



AQUINAS COLLEGE

Anti - Bullying Policy

Aquinas College strives to create a caring, safe and rich learning environment in which every young person feels safe, valued and connected. We believe that all members of our College community are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore have a special value, dignity and worth. We encourage the positive participation of all students in our College community.

This Policy provides a focus on strategies that aim to enhance and strengthen the community of Aquinas College through establishing student, teacher and parent connectedness. We believe that all members of the College community share the responsibility to teach, foster, promote and encourage positive student behaviour.

This policy reflects and is applied in the context of our Catholic tradition and worldview, as well as, the values of academic excellence, mercy, justice, faith, courage, service and compassion as identified in our College vision and mission statement.

ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE RIGHT TO FEEL SAFE,

BE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND LEARN.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED AT AQUINAS COLLEGE.

We believe in:

- Building a safe and supportive school and preventing bullying
- Knowing when bullying is happening, acting to stop it and supporting those involved
- Managing incidents that have serious impact on individuals and/or the school

POLICY AIMS

We aim to provide an environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all members of our school community.

We seek to achieve this by:

- preventing the occurrence of bullying. We do this by educating the students on establishing positive relationships and reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of all school members;
- developing individual self-esteem and respect for others through informative lessons and activities through our Pastoral Care system and classrooms; and

- combating bullying by processes of reconciliation, support (which may include involvement by school Guidance Counsellors, Deputy or Assistant Principals and parents as deemed necessary by the Pastoral Leader) or sanctions (as prescribed by the Deputy or Assistant Principal) which are directly linked with the Policy.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when an individual or group misuses power to target another individual or group to intentionally threaten or harm them on more than one occasion. This may involve verbal, physical, relational and psychological forms of bullying. Teasing or fighting between peers is not necessarily bullying.

Bullying may involve:

- **verbal bullying:** The repeated use of words to hurt or humiliate another individual or group. Verbal bullying includes using put-downs, insulting language, name-calling, swearing, nasty notes and homophobic, racist or sexist comments.
- **emotional/psychological bullying:** Includes repeated stalking, threats or implied threats, unwanted email or text messaging, abusive websites, threatening gestures, manipulation, emotional blackmail, and threats to an individual's reputation and sense of safety.
- **relational bullying:** Usually involves repeatedly ostracising others by leaving them out or convincing others to exclude or reject another individual or group, making up or spreading rumours, and sharing or threatening to share another's personal information.
- **physical bullying:** Includes repetitive low level hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing, tripping, 'ganging up', unwanted physical or sexual touching and damage to personal property. More serious violent behaviours are not necessarily treated as bullying and may be better managed through the school's discipline processes.
- **cyber bullying:** Involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, text messages, instant messaging, social media and websites to engage in the bullying of other individuals or groups. This technology provides an alternative means for verbal, relational and psychological forms of bullying.
- **Bystander:** A Bystander is a person who witnesses a bullying incident as an onlooker. At Aquinas College, we agree that, if you are a bystander who encourages bullying behaviours, or if you witness bullying and do not report the incident, your behaviour is considered to be bullying.

Helping Your Child:

SYMPTOMS OF BULLYING

The symptoms associated with bullying include, but are not limited to;

- not wanting to go to school,
- change in friends and social activities,
- anger,
- tears,
- depression,
- low self-esteem,
- and a raft of psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches.

Withdrawal and reluctance to “join in” can be a warning sign, as can truancy, misbehaviour and aggressive behaviour. Cuts, bruising, torn clothing, requests for extra food or money as well as a decline in academic performance can also be clues that a student may be suffering from bullying.

IF YOU SUSPECT THEY ARE BEING BULLIED

- Encourage your child to talk to you about the situation
- Reassure your child that the bullying is not their fault
- Encourage your child to seek out a support person (adult) at school
- Help your child problem-solve solutions
- Involve your child in making decisions about what to do to improve the situation
- Help build their confidence
- Make solutions time limited
- Keep a record of what is happening and notify the school if it continues
- Never contact the child who is doing the bullying or their parent - this can escalate the situation unnecessarily

PROCEDURES

If you believe that you or someone that you know are being bullied you are encouraged to report your concerns immediately.

The report should be made to your class teacher, VPC teacher, Pastoral Leader, Guidance Counsellor, parent, senior student or any adult with whom you feel comfortable.

The person receiving the complaint will report it to your Pastoral Leader or relevant Assistant or Deputy Principal.

Any reported bullying incident would be followed up sensitively and actions taken and documented.

Bullying someone goes against the values of Compassion, Mercy, Justice, Faith and Service upheld by our Aquinas College community and contravenes State law.

STEPS IN INVESTIGATING REPORTED ISSUES:

- 1) Pastoral Leaders will interview all parties involved. They will determine the underlying problem and talk with students about the consequences of their behaviour.
- 2) Further or more serious bullying will be referred to the Assistant Principal Welfare, or Deputy Principal for interview with parents. Students may be required to participate in "Anti-Bullying" programs
- 3) Referral to the Principal. If the intimidation or behaviour continues, the student needs to report this to their Pastoral Leader, who will coordinate Principal involvement.

WEBSITES RELATING TO BULLYING WHICH MAY PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS:

- <https://headspace.org.au/friends-and-family/what-is-bullying-in-children/>
- <http://au.reachout.com/bullying>
- <https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/understand-what's-going-on/bullying-and-cyberbullying>
- <https://esafety.gov.au/parents>
- <http://friendlyschools.com.au>
- <https://education.gov.au/bullying-research-projects>
- <http://www.thinkuknow.org.au/report-cyberbullying>