



1. Policy Information

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Approval Authority	Executive
Person/s responsible for policy	Executive

2. Overview

Toongabbie Christian College (the 'College') is committed to educating students about the importance of building respectful relationships consistent with the purpose and values of a Christian community and creating a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all students and staff, where the risk of harm is minimised and the dignity of every member of the College community is respected and upheld. A supportive environment fosters the social, academic, physical, emotional and spiritual development of students.

Consistent with the Statement of Faith and the College values, bullying in any form is considered unacceptable behaviour in the College.

The College recognises the integral role of parents/carers in the prevention and resolution of bullying. All members of the College community including staff, students and parents/carers, share a joint responsibility to identify and address bullying behaviour. A caring, supportive and collaborative culture that promotes positive relationships and reflects the biblical teachings is best equipped to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour in the College.

The College fosters an environment of respect and dignity by ensuring that its values are integrated into all aspects of College life. Students are taught about respectful relationships as part of the Primary and Secondary curriculum. For further information, please refer to *Appendix C and D*.

This Policy must be adhered to when dealing with incidents of bullying of students. A copy of this Policy and Procedures will be placed on the College website. The College may amend the manner in which it discourages and responds to incidents of bullying from time to time.

The College Anti-Bullying Policy operates in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- *Student Code of Conduct*
- *Behaviour Management Policy & Procedures*
- *Student Cyber Safety Agreement*
- *Complaints Handling & Grievance Policy & Procedures.*

For an overview of what constitutes bullying behaviour, please refer to *Appendix A*.

3. Policy

- 3.1 The Principal must ensure that the College has appropriate processes, resources and procedures in place to regulate a safe and supportive environment.
- 3.2 The College will provide regular opportunities for applicable staff to be trained in effective recognition and response to bullying behaviours, which will include the key elements of Digital Citizenship.
- 3.3 The College will provide students with opportunities to learn and develop skills in self-awareness and self-management of incidents of bullying behaviour and other student conflict behaviours.
- 3.4 The College will provide students with regular and explicit instructions on College expectations and the policy and procedures in dealing with incidents of bullying behaviours.
- 3.5 Illegal behaviours that include physical violence, threats of violence, damaging property or stalking may require additional reports to external agencies such as the NSW Police and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.
- 3.6 Reports of a student displaying bullying behaviours can be made to any staff member at the College. A teacher or a member of the Executive will address the reported bullying in a timely manner.
 - 3.6.1 In circumstances where a student and/or parent/carer is of the view that the matter is not being dealt with effectively, they can refer the matter to the Principal/delegate.
- 3.7 Records of incidents relating to a student displaying bullying behaviours will be securely kept by the College and considered when identifying patterns in order to proactively support student wellbeing.
- 3.8 College staff must:
 - 3.8.1 Promote positive and appropriate relationships and behaviours, where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, tolerance and respect are encouraged.
 - 3.8.2 Teach and promote resilience.
 - 3.8.3 Teach and model that all incidents are treated seriously.
 - 3.8.4 Teach and model upstanding behaviour.
 - 3.8.5 Support the College in maintaining a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment.
 - 3.8.6 Assist the College in resolving student conflict situations in a timely and appropriate manner in accordance with the procedures set out in this policy.
 - 3.8.7 Identify and manage incidents of bullying behaviour and where appropriate, escalate matters to the Principal or other appropriate member of the Executive.
- 3.9 College Corporate Staff must:
 - 3.9.1 Promote a caring, supportive and respectful environment in the College
 - 3.9.2 Promptly report to a teacher or an appropriate member of the Executive, any reports of bullying behaviours or student conflict, either received directly or witnessed.
- 3.10 The Executive, including the Principal, must:
 - 3.10.1 Ensure all staff and students are aware of this Policy
 - 3.10.2 Actively promote, teach and model appropriate behaviours
 - 3.10.3 Provide appropriate counselling and support services, as required

- 3.10.4 Ensure that this policy is accessible by parents/carers
- 3.10.5 Recognise and value the partnership between the College and home to prevent and resolve incidents of bullying behaviours.
- 3.11 Students will be encouraged and supported to:
 - 3.11.1 Treat all members of the College community with respect and dignity, respecting individual differences and diversity.
 - 3.11.2 Behave in a manner that upholds the Student Code of Conduct, as outlined in the *Behaviour Management Policy & Procedures*.
 - 3.11.3 Behave as responsible digital citizens.
 - 3.11.4 Support the College and its teachers in ensuring the College remains a safe, inclusive and supportive environment.
 - 3.11.5 Report all behavioural incidents that may amount to bullying behaviour to their teacher, the staff member on duty, or another appropriate member of the College staff.
 - 3.11.6 Remain mindful at all times that there are serious consequences for inappropriate behaviours.
- 3.12 Parents/Carers are encouraged to:
 - 3.12.1 Be aware of this policy and strategies implemented by the College to prevent and respond to bullying.
 - 3.12.2 Help their children understand what bullying is and how it manifests itself.
 - 3.12.3 Help their children understand the legal ramifications and consequences of bullying.
 - 3.12.4 Be alert and proactive regarding their children's wellbeing, particularly to any signs of distress or anxiety.
 - 3.12.5 Educate their children about reporting potential bullying behaviours.
 - 3.12.6 Support their children to become responsible citizens, including in respect of online behaviours.
 - 3.12.7 Recognise and value the partnership between the College and home in the prevention and resolution of bullying and remain calm and assist the College in the process.
 - 3.12.8 Be aware of groups that exist to prevent bullying such as The eSafety Commissioner, Kids' Helpline, Beyond Blue and Bullying: No Way!
 - 3.12.9 Monitor their children's online activity across all media and keep a copy of any evidence of potential bullying and supply it to the College, where applicable.

4. Procedures

- 4.1 When the College becomes aware of a potential bullying incident, it must respond appropriately and consistently with the general process for a bullying allegation. Please refer to *Appendix E*.
- 4.2 While the response will depend on the specific circumstances, the following general procedures will apply to all matters:
 - 4.2.1 All reported incidents of a student displaying bullying behaviours will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively taking into consideration any immediate risks and wellbeing concerns.
 - 4.2.2 In deciding a response process, the College will listen to the complainant and discuss with them the preferred course of action.
 - 4.2.3 All incidents will be investigated and documented by the College. At a minimum, this includes:
 - 4.2.3.a Protecting the rights of all involved, including the student who has allegedly bullied another student
 - 4.2.3.b Interviewing the complainant and the student displaying bullying behaviours separately
 - 4.2.3.c Gathering information from any identified witnesses

4.2.3.d Confidentially retaining a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes.

4.3 Consequences for students who are found to have engaged in bullying behaviours will be in accordance with the College's *Behaviour Management Policy & Procedures*, appropriate for their age and level of understanding. These students will also be offered support and guidance for correction of their behaviour to mitigate against repeat incidents.

4.4 Where possible, restoration of peer relationships and reconciliation will be considered as part of addressing bullying behaviour.

4.5 Parents/Carers will be kept informed and may be asked to attend a meeting in relation to the bullying behaviour.

4.6 Where required and deemed appropriate, the Police Liaison Officer may be consulted and invited to meetings with students and/or their parents/carers.

4.7 Repetition of bullying behaviours may lead to suspension, or in the most serious cases, expulsion from the College.

4.8 The principles of procedural fairness will govern the response process. This includes:

4.8.1 Providing details of the allegation to the student subject of the allegation or incident taking into consideration the importance of maintaining confidentiality of witnesses.

4.8.2 Explaining the process by which the matter will be handled to relevant parties.

4.8.3 Providing an opportunity for the student subject of the allegation to respond to the allegations.

4.8.4 Making available to students and parents/carers, policies and procedures under which disciplinary action may be taken.

4.8.5 Where appropriate, offering the student subject of the allegation, a support person to attend meetings and/or interviews.

4.8.6 Providing information about the appeal process in accordance with *Complaints Handling & Grievance Policy & Procedures*.

4.9 The College must retain records relating to all alleged bullying incidents and stored confidentially.

4.9.1 Access to the file is only in accordance with applicable State or Commonwealth legislation or for appropriate professional reasons by authorised persons.

4.9.2 The level of detail of records will depend on the level of complexity of the bullying incident. At a minimum, the file should contain:

4.9.2.a Information gathered.

4.9.2.b Outcome/s of the alleged bullying investigation, including whether the complaint was substantiated and the resulting actions (if any).

4.9.2.c The steps that were taken to manage the reported bullying incident.

4.9.2.d The steps that were taken to implement, follow up and monitor outcomes.

4.10 All parties to a bullying incident must maintain confidentiality and treat confidential any personal information about students, their families or other persons respectfully.

4.10.1 Sharing of confidential and personal information with external persons or agencies may only occur within the established guidelines for such communication and in accordance with any relevant legislation relating to the provision of such information.

4.10.2 The DPP/DPS and/or Principal has the discretion to share information with relevant staff to manage student interactions across College activities.

5. References

- Prepared in consultation with Integro Partners
- Department of Education New South Wales – *Bullying of Students - Prevention and Response Policy*



WHAT IS BULLYING?

S23: APPENDIX A

Bullying is a pattern of uninvited ongoing behaviour directed by a person or group to intentionally or unintentionally hurt, injure, embarrass and/or distress another person or group. Bullying can be physical, verbal, psychological or social. Bullying behaviour can also involve intimidation, victimisation and harassment, including that based on gender, race, religion, disability or sexual orientation, both online and offline. Bullying can be illegal if it involves behaviours that include physical violence, threats of violence, damaging property or stalking. Bullying can happen in person or online and can be obvious or hidden.

Bullying behaviour has three key features:

- it involves intentional misuse of power in a relationship
- involves ongoing and repeated behaviours
- it involves behaviours that cause harm and distress to the person who is being bullied and may negatively impact others, for example, their family, friends and witnesses.

Bullying can take many forms, all of which can cause distress. Examples of bullying include:

- **Physical:** hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others
- **Verbal:** teasing, using offensive terms and names, spreading rumours, belittling
- **Non-verbal:** using digital communication technology such as email or text messaging to hurt others, using rude gestures, making inappropriate facial gestures, writing offensive and hurtful notes or graffiti about others
- **Extortion:** threatening to take someone's food or money or other possessions
- **Exclusion:** deliberately excluding a person or a group from a community event or a group, refusing to sit next to someone, shunning people out of groups, clubs and meetings
- **Property:** stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property
- **Cyber:** posting material (in any form – photos, print) on a website or sending via the internet or any technological device which identifies, bullies, embarrasses or harasses individual students, groups, parents/carers and families, staff or others in the College community. This applies both at and away from the geographical College 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, disseminating or sharing information, photos or videos without the victim's permission with the intent to cause hatred
 - Inappropriate digital and social networking.



Examples of available support services include, but are not limited to:

Police Liaison Officer

Quakers Hill & Blacktown LAC

Telephone 02 8805 4744

OR

Parramatta LAC

Telephone 02 9633 0799

The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner offers a complaints scheme for children who are suffering from serious cyber-bullying. By contacting the Office, they may request to have content removed if social media companies do not remove the offending content after it has been reported to them. The Office website is www.esafety.gov.au.

Counselling and Support

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 College and families will need to make their own enquiries. However, we hope this helps:

Access to Allied Psychological Services - Children's Mental Health Service (ATAPS)

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/carers of children up to 12 years experiencing behavioural and emotional difficulties. The program allows GPs, paediatricians and College counsellors to refer children to participating local mental health professionals. If your child requires support beyond the College counselling service, your GP may be able to arrange a referral to a local ATAPS provider.

Better Access (Medicare)

Through the Better Access initiative (Medicare), referring health practitioners 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 review eligibility to access 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 the Accident & Emergency Department at your local hospital. For students, you can take them to the Accident & Emergency Department at the Children's Hospital, Westmead.

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, the Kids Helpline has phone counselling 24/7 as well as online text chat

1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelpline.com.au

Eheadspace (ages 12-25)

To talk to someone and discuss advice about tough issues

1800 650 890 or www.eheadspace.org.au

Parent Line

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

1300 1300 52 or www.parentline.org.au

Websites

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

Australian resource for parenting newborns to teens

Beyond Blue: <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

Beyond Blue contains information, resources & support for dealing with depression and/or anxiety.

Bite Back: www.biteback.org.au

The Black Dog Institute's site for young people

Local Family Support Services & Family Counselling

Hills Family Centre: Phone (02) 8805 7288

Quakers Hill Family Centre: Phone: (02) 9626 6620

Centacare Blacktown: www.centacare.org.au & follow links to the local area

The College does not take responsibility for the accuracy of this information.



PRIMARY BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

S23: APPENDIX C

Primary School Programs

- Devotions focus on caring for one another.
- Discussions during shared book experiences on relevant issues as per the Responding and Expressing outcomes of English, as appropriate.
- Cybersafety Agreements - Class teachers discuss these in detail.
- Assembly talks about the variety of ways students can care for one another.
- Strong relationships between teachers and students, enabling teachers to effectively monitor student issues.
- Excellent pedagogy to ensure safe and supportive classes.

Early Stage 1 & Stage 1

- Biblical focus in Kindergarten is on kindness. This focus is woven throughout all KLA's.
- *You Can Do It!* focusing on Social Emotional Learning, taught during PDHPE Lessons.

Stage 2

- Parent Information Sessions provide parents/carers with teaching on Cybersafety.
- *You Can Do It!* focusing on Social Emotional Learning, taught during PDHPE Lessons.
- Year 4 camp have a strong focus on team-building and working together.
- Some classes use the SEAL strategy as outlined in *Queen Bees & Wanna Bees* for settling disagreements.
- SEL small-group programs target students who have experienced difficulty with anxiety, social skills, grief and loss.

Stage 3

- *You Can Do It!* focusing on Social Emotional Learning, taught during PDHPE Lessons.
- Parent Information Sessions address specific issues such as Cybersafety and mental health.
- Year 5 camp have a strong focus on team-building and working together.
- Year 6 camp focuses on positive relationships including encouraging one another and inclusive behaviours.
- Grade meetings addressing specific topics.
- SEL small-group programs target students who have experienced difficulty with anxiety, social skills, grief and loss.



SECONDARY BULLYING PREVENTION PROGRAMS

S23: APPENDIX D

Secondary School Programs

- Blacktown Police Liaison Officer Presentations each year. One hour presentations to Years 7 – 9 and Years 10-12.
- Liaison between the Blacktown Police Liaison Officer, Principal and DPS regarding advice on bullying situations.
- Years 7 – 10 PDHPE syllabus content that deals with bullying.
- Biblical Life Studies/Wellbeing lessons for Years 7, 9-12.
- Family Group/Homeroom discussions.

Stage 4

- Two gender-based meetings led by the Homeroom teacher, with topics including defining bullying, the different types of bullying preferred by boys and girls and the nature of cyberbullying.
- Stage 4 presentations on bullying led by the Counselling Services.
- *Building Positive Relations* program.
- Year meetings.
- Years 7 and 8 camps.

Stage 5

- A variety of wellbeing events are held throughout the year to advise and educate students on the nature and forms of bullying, as well as its consequences.
- Biblically-focused wellbeing/relational discussions to take place in Family Group.
- Year meetings to address issues as relevant to the particular cohort.
- Years 9 and 10 camps.

Stage 6

- Year 11 and 12 camps with a focus on considering aspects of post-school relationships and responsibilities with groups such as employees, employers and tertiary educational institutions.
- Devotions in family groups.
- Year meetings to address issues as relevant to the particular cohort.



GENERAL PROCESS FOR ALLEGED BULLYING INVESTIGATION

S23: APPENDIX E

Step 1: Staff involved and immediate response

Where an alleged situation arises, is observed by a teacher, is witnessed by a student and/or reported by a parent/carer, the staff member will refer the incident to the HoJP/HoSP or DPP; DoS7-9/DoS10-12 or DPS, as soon as possible. At the discretion of the College, with reference to confidentiality considerations and the seriousness of the situation, other staff may be involved to assist in the following process.

In situations where there is an immediate or imminent risk to the safety and wellbeing of another person, all parties must be separated. The College must ensure appropriate supervision and maintain its duty of care towards each student, including considering whether immediate counselling support is required.

The College will inform parents/carers of the students about any matter of serious concern.

Step 2: Reporting

Reports of alleged bullying incidents should be made in accordance with the Hierarchy of Contact as per the *Complaints Handling & Grievances Policy & Procedures, Appendix B*.

Teachers should not conduct an investigation without the approval of the HoJP/HoSP and DPS.

In all cases, the DPP/DPS will be informed.

Step 3: Investigation

Once a report has been made, student interaction and wellbeing will be prioritised while an investigation takes place.

Depending on the nature of the alleged bullying, the investigation will be led by the HoJP/HoSP or DPP; DoS7-9/DoS10-12 or DPS or a delegate. The investigator will conduct the investigation in a prompt and reasonable manner.

The Process:

- Selection of an investigator/s to minimise a conflict of interest and to ensure the investigation remains neutral, impartial and objective.
- The investigator will conduct the investigation in accordance with the principles of procedural fairness including the hearing rule and the right to an unbiased decision.
- The investigator will give consideration to the privacy and confidentiality of those involved including witnesses, as appropriate.
- The investigator will devise an investigation plan.

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.

An Investigation Plan requires:

- Identification of the decision maker (usually the Principal).
- Collection of information including the notification documents such as a written complaint.
- Notification to the parents/carers of the student alleged to have bullied the complainant.
- Process of collection of information:
 - names of people to be interviewed listed, including the complainant
 - selecting a person to record meeting/interview notes
 - formulating interview questions to ask during interviews
 - conduct interviews in a timely manner
 - obtain other relevant evidence, photos, documents, printed cyber activity etc.
- At any stage of the investigation, the investigator may revise the investigation plan, as required.
- A written report will be submitted to the DPP/DPS, who then presents it to the person adjudicating the allegation.

Step 4: Explanation of the Findings of the Investigation & Consequences

A meeting is arranged between the investigator, decision maker and the parents/carers of the alleged victim to discuss the process and findings of the investigation, as well as any reasonable supportive measures.

A meeting is arranged between the investigator, decision maker and the parents/carers of the student who is allegedly displaying bullying behaviours to discuss the process and findings of the investigation.

If the allegation is sustained, the consequences will be discussed with the parents/carers and the student. The student involved will be 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.

Where required and deemed appropriate, NSW Police may be consulted and invited to meetings with students and/or their parents/carers.

Once a decision is made, an outcome will be determined. The outcome will depend on the severity of the incident. The College will protect the privacy of students insofar as it is practical and appropriate taking into consideration principles of procedural fairness. 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 5: Appeal Process

In the event of a parent/carer being dissatisfied with the process or outcome of the investigation, the parent/carer is to be directed to the College's *Complaints Handling & Grievance Policy & Procedures*.

Step 6: Process of Reconciliation

Once discipline has been completed, the relevant parties may be provided with an avenue to begin a reconciliation process, in a controlled environment, with appropriate support. This will only occur if both parties and their parents/carers grant consent.