

Bullying Prevention Policy

Ratification Date: Update by RNS Principal 02/2023 RNS Board 15/03/2023	Next Review: By 1 July 2024 or after an event or changes to the minimum standards as advised by the VRQA	Availability: <table><tr><td>Web</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>Office</td><td>X</td></tr><tr><td>On Request</td><td>X</td></tr></table>	Web	X	Office	X	On Request	X	Actions:
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SCHOOL CONTEXT

River Nile School (RNS) is a specialist reengagement senior-secondary school for young women who are Humanitarian refugees and new arrivals to Australia. In general, our school's students are highly vulnerable with backgrounds of complex trauma in their lives. Most RNS students live as independent young adults, and those with parents/carers commonly have parents/carers who are also new to Australia, with low levels of English oracy and literacy and which are not yet well informed about child safety expectations and obligations in Australia. Some RNS students have significant responsibilities as young parents or carers/guardians of younger siblings.

PURPOSE

River Nile School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment and workplace where bullying will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the River Nile School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at River Nile School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at River Nile School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and understands the importance of reporting bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders, witnesses and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental/carer, peer group or collegiate support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at River Nile School.

When responding to bullying behaviour, River Nile School aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

River Nile School acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students and to each other to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

SCOPE

This policy addresses how River Nile School aims to prevent, address and respond to bullying behaviour. River Nile School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *Student Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy* and *Inclusion and Diversity policy*.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions. It also applies to bullying behaviour between students or staff that occurs outside of school hours, where the behaviour impacts on student or staff wellbeing and safety at school.

POLICY

Definitions

Bullying

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all 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.

Bullying has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

There are four main types of bullying behaviour:

- Physical – examples include hitting, pushing, shoving or intimidating or otherwise physically hurting another person, damaging or stealing their belongings. It includes threats of violence.
- Verbal/written – examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) – examples include 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.
- Cyberbullying – 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.

Bullying can be a form of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or other type of social prejudice when the behaviour is targeted at an individual or group because of a personal characteristic, such as race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability.

For further information about bullying, refer to: [Bully Stoppers \(education.vic.gov.au\)](http://education.vic.gov.au) and the Department of Education and Training's [Bullying Prevention and Response](#) policy on the Policy and Advisory Library.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students/staff who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff/leadership and our school will follow our Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy and/or this Bullying Prevention Policy where the behaviour constitutes bullying.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution

to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. River Nile School will use its Student Wellbeing, Inclusion and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

Harassment is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

Discrimination is behaviour that treats someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic (for example, race, religious belief or activity, disability, sex or intersex status, gender identity or sexual orientation).

Discrimination, harassment, and any other inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated at our school and there may be serious consequences for students/staff engaging in this behaviour. This includes any form of racism, religious or disability discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any other behaviour that targets an individual or group. Further information about discrimination and harassment, including definitions, is set out in our Inclusion and Diversity Policy.

Bullying Prevention

River Nile School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture and relationships to promote wellbeing. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling, encouraging and teaching behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at River Nile School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying.

Engagement strategies used by our School include:

- Promoting River Nile School values especially that relationships are respectful and tolerant and creating a culture that is inclusive, engaging and supportive
Our School Values are incorporated into our curriculum and promoted to students, staff and parents/carers so that they are shared and celebrated as the foundation of our School community
- Ensuring staff are role models at all times
- Celebrating the diverse backgrounds of members of our school community and celebrate multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion to promote mutual respect and social cohesion.
- Low teacher to student ratios, with significant support staff, fostering strong and trusting student/staff connections.
- Positive behaviour and student achievement acknowledged in the classroom, and formally in Student Assemblies and Celebrations.
- Training and education around cyber bullying. Student producing messages / posters / videos for awareness raising events e.g. eSmart Week to raise awareness and support education of strategies to prevent bullying and online bullying.
- Have clear behavioural, learning and attendance expectations and strategies (especially online behaviour)
- Being observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- Making efforts to remove occasions for bullying by supervising students during break periods and by supervising effectively within the premises
- Taking steps to help the victim and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk

- Reporting suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member who will investigate and intervene with appropriate strategies
- Contacting parents/carers (where relevant) regarding incidences of bullying
- Regularly remind staff and students during staff meetings and class activities about the importance of bullying prevention.
- Promoting information sessions for students and parents/carers such as understanding cyberbullying, peer and personal safety, positive online behaviour and online security
- Conducting welfare and staff meetings on a fortnightly basis
- Discussing individual learning plans with students and parents/carers and provide opportunities in those meetings to raise concerns
- Encouraging School staff to meet with the Principal to discuss their welfare and concerns
- Make this and other associated policies available to staff, students and parents/carers (website, SharePoint, School and staff handbooks)
- Our School Nurse, Student Support staff, Engagement Coordinator and Teachers deliver health and wellbeing education and social skills development in response to needs identified by student wellbeing data, classroom teachers or other school staff each year
- Students can contribute to and provide feedback on decisions about school operations through briefings, their homegroup and classwork and an annual school survey. Students are also encouraged to speak with their teachers, Student Support Workers, the Engagement Coordinator, School Nurse, Assistant Principal and Principal whenever they have any questions or concerns
- All students are welcome to self-refer to Student Support, if they would like to discuss an issue or feel as though they may need support of any kind
- Responsive and sensitive to changes in the student's circumstances and health and wellbeing.
- We participate in programs to help us foster a safe environment that is supportive and inclusive of LGBTIQ+ students.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- We promote upstander behaviour as a way of empowering our students and staff to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- Peer Support and Peer Mediation program encourage positive relationships between students of different levels across the school. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to River Nile School

Bullying is not tolerated at our school. We ensure bullying behaviour is identified and addressed with appropriate and proportionate consequences. All bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively.

Students/staff who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students/staff who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff/leadership or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students, parents/carers or school community members reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by River Nile School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to their Homegroup Teacher, Student Support Worker, Assistant Principal or Principal. Students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff. Staff are encouraged to speak to a member of the School Leadership Team.

Parents/carers or school community members who develop concerns that their child or a person is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at River Nile School should contact:

	Email	Telephone
Lisa Wilson – Principal	lisa.wilson@rivernileschool.vic.edu.au	03 9329 8425
Susan Kent – Assistant Principal	susan.kent@rivernileschool.vic.edu.au	03 9329 8425
Nadia Faragaab – Engagement Coord	nadia.faragaab@rivernileschool.vic.edu.au	03 9329 8425
Jacinta Bongiorno – School Nurse	jacinta.bongiorno@rivernileschool.vic.edu.au	03 9329 8425

Investigations

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations in the incident register with a note in Compass Chronicles, and, if appropriate the student wellbeing file; and
2. Inform relevant staff involved, i.e. Homegroup Teacher, Engagement Coordinator, School Nurse, Assistant Principal, Principal.

The Principal or their most appropriate delegate from the School Leadership Team, is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, they may:

- speak to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parent/carer(s) of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the Principal (or their delegate) in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

Responses to bullying behaviours

When the Principal (or their delegate) has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with relevant teachers, Student Support Team members, the Assistant Principal and specialist staff etc.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, River Nile School will consider:

- the age, maturity and individual circumstances of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour.

The Principal (or delegate) may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer wellbeing support, including referral to the School Nurse or Student Support Team member or specialist external provider to:
 - the target student(s) or person(s)
 - the students/persons engaging in the bullying behaviour
 - affected students/persons, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student/person.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students/persons involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students/persons involved to help to encourage students/persons to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students/persons are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a process using a Support Group Method, involving the target student(s)/person(s) engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students/persons who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students/persons involved in the bullying.
- Facilitate a Student Support / Care Team meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students/persons.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students/persons engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including for example, Student Mentor or resilience program.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students/persons involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement cohort, homegroup or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, as appropriate.
- Implement proportionate disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

River Nile School understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

The Principal (or delegate) is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Included in our staff handbook
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings, as required
- Discussed at parent/carers/community information sessions

- Included in student handbook
- Included in school e-newsletter – referred to at least once annually
- Discussed at student forums and with student leaders
- Made available in hard copy from the school administration upon request

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Complaints Grievances and Concerns Policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy
- Gender Identity Policy

Our school also follows Department of Education and Training policy relating to bullying including:

- [Bullying Prevention and Response](#)
- [Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies](#)
- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- [LGBTIQ Student Support Policy](#)

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Report racism or religious discrimination in schools](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years, or earlier as required following an incident or analysis of new research or school data relating to bullying, to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data to inform this review will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with students, staff and parent/carer/school community
- annual student surveys
- staff feedback
- assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with student leadership group, staff group and the school Board.

The River Nile School Inc.

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