

## Mildura Christian College

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# Bullying & Harassment Policy

At Mildura Christian College, students are taught and expected to respect the rights of others in accordance with Christian principles taught in the Scriptures.

"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."  
*Philippians 2:3-5*

"The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'"  
*Galatians 5:14*

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."  
*Colossians 3:12-14*

Consistent with the ethos of the college, harassment/bullying is not an acceptable form of behaviour. Staff and students of this college have the right to work and study without suffering from harassment/bullying.

**Much of the information in this policy is taken directly from Bullying No Way!**  
([www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au))

## National Definition of Bullying for Australian Schools

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Mildura Christian College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the College is respected and accepted.

**Bullying is not tolerated at Mildura Christian College.**

## Types of Bullying

Bullying is usually described by the types of behaviours involved, so we talk about verbal, social and physical bullying.

Bullying is sometimes also labelled by where it occurs or by what type of harm is done. The most common ways that bullying is described are outlined below.

### Type of behaviour – verbal, physical and social

There are three types of bullying behaviour:

- Verbal bullying which includes name calling or insulting someone about physical characteristics such as their weight or height, or other attributes including race, sexuality, culture, or religion
- Physical bullying which includes hitting or otherwise hurting someone, shoving or intimidating another person, or damaging or stealing their belongings
- Social bullying which includes consistently excluding another person or sharing information or images that will have a harmful effect on the other person.

If any of these behaviours occur only once, or are part of a conflict between equals (no matter how inappropriate) they are not bullying. The behaviours alone don't define bullying.

Verbal, physical and social bullying can occur in person or online, directly or indirectly, overtly or covertly.

### Setting – in person and online

Bullying can happen in person or online settings. Online bullying is sometimes called cyberbullying

Verbal, physical and social bullying can happen **in person**.

Verbal and social bullying can happen **online**, as can threats of physical bullying.

Specific features of online settings create additional concern for students, parents and carers, and teachers. For example, bullying someone online can potentially have an enormous audience.

Research shows that children who are bullied online are often also bullied in person. This means that effectively dealing with online bullying means looking at other situations as well.

### Means – direct and indirect

Bullying can be by direct or indirect means:

- **Direct bullying** occurs between the people involved, whereas indirect actions involve others, for example passing on insults or spreading rumours.
- **Indirect bullying** mostly inflicts harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem.



## Visibility – overt and covert

Bullying can be easy to see, called overt, or hidden from those not directly involved, called covert.

**Overt bullying** involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or observable verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting. Overt, direct, physical bullying is a common depiction of bullying (this is sometimes called 'traditional bullying').

But overt physical bullying may not be the most common type of bullying.

**Covert bullying** can be almost impossible for people outside the interpersonal interaction to identify. Covert bullying can include repeatedly using hand gestures and weird or threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with.

Covert social or verbal bullying can be subtle and even sometimes denied by a person who claims they were joking or 'just having fun'.

Some bullying is both covert and indirect, such as subtle social bullying, usually intentionally hidden, and very hard for others to see. This type of bullying is often unacknowledged at school, and can include spreading rumours, threatening, blackmailing, stealing friends, breaking secrets, gossiping and criticising clothes and personalities.

Indirect covert bullying mostly inflicts harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem, that is, through psychological harm rather than physical harm.

## Harm – physical and psychological

Bullying has the potential to cause harm (although not all unwanted actions necessarily cause harm).

The **physical harm** caused by some types of bullying is well recognised.

More recently, research has confirmed that short and long term **psychological harm** can result from bullying. This includes the harm to a person's social standing or reducing a person's willingness to socialise through bullying (particularly covert social bullying).

In fact, just the **fear of bullying** happening can create distress and harm. The ongoing nature of bullying can lead to the person being bullied feeling powerless and unable to stop it from happening.

The effects of bullying, particularly on the mental health and wellbeing of those involved, including bystanders, can continue even after the situation is resolved.

Sometimes the term 'psychological bullying' is used to describe making threats and creating ongoing fear, but it is more accurate to describe this type of behaviour as 'verbal or social bullying' and the impact on the person being bullied as 'psychological harm'.

## Signs of Bullying

Each student who has been bullied or is bullying others will respond and act differently.

A student's behaviours and moods can change for a variety of reasons.

Teachers and parents/carers need to be alert to the possibility that the change in behaviours and moods is related to bullying.



Signs a teacher might notice include if a student:

- becomes aggressive and unreasonable
- starts getting into fights
- refuses to talk about what is wrong
- drops in academic performance.

Less obvious signs could include if a student:

- is often alone or excluded from friendship groups at school
- is a frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule at school
- changes their willingness to speak up in class
- withdraws from friends and activities they previously enjoyed
- appears insecure or frightened in the classroom.

## Definition of Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome behaviour that intimidates, offends, or humiliates a student because of a particular personal characteristic.

Harassment is similar to bullying because someone hurts another person through cruel, offensive and insulting behaviours. Harassment is different from bullying in that it is a form of discrimination and is unlawful where the basis for harassment relates to a personal characteristic which is protected by law, such as:

- sex and gender identity or sexuality and sexual orientation
- race, religion, ethnic background
- disability.

## Types of Harassment

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment occurs when a student is subjected to unwelcome and uninvited sexual conduct by another student which could be expected to make a student feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated.

Sexual harassment can also result when a sexually intimidating or offensive environment is created.

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal, written or pictorial, and can range from relatively mild sexual banter to actual physical violence.



It is important to remember that it is the way the victim perceives the behaviour that is important in determining whether or not harassment has taken place, not the intent of a particular individual.

Mutual attraction or consenting friendships do not constitute sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- unwanted physical contact, touching, brushing against another student, hugging
- persistent jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature
- repeated requests to go out
- offensive gestures
- persistent or intrusive enquiries into another student's private life, sexuality, or physical appearance
- sexual propositions
- sexually offensive phone calls, messages on email, voicemail or in writing
- displaying offensive screen savers, photos, calendars or objects
- sexually explicit emails, text messages, or posts on social networking sites (refer to our Cyber Safety policy)
- stalking
- sexual assault.

### **Racial Harassment**

Racial harassment is also found in many forms. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- abusive, threatening or insulting words and behaviour
- deliberate exclusion from conversations
- displaying abusive writing and pictures
- insensitive jokes related to race
- pranks.

### **Disability Harassment**

Examples of disability harassment include:

- humiliating comments or insults about a student's disability
- disparaging remarks to students who have received learning adjustments
- comments or actions which create a hostile environment for a student with a disability
- deliberately excluding a student where the disability is not an issue.

## **Reporting Bullying & Harassment**

Research shows that adults usually underestimate the rates of bullying because it often happens when adults are not around and students may be reluctant to report it.

### **Reasons students may not report**

Research has found that students often do not report bullying and harassment because they fear not being believed or not having their concerns appropriately and thoughtfully addressed by relevant adults.



Different ideas about what bullying is and is not may also contribute to students not reporting bullying.

Fear of making things worse is another reason students give for being reluctant to report.

Responses by staff and others which are supportive, measured and respectful reassure students that their reports will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.

### **Encourage student reporting**

Students are to be regularly encouraged to report bullying directly to their Learning Centre Teacher.

Some students may be reluctant to speak directly with a teacher for fear of being overheard or seen or for any of the other reasons listed above. An alternative reporting method is provided for all students called SpeakUp.

SpeakUp is an online reporting portal that allows students to discreetly report any incident of bullying that they have observed or have been a victim of. The incident report is forwarded directly to the Principal.

All students will be informed how to access the SpeakUp portal and trained in its use. This will be achieved through in-class demonstrations and graphical presentations in assemblies.

Students may also choose to report bullying and/or harassment directly to the Principal.



## Communication

This policy will be made available for all on the College website as well as in the Sentral Parent app and portal.

The following information appears in each student's diary:

Bullying is a form of abuse that occurs when an individual or group is subjected to behaviour that is hurtful and/or threatening either physically or psychologically. It may be planned, spontaneous, or even unintentional.

### ***Bullying may be:***

- Verbal, including name-calling, teasing, racist remarks, sexist comments, put downs, etc
- Non-verbal, such as obscene gestures or inappropriate acts
- Physical, including pushing, hitting, tripping, hair pulling, stealing, hiding or damaging others' belongings etc.
- Social, such as alienating or ignoring someone or spreading rumours
- Psychological, where someone is made to feel threatened by dirty looks, staring, deliberately turning away etc.
- Sexual harassment, such as sexist comments or inappropriate acts
- E-bullying, such as inappropriate text messages, emails, chat-room gossip etc

### ***What can be done?***

#### ***If you are being bullied:***

- Try to control your actions
- Do not retaliate
- Ask the person to stop
- Leave the area
- Seek a safe place that is well supervised
- Don't isolate yourself
- Tell someone
- Seek help

#### ***If you see someone being bullied:***

- Speak out
- Don't join in
- Don't be a spectator
- Support the person being bullied
- Encourage the person being bullied to seek help
- Let someone know what is happening

### ***E-Bullying or Cyberbullying***

Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, mobile phone text messages, instant messaging, and defamatory personal websites in order to cause harm or offence to others.

To prevent cyberbullying you should:

- Never give out personal information such as your address, phone number, passwords, PIN numbers etc.
- Use netiquette
- Avoid opening a message from someone you don't know



### **BullyingNoWay**

Mildura Christian College will participate in the annual National Day Against Bullying and Violence. The College will register as an official NDA school.

### **Training**

Mildura Christian College conducts annual training/information sessions for both students and staff to help identify bullying, and provide strategies to help avoid it. In addition, learning centre teachers are to regularly refer the students to the information in their diaries and provide age appropriate explanation. Students and staff will receive training through their active participation in the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

## **Responding to Bullying**

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances the College:

- takes bullying incidents seriously
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- notification of/consultation with parents/carers
- offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims
- implementing effective follow up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

## **Discipline for Breach of Policy**

Depending upon the nature and seriousness of the breach of this Policy, Mildura Christian College may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, suspension or expulsion.

Penalties will be consistent with the school's Discipline Program and may include:

- Out-of-school hours detention
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Suspension
- Expulsion



## **Dealing with Harassment/Bullying at Mildura Christian College**

1. Staff should:
  - Act as role models
  - Be observant of signs of bullying and take appropriate action minimising further risk to the victim
  - Report actual and suspected incidents of bullying to the student's learning centre teacher
  - Record incidents of bullying in the Wellbeing module of Sentral.
  
2. Students should:
  - treat all students, staff and any other person at the College professionally and with respect
  - avoid behaviour that could be interpreted as harassing and act to prevent other students from engaging in harassment, where this is reasonably practicable
  - where students have witnessed harassment at the College they are encouraged to report this to a staff member.
  - Refrain from using bullying tactics.
  - Discourage other students from using bullying tactics.
  - Be encouraged to report the incident or suspected incident to a teacher.
  - Make a report on SpeakUp if they would rather not speak with a teacher
  
3. Parents are strongly encouraged to report incidents of bullying occurring or suspected incidents to teachers or the Principal. Parents should support the College in its endeavours to minimise harassment/bullying.

Next Review: January 2022

