



POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

Counter Bullying

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1. OVERVIEW

Rehoboth Christian College is committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is therefore unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell the school authorities and have confidence that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

The College and its staff are committed to being pro-active against bullying. This means that staff will actively watch out for students who are bullying or being bullied, and will take measures in accord with this policy when such behaviour is observed. It also means that all students and parents will be supplied with information making clear the College's expectations about bullying (see s3 below for examples). This is so that students and parents are aware of the processes available to them should bullying occur.

Students, parents and staff are to be pro-active against bullying. **We are a reporting school.** This means that **anyone** who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff. Students who see that bullying is occurring but do not tell a staff member about it are taking part in **passive bullying**.

1.1 Christian principles for relating in a community

The instruction of Jesus about the way people should treat each other: "Do to others as you would have them do to you", (Luke 6:31)

Elsewhere the apostle Paul tells us, "...encourage one another and build each other up..." (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

We are called by God in Matthew 22:34-40 to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all our mind" and "Love your neighbour as yourself". In order to love our neighbour as ourselves, we cannot accept that bullying is alright.

So God's intention is for each person in the community of His People to consider the needs of other people, and try to make the lives of other people happier and more fulfilling.

2. RATIONALE AND SCOPE

2.1 Objectives of this policy

- a) All members of the College Board, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.



- b) All members of the College Board, teaching, and non-teaching staff should know the College's policy on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- c) All students and parents should know what the College's policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- d) As a College, we take bullying seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- e) Bullying will not be tolerated. Students who engage in bullying behaviour will be given the opportunity to change their behaviour but they may be required to leave the school if they do not do so.

The Rationale statement should include a statement to the effect of: **“The purpose of this policy is to ...”**, but may be modified as circumstances demand so long as the statement is clear as to the purposes of the policy.

2.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Board members, staff, parents, and students of the College.

3. ATTACHMENTS AND REFERENCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Encouraging One Another at Rehoboth Christian College
- Students Confronting Unwanted Behaviour
- Complaints and Grievances – Parents and Students Policy and Procedures

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1 What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation, or social acceptance on more than one occasion.



4.2 Types of bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying:

- a) **Direct physical bullying:** For example, hitting, tripping, pushing, taking or damaging property.
- b) **Direct verbal bullying:** For example, name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.
- c) **Indirect bullying:** This form of bullying is harder to recognize and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes, but is not limited to:
 - i. Lying and spreading rumours
 - ii. Playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
 - iii. Mimicking
 - iv. Encouraging others to socially exclude someone
 - v. Damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
 - vi. Cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

4.3 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 three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

- a) **Mutual conflict:** In mutual conflict situations, 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.
- b) **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.
- c) **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation:** Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, for example, they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.



5. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RESPOND TO BULLYING?

Bullying hurts people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect with regard to their person, their property and their activities at school.

Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving, and if necessary to be prevented from continuing with such behaviour.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying. Our College takes that responsibility seriously and will work proactively to prevent bullying and to protect students who are being bullied.

6. COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF BULLYING

6.1 Common characteristics of a student perpetrating bullying behaviour

- a) Often attention seekers;
- b) They bully because they think they are popular and have the support of others;
- c) They do not accept responsibility for their behaviour;
- d) They have a need to feel in control and dominate peers;
- e) They will continue to bully if no one complains
- f) Little or no remorse shown for hurting another student;
- g) Higher than average aggressive behaviour patterns.

6.2 Signs and symptoms of a student receiving bullying behaviour

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- a) is frightened of travelling to or from school;
- b) doesn't want to go on the school or public bus;
- c) begs to be driven to school;



- d) changes their usual routine;
- e) is unwilling to go to school (school phobic);
- f) begins truanting;
- g) becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- h) starts stammering;
- i) attempts or threatens suicide or runs away;
- j) cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares;
- k) feels ill in the morning;
- l) begins to do unusually poorly in school work;
- m) comes home with clothes torn or books damaged;
- n) has possessions go “missing”;
- o) asks for money or starts stealing money (may be needed to pay off a bully);
- p) has lunch or other monies continually “lost”;
- q) has unexplained cuts or bruises;
- r) comes home starving (may indicate money/lunch has been stolen);
- s) becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- t) is bullying other children or siblings;
- u) stops eating;
- v) is frightened to say what is wrong;



w) gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

7. CYBER BULLYING

At Rehoboth we value the important role that new technologies play in education and the social lives of our students. However, with the benefits of technology come the challenges faced by cyber bullying and the moral disengagement students sometimes feel when using such technologies.

7.1 What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is a new way of doing the same bullying that is mentioned earlier in this policy document.

“Cyber bullying uses information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour, by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.” (Bill Belsey, 2007. www.bullying.org)

Cyber bullying is different from other forms of bullying in the following ways:

- a) Students may have 24/7 access to one another through technologies;
- b) The bullying has a wide broadcast and, therefore, a high level of public humiliation;
- c) Cyberspace communications are often anonymous or via avatar (this reduces inhibitions and allows nastiness that might not be exercised face-to-face);
- d) There are few authorities to monitor it;
- e) Students don't tell because of punitive fears;
- f) Students do not “switch off” or go offline because they see cyberspace as their world and they need to know what is being said about them;
- g) “Net speak” (the language used online) is often difficult for authority figures to understand because it actively seeks to “disable” non-natives (parents and authority figures).

Another challenge of cyber bullying is that bullying can occur at school and/or via private computers or phones.



7.2 What are some cyber bullying behaviours?

- a) “Flaming” – a heated exchange;
- b) Harassing and threatening messages, eg. text wars, games;
- c) Denigration – sending nasty SMS, pictures, or prank phone calls, text bombing, “Slam books” (websites or negative lists which are very hard to have taken offline);
- d) Impersonation – using person’s screen name or password;
- e) “Outing or trickery” – sharing private personal information, messages, pictures with others;
- f) Posting “set up” – devaluing images/video online with the purpose of humiliating;
- g) Ostracism – intentionally excluding others from an online group.

7.3 What is the social architecture of cyber bullying?

Bullying is usually a strategy to gain status and power in a peer group and it is often successful. Targets are usually those in a group who tend to be submissive, insecure, physically weak, or are in a lower power/rejected position in the group. Studies show that group bullying is more harmful than individual bullying (because of the diffusion of responsibility) although most students do not like seeing bullying. Mobilising these students to take action is an important part of dealing with the issue. Studies also show that defended victims are much better adjusted than the undefended ones.

Students find dealing with bullying uncomfortable because they place much importance on peer group acceptance and the need to conform. Students are usually more “pro-bully” and less “pro-victim” in their attitudes. There is a culture of silence and unwillingness to talk with teachers.

It is significant to note that in online environments students are “usually” bullied by students of the same gender and girls and boys usually use different sites.

Cyber bullying has a devastating effect on its target because it seeks to humiliate and hurt in a context that the student is unable to escape from. They are not free from the pain in their own home, or even during sleep (many students have their phone on and their computers online all night). This has devastating consequences for their education and social well-being.



7.4 Cyber bullying of teachers

Teachers may become the target of cyber bullying. There are a number of sites that actively encourage this (such as ratemyteachers.com), as well as the usual sites that students frequent where such things may occur (Facebook, for example). Teachers have the same rights as students to have this dealt with by the College as unacceptable.

8. PROCEDURES IN HELPING A STUDENT WHO IS BEING DISTRESSED BY ANOTHER STUDENT

- a) The student being harassed, their parent(s), or another student or staff member who is aware of the problem, should report the harassment to a member of staff. If the staff member receiving the report is not a Senior Member of Staff*, they should refer the matter to a Senior Member of Staff.

*Senior Member of Staff as determined by the Principal; in the primary context this may be the classroom teacher.

- b) The Senior Member of Staff to whom the matter is reported, or another Senior Member of Staff if necessary, will talk with the student to find out exactly what has happened. The student will be given the opportunity to be accompanied by a parent, a friend, or another staff member during this discussion.
- c) As appropriate to the age of the student, and taking into consideration the particular circumstances, the distressed student may be involved in the process of determining how to proceed in dealing with the offending student.
- d) The Senior Member of Staff dealing with the matter will then take appropriate steps as detailed below to deal with the offending student and to ensure that the distress-causing behaviour is stopped.
- e) The student being harassed will be offered ongoing support and access to staff for advice and counsel. The student will be encouraged to continue to report harassment on future occasions, and the importance of doing this in order to end the harassment will be stressed.

9. PROCEDURES IN DEALING WITH A STUDENT WHO CAUSES DISTRESS TO OTHERS

A student who bullies other members of the College community will be approached about the matter in one or more of the following ways:

- a) Through an informal talk with a staff member;
- b) Through counselling and mediation;



- c) Through a formal meeting, which may include the student and parents, staff members, College-appointed psychologists or College Board members;
- d) Through removal from the school, either temporarily or permanently.

The emphasis in the first place will be upon solving the problem of the distress being caused, rather than punishing an offender. The offender is expected to **immediately and completely** cease the distress-causing behaviour. The offending student may be given the opportunity to genuinely apologise for their behaviour to the distressed student. If appropriate in light of the needs of the distressed student, steps towards reconciliation between the students may be taken.

A punishment or penalty may, however, be applied to the student causing the distress where appropriate. This will be the case especially where repeat offences are involved.

A Student Incident Record of each incident of bullying behaviour will be made under the name of the offending student.

9.1 Consequences of bullying behaviour

- a) A contract is written which is signed off by the student, parent, and a Senior Staff Member specifically outlining student responsibilities, expectations and consequences. This will also include weekly meetings with the College Chaplain as deemed necessary by the College. This process will also involve a period a suspension. The contract shall remain in force for the remainder of the student's time at the College.
- b) In the event of a second infraction, the student will be suspended indefinitely, pending a review by the disciplinary panel.
- c) In the event of a Police investigation, the College will assist Police in every way. In certain cases the College may initiate contact with the Police.
- d) Parents of the distressed student and the student(s) who are causing the distress will be kept informed throughout the process.