

HCS Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Policy Statement

This Policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

Hunter Christian School provides an environment where bullying is not accepted.

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.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bullying will be dealt with in accordance with school's Behaviour Management Policy.

Procedures

- bullying behaviour may be managed through a 'whole-of-school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians
- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within the school on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/guardians to recognise bullying and respond appropriately
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis in line with best practice.

Appendix

Bullying Prevention Strategies

Hunter Christian School recognises that the implementation of whole-school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no-bullying' culture within the school:

- a structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year
- education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies
- regular provision of information to parents/guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a School community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the School
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/guardians
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/guardians
- reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below)
- students are supported by their teachers, pastoral care staff and the school leadership when they report a bullying incident and during the processes that follow the submission of the report
- records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify students who persistently intimidate or bully and/or students who are persistently bullied and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate
- statements supporting bullying prevention are included in students' School diaries
- education of staff, students and parents/guardians on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear

- promotion of student awareness and a 'no-bullying' environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

Reporting Bullying

Students and their parents/guardians are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of the school's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well providing support and assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:

- bullying is not tolerated within the school
- their concerns will be taken seriously
- the school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Reporting Bullying Incidents to the School

Bullying incidents can be advised to the school verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher
- informing the school counsellor
- informing a student's pastoral care teacher; or
- informing the Head of School or the Executive Principal.

Bullying behaviour can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or using one's physical presence, or physical bodily acts, to hurt or intimidate someone or threaten violence. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying
- **Verbal/written bullying** examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic
- **Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying)** examples include deliberate acts of exclusion, spreading rumours or sharing information to have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance

- **Cyberbullying** which is the misuse of power within a relationship to repeatedly threaten or harm another person using technology.

What Isn't Bullying?

There are many negative situations which, while being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- **Mutual Conflict Situations** which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation
- **One-Off Acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

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 school:

- enact the school's Behaviour Management System
- takes seriously, and monitors single incidents of conflict or fights between students, that do not ordinarily amount to bullying, for signs of ongoing behaviour, which may be an indicator of bullying
- takes time to properly understand and investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the student being bullied, the student who was bullying and any bystanders
- will escalate its response when dealing with students who persistently bully and/or for severe incidents, even if these are not necessarily repetitive.

These approaches may be used to intervene in group or relational bullying situations. They are only appropriate during the initial stages. They are not appropriate for persistent or severe bullying incidents.

- notification of/consultation with parents/guardians
- offering counselling to students who persistently bully / students who are persistently bullied
- implementing effective follow up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the Executive Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of students who persistently bully, or in cases of severe incidents.

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Reference documents / legislation	Behaviour Management Policy Student Code of Conduct