



## Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy

OakTree College ('the College') is an independent co-educational specialist senior secondary school providing education opportunities for young people of migrant backgrounds who are at risk of disengaging from education.

OakTree College ('the College') seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment where all students can safely participate in the educational experiences offered by the College.

This policy will ensure that the College's mission is upheld in providing a sustainable and deliberate learning community where the potential and aspirations of the students are harnessed and honed and where they are equipped with skills and knowledge for them to play their part in the wider Australian multicultural society.

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure that the College is committed to creating and providing a safe and respectful teaching and learning environment free of bullying and harassment;
- Explain what bullying and harassment are, and that they are unacceptable and will not be tolerated;
- Inform everyone in the College community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and harassment and to report it to staff;
- Ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately to minimise future occurrence and that support is given to all parties as appropriate;
- Seek internal and/or external specialist support and parental, carer or guardian co-operation at all times.

All staff working with students have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to prevent students from foreseeable harm, abuse or injury. This includes taking reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable physical or psychological harm occurring as a result of bullying and/or harassment. Refer to the Duty of Care Policy.

### 2. Definitions

#### Bullying

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 is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike. 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 may be direct physical, direct verbal, indirect or cyberbullying.

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.

Types of bullying can include:

- **Covert bullying**- which can be very difficult for someone outside of the interaction to identify. It can include hand gestures and threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with. Social bullying (spreading rumours, manipulation of relationships, excluding, isolating) is often covert bullying.
- **Cyberbullying** – this includes any form of bullying behaviour that occurs online or via a mobile device. It can be verbal or written, and can include threats of violence as well as images, videos and/or audio.
- **Physical bullying**- such as hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- **Social bullying** – such as deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, sharing information that will have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- **Verbal and written bullying**- including name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.

### What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying (including but not limited to):

- **Mutual conflict**- where there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- **Social rejection or dislike**- unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

### Harassment

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome and which is reasonably likely to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress a person.

### 3. College Commitment

The College will not tolerate any forms of bullying or harassment and will ensure a safe environment for students via the following.

- A College-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying and harassment in a consistent and systematic way, with a focus on student safety and wellbeing.
- All students will be informed of the anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy as part of their enrolment and orientation process.
- Student programs will be organised to raise awareness about bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of positive attitudes. Occasional activities may be run by external experts and professionals.
- All complaints of bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment will be heard in confidence, investigated and taken seriously in line with the College Complaints Policy.
- The Executive Principal and/or the Assistant Principal will be responsible for completing an investigation and maintaining up-to-date records of the investigation and responses to bullying and harassment behaviour.
- The College will organise preventative programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness training, counselling, conflict resolution and problem solving. These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.
- There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in continuous breach of the behaviour expectations established by the College. Disciplinary consequences for bullying and harassment will comply with the Student Behaviour Management Policy.
- All new staff will be informed of the anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and practices as part of the College's induction processes
- Staff programs or refresher courses will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.
- Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff. Specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off-site in-service activities will be provided to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues.

### 3. Student Support

If any staff member feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and/or harassment then it is the College's duty of care obligation to investigate the matter and pass on the information to the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal in order to ensure appropriate support is provided to students as well as implementing strategies to prevent such matters from happening in the future. It is also important that staff document any actions taken in response to such matters and, if necessary, contact the students' parents, carers or guardians.

If a student believes they are being bullied, they can contact their teacher in the first instance, or a staff member that they would prefer to discuss the matter with.

All allegations are investigated, and the College might adopt some early intervention techniques to assist the students, which may include (but not limited to): education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving, mentoring and social skills; counselling, peer support and behaviour modification.

Refer to the Student Behaviour Management Policy for processes followed in case there is a breach of the student behaviour expectations.

#### **4. Dealing with the Perpetrator**

Take action immediately by enforcing school policies for any incidents of bullying and/or harassment.

No student is exempt from being disciplined for bullying and/or harassment.

Remind students that bullying and harassment is not tolerated at the College and that if there are any signs that this was not an isolated incident, there will be additional repercussions including a call to their parents, carers or guardians and notification to the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal.

The disciplinary plan developed for the perpetrator should be logical.

- if the bullying took place during outside recess, the perpetrator may lose the privilege of playing outside,
- if the bullying took place while the students were eating lunch, the perpetrator may have to eat separately from the cohort.

Discuss the incident privately with all parties including the perpetrator.

Perpetrators need to recognise that no matter the reason behind their bullying behaviour, bullying was a choice they made: they are responsible for their actions. They must own their choices and accept responsibility for their actions. Avoid giving the perpetrator too much attention or increasing credibility among peers.

#### **5. Guidance for Staff**

College staff must consider a few techniques when dealing with bullying and/or harassment matters.

- Remember that every bullying situation is different and as a result, the consequences will be different. The point is to demonstrate that bullying behaviour has consequences and will not be tolerated.
- Ensure that all parties are heard and provided with appropriate support. All allegations must be taken seriously and treated sensitively.
- It is never a good idea to have the perpetrator and the student in a meeting together. Mediation may not work between perpetrators and the other student because of the power imbalance. Additionally, one party may be so intimidated by being in the same room with the perpetrator that it silences them.
- Avoid providing the perpetrator with situations where they can exert their power over the other students.
- While making a call to the parents, carers or guardians is never an easy task, it is one that needs to happen. Explain that their child has been reported as bullying

other students and ask them to help you intervene. Ask them to tell their child that the behaviour is unacceptable and to implement consequences at home. Stress the importance of respect and safety at school.

- While some parents, carers or guardians will be appalled by their child's behaviour, other parents will deny their child did anything wrong. They may make excuses, shift blame or get confrontational. Be professional and stand your ground. Make sure the perpetrator still experiences consequences for their choice despite any disagreement from the parents, carers or guardians. If the parents, carers or guardians are not supportive, you may have a harder time getting the perpetrator to change, but stay the course and follow your plan of action. If challenging, escalate to the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal.
- Sometimes when bullying is caught early, it will not happen again, but do not automatically assume this is the case. Instead, monitor the perpetrator's behaviour and continue to discipline (if necessary). It is also a good idea to check in with the other student as well. Make sure they are adjusting well. Additionally, if the perpetrator still has a bad attitude or is not taking responsibility, continue to require work and escalate complex or repetitive behaviour to the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal. The Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with the Student Behaviour Management Policy.

## 6. Appropriate Action/Steps

**Level 1:** In the first instance, teachers or staff may elect to use one or more of the following:

- stopping the behaviour /re-statement of policies and consequences that the College does not tolerate bullying and/or harassment,
- restorative conversation,
- meeting with parents, carers or guardians,
- private and/or shared control discussion,
- removal from the situation.

If the student does not take control over their behaviour or show remorse, the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal should be notified and actions taken documented.

**Level 2:** If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassment, a formal referral (refer to Appendix 1 – Incident Report Referral) should be made to the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal who may:

- provide or refer for counselling support to the students,
- meet with the perpetrator to discuss and/or develop a plan and/or meet with parents, carers or guardians of the student to discuss strategies to prevent such issues from happening again,
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities,
- conduct a restorative conference separately with the impacted students.

**Level 3:** For students whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe or resistant to change, an Individual Behaviour Plan (refer to Appendix 2 – Individual Behaviour Plan) should be developed by the students' teacher in consultation with the student and parents, carers or guardians and the Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal. Individual

Behaviour Plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, college and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths.

**Level 4:** Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists college efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing of other students should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. The Executive Principal or the Assistant Principal will need to be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family. Refer to the Enrolment Policy regarding grounds for the termination of enrolment.

## 7. Communication

The College will communicate this policy to the school community via the College website and staff induction. This policy will also be referenced in the Student & Parent/Guardian Handbook.

## 8. Contact

For questions about this policy, contact the Executive Principal.

## 9. Related Policies

- Duty of Care Policy
- Child Safe Policy
- Enrolment Policy
- Student Behaviour Management Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy

## 10. Approval and Review

Document Owner	Executive Principal
Approved by:	College Board
Approval date:	11 May 2024
Next review date	May 2025 (and every 12 months thereafter)

## Appendix 1

### Bullying/Harassment: Incident Report referral to the Executive Principal or Assistant Principal

Staff member reporting the incident

Name:	
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Name of student/s who appear to have instigated the incident – perpetrator

Name:	
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Name of target/s or impacted student/s

Name:	
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Name of witnesses (if any)

Name:	
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Brief account of incident and allegations

Details of Incident:	
Incident Date:	Incident Time:
Incident Location:	
Did you observe the incident? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	If No, who reported the incident to you?
What form did the bullying / harassment take? <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal <input type="checkbox"/> Physical <input type="checkbox"/> Indirect <input type="checkbox"/> Cyber <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Details:
Severity <input type="checkbox"/> mild <input type="checkbox"/> severe	Details:
Has this happened before? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	What action was taken?

Describe how you responded:
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Describe how students responded to the intervention:
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Additional comments:
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Signature:

## Appendix 2

### Individual Behaviour Plan

<b>Name and contact:</b>		<b>Age:</b>	
<b>Teacher/s:</b>		<b>Class:</b>	
<b>Executive Principal or Assistant Principal</b>		<b>Date:</b>	

<b>Background information</b>	
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#### Discussion

<b>Strengths</b> What is the student good at, what do others like about them?	
<b>Academic/Social/Other Concerns</b> Identified issues which need to be addressed?	
<b>Setting events / Antecedent</b> Events or circumstances that make the behaviour more likely including identified trigger and behaviour	
<b>Target/agreed behaviour</b> Describe the targeted/agreed behaviour including preventative strategies and techniques.	
<b>Function/Recognition</b> What the student gets or avoids as a result of meeting the targeted behaviour.	

Date completed:

Date to be reviewed:

Student signature:

Parent/carer/guardian signature:

Executive Principal or Assistant Principal signature: