

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

What you need to know

- Mount Annan Christian College desires to facilitate a unified and peaceful community that treats each other as we would like to be treated – with dignity, respect, honesty, and grace.
- Bullying of students is not tolerated at any time.
- All students have the right to learn, and all teachers have the right to teach in a safe and caring environment that promotes self-worth and personal growth.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the College community to play an active part in ensuring that everyone is treated with respect.

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Vision Statement

To provide a Christ-centred learning environment that empowers each individual to enjoy a life of purpose.

Purpose

This policy seeks to embed a unified and peaceful community as part of our College culture that treats each other as we would like to be treated – with dignity, respect, honesty, and grace. Bullying of any College community member is unacceptable. All students have the right to learn and feel safe in the learning environment. All teachers have the right to teach in a safe and caring environment that promotes self-worth and personal growth. All members of the College community are responsible for playing an active part in ensuring that everyone is treated with respect, kindness, and tolerance.

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The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote a safe, supportive, and positive environment free from threat, harassment, and any type of bullying behaviour.
- show commitment to overcoming bullying by practicing zero-tolerance.
- inform students and parents of the College's expectations and to foster a productive partnership which helps to maintain a bully-free environment.
- educate students, parents, and staff about the causes, nature, effects, and prevention of bullying.
- provide support for victims of bullying.
- ensure that the perpetrators of bullying behaviour understand and accept responsibility for their behaviour and receive appropriate discipline and rehabilitation in accordance with our Student Management policies.

Scope

The College has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying at all levels in our community. We seek to implement intervention strategies and programs of instruction to minimise bullying at all levels of our community. All bullying incidents will be treated seriously with a response appropriate to the circumstance.

Definition

Bullying is repeated intimidation over time of a physical, verbal, or psychological nature of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons.

Three important points in this definition are:

- Power – People who bully may acquire power through various means: physical size and strength, status within a peer group, and recruitment within the peer group so as to exclude others.
- Frequency – Bullying is not a random act. It is characterised by its repetitive nature whereby the children who are bullied not only have to survive the humiliation of the attack, but live in constant fear of its re-occurrence.
- Intent to harm – Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical and emotional harm however, is a deliberate act. It puts the person who is bullied in a position of oppression by the person who bullies.

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Examples

Some examples of bullying may include:

- Any form of physical violence towards others.
- Invasion of another's personal space with the intent to intimidate.
- Using offensive names, teasing, or spreading rumours about others or their families or friends.
- Using put-downs such as negative nicknames or belittling others' abilities, achievements, or efforts.
- Ridiculing or suppression of others because of their race, gender, religion, social grouping, physical appearance, or dress sense.
- Writing offensive notes, emails, or graffiti about others.
- Using a third person or group to influence others against someone.
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group, conversation, or event.
- Using stand-over tactics or threats to intimidate others.
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging, or destroying it.
- Making sexually suggestive comments or gestures or telling sexually oriented jokes that cause discomfort, which could be classed as sexual harassment.

Cyber-Bullying

Cyberbullying involving the use of information and communication technologies can occur on internet services, social media and electronic services that enable communication including, but not limited to, instant messaging, chat services, email communications, online games, SMS, and MMS. It can be verbal or written and can include images, videos and/or audio.

Cyber-bullying is a form of bullying used to deliberately harm another person and can be particularly detrimental given the potential out-of-school hours accessibility to technology and use as a means to harm the victim even when at home. Cyber-bullying may include:

- Sending unwelcome text messages to harm, shame, exclude, embarrass, or intimidate another person.
- Circulating hurtful messages or images with the intention of humiliating someone or isolating them from their peer group.
- Posting messages, images, and videos on social media.
- Sharing sexually explicit images via text messages, known as sexting.
- Using text messages and social media sites whilst using someone else's identity/personal details, known as hacking.

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Policy implementation

Proactive Strategies

Our proactive response to bullying includes:

- Facilitating an environment that ensures every student flourishes; free from the threat and fear of bullying.
- Not condoning or trivialising any bullying behaviours.
- Informing staff and students about how to recognise bullying behaviours.
- Individual classes and teachers will address important issues of bullying, inclusion, acceptance, servanthood, fellowship, caring for others, and self-esteem in Devotions and Personal Development & Health KLAs. In this way students are receiving ongoing guidance and support from a teacher they see daily and have an existing relationship with.
- All College staff (including in the playground or on excursions) have a responsibility to report any incident of bullying to a student's classroom/rollcall teacher or Year Advisor. The teacher responsible will then follow up the incident in accordance with the relevant Student Management Policy and record the incident.
- It is important that the communication lines between home and school be open. The College seeks to work cooperatively and collaboratively with families to support students in partnership. Parents will be informed of bullying and any incidents reported by parents will be investigated.
- Disciplinary action taken as a result of bullying by a student will be managed in accordance with the relevant Primary or Secondary Student Management Policy, depending on the College grade of the perpetrator/s.
- Regular and ongoing Professional Development of teaching staff in the ability to identify different forms of bullying and strategies to effectively address bullying issues.
- Facilitating Student Wellbeing initiatives across Prep-12, including CARE Groups, student leadership programs, and an organised approach to delivering pastoral care.

Responding to Bullying

Victims of bullying behaviour at Mount Annan Christian College will be urged to consider using some of the following strategies:

- confront the offending student and make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable;
- speak with the relevant teacher or parent/guardian to work out strategies for dealing with the problem and follow the appropriate guidelines for the management of bullying.
- seek support through referral to external agencies such as counselling services if appropriate.
- refrain from the retaliatory use of ICT, mobile phone, and social media technologies.

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Being a Positive Bystander

Bystanders (other students) should:

- inform an appropriate member of staff or responsible senior student immediately;
- make it clear to others in the peer group that such behaviour is wrong;
- understand that observing such behaviour without action can be seen as supporting the offending student.
- responsibly use ICT, mobile phone, and social media technologies.

Strategies for Parents

We encourage parents to:

- be supportive of the College's efforts to deal with incidents of bullying and be willing to attend interviews or conferencing if required;
- take an active interest in their child's social life and friendship groups;
- communicate openly and regularly with their child so the child is more inclined to tell them of problems before they become major problems;
- encourage their child to report the problem to a trusted teacher or do so themselves if the child is unable to do so;
- refrain from encouraging the child to retaliate or involving themselves directly with the child or their parents;
- trust the College's established procedures and desire to reach the best outcome for all parties concerned rather than seek revenge.
- refer their child to external agencies such as counselling services if appropriate.
- monitor their child's use of ICT, mobile phone, and social media technologies.
- attend College events which educate them about bullying and cyber-bullying;
- be aware of signs of distress or changed behaviour that may indicate their child is a victim of bullying.

Being Aware of the Possible Signs of Bullying

Major behavioural changes that parents or staff may notice could be indicative of a student being bullied, such as:

- a reluctance to attend school, particular school-organised activities, or an unwillingness to attend other social events;
- a pattern of headaches, stomach pains, or other ailments at particular times of the day;
- frequently missing equipment that is out of character;
- requests for extra money;
- unexplained and damaged clothing, bodily bruising, cuts, or scratches;
- crying at night and having nightmares;

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- refusing to talk when asked about their wellbeing by a concerned adult or friend;
- a decline in quality of schoolwork and home learning tasks;
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- appearing lonely or distressed;
- beginning to display bullying behaviour towards siblings, peers, or younger students;
- unexpected changes in friendship groups;
- acting unreasonably.

Students may also not disclose cyberbullying to adults through fear that the adults may overreact and make the situation worse. Signs of cyberbullying to watch out for may include one or more of the behavioural changes outlined above, and/or other signs, including a student:

- being upset after using a device to access the internet or their mobile phone/smartwatch;
- being hesitant to go online, avoiding their phone or seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears;
- spending unusually long hours online or on their mobile phone;
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone usage.

Management of bullying incidents

The following steps will be followed in the case of bullying incidents occurring.

Step 1

All reports of bullying (including cyberbullying) are to be investigated in the first instance by the relevant staff member in consultation with the Head of Primary/ Secondary to determine the nature and extent of the bullying.

Step 2

If the bullying incident is a minor first offence, staff will follow up the incident as appropriate. This should involve bringing the parties together, with other relevant people as required, in student conferencing, engaging in restorative practices. This will allow both the offending party and the victim to talk through the situation and the offending student being given the opportunity to apologise and accordingly modify their behaviour. The offending student must be very clear on the fact that their behaviour is wrong and must not reoccur. The details will be recorded on the Sentral files of all students involved with them tagged as Involved (offender); Victim, or Witness (bystander).

Step 3

If the bullying is a serious first offence, the teacher will interview the offenders and the victim and the parents will be informed. The offending student will have discipline applied in an appropriate manner and counselled to assist them from re-offending. The victim will be provided with appropriate support. Staff will then appropriately monitor the students involved. The details will be

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recorded on the Sentral files of all students involved with them tagged as Involved (offender); Victim, or Witness (bystander).

Step 4

In the event of repeated offences of bullying by the same student, the Head of School will interview the offending student in the presence of their parents and the teacher. A more comprehensive conference would be arranged. The details of correspondence and consequences in addressing repeated negative bullying behaviours will be recorded on the student's Sentral file and supporting documentation attached as appropriate. Direct consequences for repeated incidents of bullying behaviour may include:

- detention;
- separation from peers;
- School or community service;
- professional assistance or counselling such as conflict resolution, anger management, referral to College Chaplain or Police Youth Liaison Officers (see contact details below); · suspension or expulsion at the direction of the Headmaster and in accordance with the relevant Primary or Secondary Student Management Policy.
- being banned from bringing a mobile phone/device to school and/or from using the school's ICT resources.

Making a Cyberbullying Complaint

If cyberbullying occurs, the abovementioned steps will be followed but it may also be pertinent to seek outside assistance in having the offending material removed from online access.

If cyberbullying material is targeted at a child under the age of 18 years, a complaint can be made to:

- the provider of a social media service, relevant electronic service, or designated internet service (as defined in the *Online Safety Act 2021*) – see [The eSafety Guide](#) for information about providers;
- the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021.

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner can be made through the [online portal](#) by the child, their parent or guardian, or an adult authorised by the child to make the complaint. The eSafety Commissioner has the power investigate the complaint and to issue a removal notice.

For the eSafety Commissioner to investigate cyberbullying, the harmful content must have first been reported to the service or platform used to send, post, or share it – at least 48 hours before it is reported to eSafety.

Cyberbullying Material

Cyberbullying material that is provided on a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021) that an ordinary person reasonable person would conclude is likely to:

- be intended to have an effect on a particular child; and

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- have the direct or indirect effect on the child as seriously threatening, seriously intimidating, seriously harassing or seriously humiliating the child, can be the subject of complaint to the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021).

Record Keeping

- Details of all alleged and investigated but unconfirmed bullying incidents will be recorded within the normal record-keeping methods of individual teachers.
- Details of all confirmed and investigated cases of bullying and the related disciplinary outcomes for both the victim and offender will be recorded on the students' files located on Sentral, the College's administrative online platform, as well as a soft copy of any documentation produced uploaded and attached to the Sentral incident.
- All standard record-keeping practices should be maintained by staff e.g. diary entries and/or staff emails and detailed in or attached to the incident on Sentral.

Restorative Practices

- The relevant teacher or Executive Leadership member will conduct a post-bullying review with the victim and offending student to ensure that the situation has improved. The review should be shortly after the original incident and in the following days and/or weeks. The focus will be on implementing restorative practices to re-establish a collegiate and positive relationship moving forward and support students to proactively implement positive strategies in their interactions henceforth.

Police Youth Liaison Contact Details

The College works closely with our Police Youth Liaison Officer, who regularly conducts information sessions for our College community and works in consultation with the College to support our students and promote awareness of the importance of working together to combat bullying.

Our Police Youth Liaison Officer contact details are as follows:

Kylie Marinello

Senior Constable, Youth Liaison Officer

Camden Police Area Command

Ph: 4632 4499

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Related policies and procedures

- [Student Wellbeing Hub | Home](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#) booklet
- [Federal Register of Legislation - Online Safety Act 2021](#)
- [The eSafety Guide | eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Report forms | eSafety Commissioner](#) (for reporting Cyberbullying Material)
- Primary Student Management (Discipline) Policy
- Secondary Student Management (Discipline) Policy
- Mandatory BYOD Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Phones Acceptable Use Policy
- Parent Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy