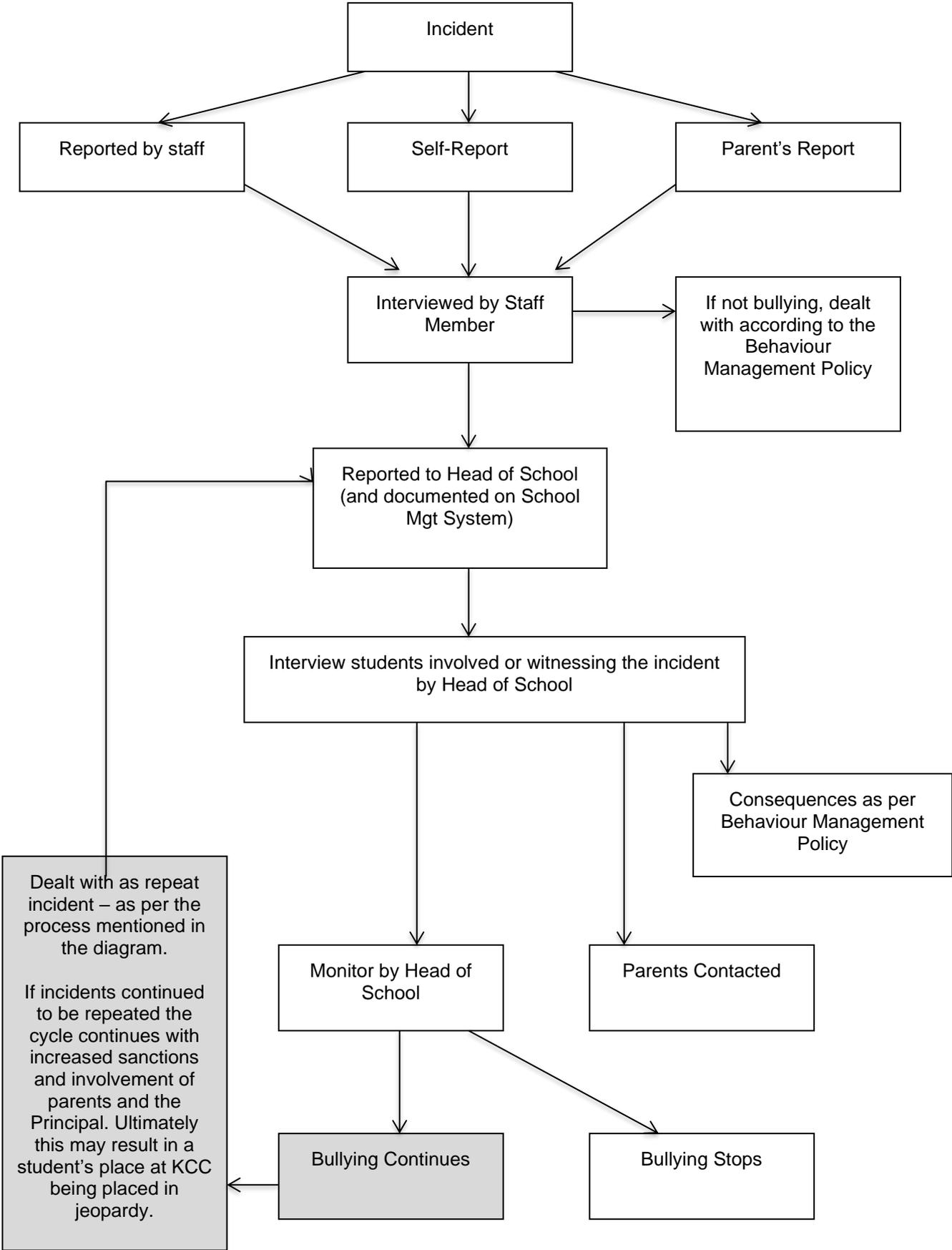
All incidents will be thoroughly investigated. The names of the victim(s) and the person(s) bullying will be recorded and their subsequent behaviour monitored.

Bullying is against the law. The bullied person is entitled to report this to the police. In addition to any School sanctions, any person guilty of bullying may be subject to legal processes.

Repeated Bullying

Students who continue to be involved in ongoing bullying will be interviewed by the Head of School together with their parents and the Principal. Appropriate action, which may include detention, mediation, suspension or expulsion, will be taken.

Protocol Flowchart



Restorative Practice

Restorative Practice is a process that actively encourages students to speak about their actions, consider their effects on others and help decide the best way of repairing any harm. It provides a range of approaches to reduce the harm and to fix “damage” caused by incidents. It is a problem-solving approach, which supports students in their efforts to build personal relationships as a means of overcoming social conflict. Restorative Practice is a process which is authoritative and re-integrative. It stresses high support for students and high personal control. Teachers using restorative practices develop social problem solving skills and empathy in their students.

Kerang Christian College is committed to creating quality relationships through The Principles of Restorative Practice that:

- Develop an awareness in students about the effects of their behaviour on others
- Avoid scolding and lecturing students
- Actively involves students in discussing the reasons and effects of their actions on others
- Addresses behaviour whilst still maintaining a student’s dignity
- Views poor behaviour as an opportunity to learn through problem solving and focusing on the future
- Provide students with a range of future options for behaviour
- Form the basis of classroom management practices at the school

Bullying Consequences

Consequences for bullying by students will be in accordance with the College’s Behaviour Management Policy.

There must be clear consequences for bullying, and if a student is found to be bullying, then he or she will expect some of the following responses or sanctions:

- Written records being kept on the student’s file
- Warnings accompanied by a formal letter to the student and his/her parents
- Consultation with parents
- Repair/replace any damage and parent contact
- Referral to the Head of Primary/Secondary and/or Principal
- Counselling and parent interview
- Exclusion from privileges
- Suspension from school, resuming only on the condition that a formal contract is signed undertaking to cease all bullying behaviour
- Expulsion

Those who bully or harass others are themselves in need of help. This could be by way of assistance with behaviour modification strategies, counselling and the provision of very clear boundaries.

Resources

The Australian Government recognises student well-being and safety are essential for academic and social development. All students should be able to learn and develop in safe, supportive and respectful environments. Australian schools, families and communities all have a responsibility to provide safe online environments and teach children how to use technology in positive and productive ways.

The following resources provide information for teachers, parents, students and the broader community about creating safe online and offline environments.

Student Well-Being Hub

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

is a one-stop shop for information and resources underpinned by Australian Student Wellbeing Framework. The Hub assists school communities to nurture student responsibility and resilience, build a positive school culture, foster respectful relationships and support students who are impacted by anti-social behaviour, including bullying and cyberbullying.

Bullying No Way!

Bullying No Way! – www.bullyingnoway.gov.au is an educational website for Australian school communities and the general public. As well as providing information for individuals, the website provides online curriculum and other resources to support the bullying prevention work of schools. Cybersafety resources and information aimed at children, parents and teachers are provided on the website.

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation—<https://www.amf.org.au/> is a national charity keeping children safe from violence and its devastating impact. The foundation runs innovative programs and initiatives such as; Children Ahead, Buddy Bags, National Centre Against Bullying, eSmart Schools, eSmart Libraries and eSmart Homes.

eSafety Commissioner

The eSafety Commissioner

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/> is a national Cybersafety and Cybersecurity education program designed to promote online safety for all Australians. They encourage participation in the digital economy by providing information and education which empowers children to be safe online. Further information on other Australian Government cybersafety initiatives is available from the:

- For younger children, parents might consider the use of filters, labels and safe zones so they can restrict the sites their child can access or the materials they can receive (see the CyberSmart site at <http://www.cyber.gov.au>) for advice about filters and other ways to restrict access to dangerous materials).
- For younger and Middle School students, parents should consider keeping the computer in a public area of the house, such as the family room, so they can see what sites are being accessed and the type of messages their child is receiving.
- For all young people, parents should be advised to talk to their children about the ways they can protect themselves when using information technologies. For example:
 - to be careful who they give their telephone number to or their online handle;
 - never give out or share personal information numbers (PINS);
 - don't believe everything you read online – just because someone tells you they are fifteen, it doesn't mean they are telling the truth;
 - never send a message to others when you are angry. Remind them that what they write becomes available in cyberspace and cannot be taken back;
 - never open a message from someone they don't know;
 - be polite in all online or text message dealings; and

- never arrange to meet someone they have met online unless they take their parents or (for older children) a trusted friend with them.

The Cybersafety Help Button

The Cybersafety Help Button is a free downloadable resource providing a one-stop-shop for Cybersafety information. The Help Button is easy to install and use, and can be downloaded onto computers and mobile devices. Users have the option to talk to someone about online issues that are of concern, report inappropriate online content or behaviour, and learn about good cybersafety practices. See the Department of Communications and Arts website for more resources—communications.gov.au

Review

The College keeps central records of all reported incidents of bullying. These will be analysed on a regular basis to ascertain major areas where bullying occurs, age of victims and bullies, and which strategies have been successful. A review of the College's policy will be undertaken every 12 months by the Leadership Team, taking into account this annual data.

The National Safe Schools Framework highlights that schools should commit to ongoing data collection, including incidence and frequency of harassment, aggression, violence and bullying to inform decision-making and evaluate effectiveness of policies, programs and procedures.

An important consideration is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. The College will constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and remind staff, parent, carers and students how to counteract bullying, as well as offering programs to improve their emotional intelligence (self-esteem and resilience); students will be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders; and parents need to be confident to approach the school with their concerns, and encouraged to work with the College in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

Responsibilities

The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College's three-year review cycle.

Approved: August 2010
Amended: February 2012¹
Amended: May 2015
Amended: April 2019
Amended September 2022

¹ The 2012 Policy replaces Primary and Secondary Bullying Policy 14a and 14b.