

Australian International Islamic College (AIC)

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Anti-Bullying Policy

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The AIC is implementing this policy to ensure that students and staff feel safe from bullying in all its forms. The policy sets out the requirements for dealing with bullying.

The basic beliefs underlying the policy are:

1. Every individual has value in a community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Every conflict can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need help to solve conflict.
4. A 'No-Blame' approach is the most effective means of dealing with conflict resolution.
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
6. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents/carers/students, and people visiting the school site.

Responsibility

Principal

Point of Contact

Bullying Contact Person

DEFINITIONS

“Bullying is **repeated** oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person and occurs when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, or their property, reputation or social acceptance.”

Bullying involves a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + (typically) repetition + an unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.

There are three broad categories of bullying.

- **Direct physical bullying** e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **Indirect bullying** - This form of bullying is harder to recognise 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:

- lying and spreading rumours
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- provoking a food-allergic reaction
- mimicking
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone

- damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
- cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

Cyber-bullying, or e-bullying, is a reasonably recent type of bullying which involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, (mobile) phone and text messages, instant messaging (SMS), chat rooms and video internet sites e.g. YouTube. It can be particularly harmful because it can happen anywhere and at any time. Thus young people who are the victims of cyber-bullying have no place where they feel safe. If the bullying is of a serious and threatening nature then obviously it becomes a legal issue and students and parents should seek advice by reporting the matter to the police.

If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in the school's Child Protection Policy then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

What bullying is not

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble or school yard fights. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is **not**.

Bullying is not:

- **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** – It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation.** A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion**. However, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should not be ignored or condoned.

POLICY

The policy of the AIC is to take a proactive approach to bullying by establishing processes to educate and inform students about bullying and procedures to follow in the event that a student is being bullied.

All students upon entry to the AIC and all on-going students will be educated about the College's anti-bullying guidelines as follows:

1. Year 1 and Year 8 students will be taken through a formal workshop including activities and discussions on the issue of bullying.
2. Education for all other year levels will occur through the College's Pastoral Care program and at Year Level assemblies throughout the year.

In addition:

- Parents will be included in the education process. e.g. Parents and Friends evenings and Newsletter;

- all teaching staff will be continually educated with regard to bullying at our school and more importantly, what their responsibilities are; and
- a bullying audit will be conducted as necessary in Years 8 & 9, and, at least, once every two years.

The school has a 'no-blame' approach to bullying. That is, its main aim is to stop the bullying, rather than punish the perpetrator, although that does not preclude punishment if bullying persists.

For any incidents of bullying, a member of staff/senior student will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps should be taken:

1. Identification.

A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problem to a staff member or senior student who notifies a member of staff identified as a Bullying Contact Person to implement the anti-bullying program.

2. Initial interview.

The Contact Person interviews the victim and bully separately, and records the details of the incident in writing on a standard proforma. The interviewer makes both parties aware of the bullying strategy and policy and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The interviewer works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame, or to punish; but to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the school policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

3. Follow-up Interview

If the incident is repeated or the problem continues - both parties record the incident/problem in writing on a standard proforma. The Contact staff member interviews the victim and bully together and discusses the problem; makes the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having; and makes suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict. The Contact Person may seek help from a qualified counsellor at any stage.

The Contact Person sends a letter to both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences that may flow from a repeat of bullying.

If a solution to a particular problem is not found, the school may consider the use of an outside person, such as a trained mediator, to assist in reaching a resolution.

4. Reinforce (as above), employ sanctions

If repeated counselling by the Contact Person, or others, does not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Detention
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- Internal Suspension
- Major fixed term suspension
- Seek help from qualified counsellor
- Permanent exclusion

The school keeps central records of all reported incidents of bullying. These are analysed on a regular basis to ascertain major areas where bullying occurs, sex and age of victims and bullies, and strategies which have been successful. A review of the school's policy is undertaken every 12 months, taking into account this annual data.

An important consideration for schools, teachers, parents and students is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. Schools need to constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and to remind students how to counteract bullying, as well as offering programs to lift self-esteem and resilience; students need to be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders; and parents need to be confident to approach the school with their concerns, and encouraged to work with schools in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

SCHOOL AND STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

The school will:

- Involve students, staff and parents in the development and review of its Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Identify one or more members of staff as a Bullying Contact Person.
- Ensure all staff are familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy and provide appropriate professional development on a regular basis, including at the time of induction of new staff members.
- Establish and train student Peer Buddies to whom victims of bullying can report, and/or approach for support.
- Ensure that all accessible areas of the school are patrolled thoroughly.
- Establish, and widely publicise an e-mail address for students/parents to anonymously report bullying.

Staff members will:

- Watch for early signs of distress in students. This could be evident in any aspect of school life.
- Ensure they are familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
- Offer the victim immediate support and help and outline what will now happen.
- Educate all students with regard to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with students, parents or other staff members.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students should:

- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted Peer Buddy or a teacher or year level coordinator or other staff member **or**, anonymously, via the school's anti-bullying email address.
- Actively support students they know are being bullied.
- Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents should:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child, such as, unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, equipment that has gone missing, request for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.

- Take an active interest in their child's social life.
- Report to the school's Bullying Contact Person or any other member of school staff if they know, or think, their child is being bullied.
- Keep a written record if the bullying persists: Who, What, Where and When?
- Advise their child to tell a trusted teacher.
- Tell their child that there is nothing wrong with them.
- NOT encourage their child to hit back or respond verbally.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with the school staff and administration.

POLICY RELEASE DETAILS

Date of Policy

October 2015

Approved by

Board

Review Date

Annually, in consultation with students, staff and parents