The RIVER SCHOOL
Neohumanist Education For Life

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur. This policy outlines the procedures and programs in place at The River School to ensure we provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment free from bullying in all its forms. Bullying, including cyber bullying, is not acceptable in this school and will be dealt with seriously.		
Scope	This policy applies to students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements and visitors. It deals with bullying behaviours within the school grounds, classroom, on the bus, and when representing the school in public, on camps and school excursions.		
Responsibility	School Principal		
References	Student Behaviour Management Policy (2026) Child Risk Management Strategy (2026) Code of Conduct Policy (2026) Classroom Restorative Process (2023) The River School Code (2023) Complaints Handling Policy (2025) Complaints Handling Process (2025) Inclusion Policy (2025) Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth) Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth) Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2017		
Status	Approved	Supersedes Bullying Prevention Policy March 2025	
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Review Cycle	Annually	Version ID BPP2026	
Authorisation	Board Chair		Date of Authorisation April 2026
Policy Owner	AME Ltd Board		

Policy Statement

The River School has a zero tolerance approach to bullying.

The River School is committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

In order to prevent bullying from occurring, The River School will implement the following actions:

- Raise awareness of the school community's shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at the school
- Develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, The River School will:

- Develop an appropriate mechanism for students and parents to report bullying
- Educate students and parents on how to respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying, and how to then report all incidences of bullying
- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to reports of bullying
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying
- Take appropriate action, which might include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

1. Definitions

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It is important that staff, students and parents have a shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at The River School.

- **Bullying**: is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:
    - dominating or hurting someone
    - unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power
    - a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation

  It can occur at any age, across cultures, genders and socioeconomic groups. It can happen in the playground, toilet areas, to and from school or in the classroom.
- **Physical bullying**: this is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying
- **Verbal bullying**: repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse
- **Covert bullying**: such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone
- **Psychological bullying**: for example, threatening, manipulating or stalking someone
- **Cyber bullying**: using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically

2. Responsibilities

The River School acknowledges its responsibilities to:

- Raise awareness of bullying and how the school will respond to it

- Take action to help prevent bullying
- Implement a reporting mechanism for students and parents — see Complaints Handling Procedure.
- Educate students and parents on how to respond to bullying and how to report it
- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to bullying
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support and consequences

2.1. Employee Responsibility

(including classroom teachers, aides, relief staff, extra-curricular teachers, support teachers, practicum students)

At *The River School* employees have a responsibility to:

- Uphold and consistently apply this Policy
- Respond appropriately to reports of bullying, including by investigating and acting upon reports of bullying, and by providing appropriate support and consequences in accordance with this Policy and the Complaints Handling Procedure.
- Explicitly teach and provide opportunities to practice our School's Virtue Program (Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Compassion, Service, Love, Contentment, Simple Living, Knowledge and Courage).
- Teach and build understandings around the School's Neohumanist philosophy, which fosters "love and respect for all, regardless of culture, religion, race or nationality, and for animals and plants and the earth's ecosystems."
- Create and maintain positive, nurturing relationships between students, students and teachers, and teacher and parents. Teachers are to be approachable and model calm, positive behaviours.
- Encourage students to problem solve using a Restorative Practice approach – solving conflict through conversation without shame.
- Be a safe and available person for students to help them report bullying behaviours. Offer immediate support and a clear outline what will happen now.
- Ensure students feel safe and secure; be observant of relationships and how students are interacting. Watch for early signs of distress in students.
- Use a Restorative Practice approach to bullying and be consistent when dealing with bullying behaviours.
- Listen to student and parent concerns, investigate any reports and deal with bullying situations in consultation with the Principal and /or Deputy.
- Provide follow up and ongoing support as required, to students who are affected by the bullying.
- Explicitly teach and provide opportunities for discussion around bullying behaviours, how to seek help and know what support is available, using a combination of School provided and teacher made resources
- Educate all students with regard to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.

2.2. Student Responsibilities

At *The River School* students have a responsibility to:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others
- Report bullying occurring to them or others
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Bullying Prevention Policy and the Complaints Handling Procedure for students.

- Practice our School's Virtue Program (Respect, Responsibility, Honesty, Compassion, Service, Love, Contentment, Simple Living, Knowledge and Courage)
- Treat others as you would like to be treated
- Work towards solving problems yourself using a restorative approach, practise resilience and stand up for yourself in an appropriate way
- Include others in activities when you can so no one feels left out
- Take responsibility for your words and actions. Be honest and own up to mistakes
- Tell a trusted adult if you are being bullied
- If you notice something that is not right, let a teacher know
- Don't be a bystander; if you see something is happening get help.
- Make it clear to peers that bullying is not accepted

2.3. Parent Responsibilities

At The River School parents have a responsibility to:

- Encourage their child not to bully others
- Encourage their child to report bullying to themselves or others
- Encourage their child to take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Policy and the Complaints Handling Procedure for students.

Parents are also encouraged to:

- Be a good role model for your child and talk to your child in a positive manner.
- Monitor online activity, abiding by the age limit restrictions on social media sites.
- Talk to your child about any issues and about their day and let the School know if your child is upset.
- Support the School's Behaviour Management Policy Code of Conduct and Restorative Processes and consequences
- Be prepared that your child might be the problem and work with the School to problem solve.
- Encourage your child to embrace the Neohumanist philosophy of our School "love and respect for all, regardless of culture, religion, race or nationality, and for animals and plants and the earth's ecosystems."
- Teach your child to be assertive in an appropriate way.
- Work with your child to understand there are two sides to a story.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with the School staff and administration.
- Report any concerns your child or you may have around bullying behaviours
- Report signs of bullying, which may include:
    - Unwillingness to attend school
    - A pattern of vague headaches, stomach-aches or feeling ill in the morning
    - Personal items or equipment have gone missing
    - Damaged clothing or bruising
    - Becomes withdrawn, refuses to talk about what is wrong
    - Expresses threats to hurt self or others
    - Asking for extra tuck-shop money or food
    - Hiding information on mobile phones or from social network sites

Note: See more detailed information in appendix – Signs of Bullying [Bullying No Way!]

2.4. Principal Responsibilities

- Ensure annual review of this Policy.
- Ensure parents/caregivers are aware of the Bullying Prevention Policy, School Behaviour Management Policy, Flowchart, Complaints Handling Procedure and the School Code of Conduct.
- Communicate with, and provide support and guidance, for all relevant parties.
- Report bullying behaviours to parents of all students involved.
- Provide to the School Board, updates each term using data and trends in relation to bullying reports.

3. Prevention Programs

Creating caring communities, teaching social and emotional skills and taking time to develop positive relationships are proven, powerful deterrents to bullying. At *The River School* we endorse a whole school approach to bullying prevention incorporating a variety of programs and strategies including:

- Peer support/ buddy programs
- Educational programs to train and support students, staff and parents in identifying and preventing bullying
- The clearly written procedures within this Policy outlining how the school will respond to, and deal with incidents of bullying
- Alignment of this Policy with the *Behaviour Management Policy* and *Framework*
- Support and follow up for both the student being bullied and the perpetrator
- Staff awareness so that that there is a high level of vigilance, but not over-reaction
- High Alert Supervision in known problem areas of the playground
- A variety of lunchtime clubs available to students with teacher supervision e.g. Japanese, art, and sport
- Explicit teaching of how to play, share and be inclusive and respectful of differences
- Explicit teaching of social and emotional skills to assist self-knowledge and regulation, meditation and mindfulness (CASEL — Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning)
- Following a Restorative Practice approach to assist students work through conflict and repair relationships
- Daily Inner Me session and virtues practise
- Regular class discussions, videos, stories, role plays and circle time
- Explicitly teaching strategies to deal with bullying, including how to seek help and awareness of supports available if bullied
- Documentation of all bullying incidents and how they were handled.

4. Responses to Bullying and Intervention Strategies

The River School uses a Restorative Practice approach to conflict resolution and endorses The Bullying. No Way! website for Australian schools (managed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group) effective school responses to bullying incidents:

- Solution-focused
- Relationship-based
- At the school level, the class level, the student level, and

- Restorative Community Conference for serious incidents – using trained personal
- Based on strong links between the School and parents.

If a student report bullying to you [Reference – Bullying No Way! Updated 19/6/23]

- Reassure them that you will try to help them.
- Avoid minimising the issue or saying dismissive things that imply the issue is not important.
- Find a suitable place to talk or make a time to discuss the problem privately.
- Ensure that your voice is calm and your body language is open as you listen.
- Listen without interrupting, using only encouraging questions or sounds to show you are listening.
- Only after you have heard their whole story should you ask specific questions if you need more details.
- If they haven't already told you, ask the student when, how and where the bullying happens, including:
    - what words have been said or written
    - has anyone been physically hurt and how
    - who is usually around
    - who else have they told about this
    - if it is happening online, ask if there is any evidence of what has happened.
- Ask questions to help you distinguish between single incidents of conflict and an ongoing pattern of bullying.
- Write down the information or ask an older student to write down the details themselves and give it to you.
- Reassure the student it's never okay to be bullied.
- Reassure the student it is not their fault that the other person is behaving in such a way.
- Praise the student for speaking out, acknowledging that talking about it takes lots of courage.
- Ask the student what they want you to do and whether they want you to do anything at this stage.
- If they want your assistance to stop the bullying, tell them you will follow your school's policy for investigating and responding to their report.
- Reassure them that the school takes this seriously and advise when you will get back to them.
- Ask the student if they feel safe in the short term in case you need to take preventative safety measures.

5. Reporting and Monitoring Bullying

Bullying is viewed as a major breach of the School rules and behavioural expectations and therefore follow up action will align with our School Behaviour Management Policy and Framework. The School's immediate response to any incidents of bullying will involve a member of staff dealing with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps will be taken:

5.1. Identification

A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problem to a teacher who notifies the Principal or Deputy Principal.

5.2. Initial interview

The Principal, Deputy or nominated teacher interviews the bullied student and perpetrator separately and records the details of the incident in writing. If both parties agree to meet together, the Interviewer, using

Restorative Practice dialogue (see Behaviour Management Policy), discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. They then work with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer supports students to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the bullied student feels safe and supported and the perpetrator is prepared to stop the bullying behaviour. The bullied student understands what support is available for them and that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame, or to punish; but to support the 'harmed' and make the perpetrator aware of School policies, taking responsibility for their behaviour and of the consequences if the bullying behaviour does not stop.

5.3. Follow-up

Follow up support is provided in the form of formal and informal check-ins, increased awareness and monitoring of student interactions in the playground and classroom. Notifying all teachers of students involved and being proactive in assisting the cessation of the bullying behaviours through revisiting activities to remind and teach students how to maintain positive relationships and repair relationships in a kind and compassionate manner.

5.4. Repeated Bullying

If the incident or similar bullying behaviour is repeated or the problem continues - both parties will be interviewed separately by the Principal or Deputy. Following individual meetings, the 'harmed' and perpetrator may meet together with the Principal or Deputy, if the 'harmed' feels safe enough to do so, and the perpetrator agrees to engage in restorative dialogue designed to make them aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects their bullying behaviour is having, and makes suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict.

Other students may be interviewed to provide supporting evidence if deemed appropriate and necessary.

The Principal or Deputy documents all interviews and notifies both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies and consequences that have been determined.

If a solution to a particular problem is not found, the School may consider the use of an outside person, such as a trained mediator, to assist in reaching a resolution.

5.5. Reinforce (above), employ sanctions

If the agreed strategies and consequences do not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warning to cease bullying behaviour
- Implementing a Behaviour Support Plan (joint agreement with student, parents & school)
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- Conditions put in place during play breaks
- Internal Suspension
- External Suspension (1 – 5 days)
- Exclusion for a period of time to be determined (up to 12 months)
- Permanent exclusion

Note: If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in the school's Child Protection Policy then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

An important consideration for schools, teachers, parents and students is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. Schools need to constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and to remind students how to counteract bullying, as well as offering programs to lift self-esteem and resilience; students need to 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 schools in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

6. Cyber-Bullying

Cyber bullying is causing harm via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices. [1.]

Cyber bullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge "audience" and the bully can remain anonymous.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the awfulness of their behaviour.

Cyber bullying can be difficult for adults, who may not be as technologically savvy as their children, to detect and monitor. It is often outside the reach of schools as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones.

The School's Bullying Prevention Policy is equally applicable when using technology. Some examples of cyber-bullying, which are unacceptable at any time, whether at or away from School are listed below. In extreme cases, this kind of bullying may be referred to the Police.

- Sending a text message to another student containing threats, swearing or insults or inciting anti-social behaviour.
- Sending an email containing destructive gossip / rumours about another student
- Creating a social media profile impersonating another student
- Sending / posting / uploading picture/s or video of students or teachers at School without their consent
- Threatening or swearing at an opponent via online games

1. *Reference: The King's School Anti-Bullying Policy*

7. Protecting Young People from Cyber-Bullying

As for other forms of bullying, there is no one approach that will always work for cyber-bullying. Schools need to educate students and families about cyber-bullying and about a range of Internet safety approaches to provide the best overall protection against cyber-bullying. Schools might supply parents with the following advice:

- 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 https://esafety.gov.au/ for advice about filters and other ways to restrict access to dangerous materials).

- 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 passwords and 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 post 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.

If a child reports he/she is being bullied on-line 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;
- Not to erase or delete messages from cyber-bullies 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. It is important that they understand that it's not their fault; and
- 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.

Note: For additional information see Appendix 2 — Reporting Cyber Bullying

8. The Role of the School with Cyber-Bullying

Because cyber-bullying often occurs outside of school it is difficult for schools to control. In most cases, however, cyber-bullying should be treated similarly to other forms of bullying. The most important thing schools can do is to educate students about cyber-bullying and the dangers online and talk about inappropriate online behaviour in the context of Section 6 of this policy and the School's Behaviour Management Policy.

The Australian Government Online Safety site gives the following advice to young people about dangers online:

- Set your online profile to private or 'friends only'

- Have a different password for each social networking site so that if one password is stolen, not all of your accounts will be at risk

- Think before you post – expect that people other than your friends can see the information you post online. Remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed.
- Don't post information that would make you or your family vulnerable – such as your date of birth, address, information about your daily routine, holiday plans, or your children's school
- Regularly check your privacy and security settings on your social networking profile, never give away your account details, and regularly update your computer security software
- Use strong passwords and change them regularly – the personal information you put in your social networking profile may be used by scammers to guess your passwords
- Don't share your personal information in an email, SMS or on a social networking site with people you don't know and trust
- Don't accept a friend request or follow a request from a stranger – the best way to keep scammers out of your life is to never let them in.
- 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
- Remember, you will not get into any trouble by letting people know what you have stumbled across.
- 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.

9. Additional Resources

https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/

https://kidshelpline.com.au/kids

https://www.esafety.gov.au/

https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/

Restorative Practice dialogue, resources and strategies
http://www.rpforschools.net/

https://nsw.childsafetyhub.com.au/safe-schools-for-parents-what-to-do-about-bullying/

Commonwealth legislation relevant to bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence include:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984