

Anti-Bullying Guidelines

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Tweed Valley Adventist College is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and supportive learning environment where all students are able to learn, grow, and participate free from bullying, harassment, intimidation, and fear. These guidelines align with NSW registration requirements, child protection legislation, and best-practice wellbeing frameworks, and are underpinned by the Christian values of kindness, dignity, justice, and care for others.

Philosophy

Tweed Valley Adventist College believes that every person is created in the image of God and is therefore deserving of dignity, respect, and compassion. This belief is grounded in the teachings of Jesus, who instructed us to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40) and to treat others as we would wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12).

Bullying behaviour is inconsistent with these values and with the College's commitment to student wellbeing, safety, and positive school culture. The College does not accept bullying as a normal or inevitable part of growing up. All students have the right to learn and socialise in an environment free from intimidation, harassment, or harm.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- clearly define bullying behaviour;
- outline preventative and educative approaches;
- describe reporting and response procedures;
- ensure procedural fairness for all students involved; and
- meet the College's obligations under NSW child protection and student welfare requirements.

These guidelines apply to all students, staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors, and extend to bullying behaviour that occurs on school grounds, during school activities, or through digital technologies where there is a clear impact on the wellbeing or safety of students.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical, or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. Bullying behaviour is usually characterised by the following elements:

- a) behaviour that is intended to cause harm, fear, distress, or humiliation;
- b) behaviour that is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time; and
- c) an imbalance of power where the targeted student feels unable to stop the behaviour.

Bullying can be overt or covert. It may be obvious to others, or subtle and difficult to detect. Behaviour described as 'just joking' or 'having fun' may still constitute bullying if it causes harm or distress to the recipient.

What Bullying Is Not

Not all inappropriate behaviour is bullying. The following are not, in themselves, bullying:

- mutual conflict or disagreement between students of equal power;
- one-off incidents of unkind or inappropriate behaviour (though these are still taken seriously);
- reasonable discipline, correction, or boundary-setting by staff.

While these behaviours may not meet the definition of bullying, they may still require intervention, support, or disciplinary action under the College's Student Behaviour and Conduct Procedures.

Forms of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, damaging property;
- Verbal: name-calling, teasing, insults, threats;
- Psychological: intimidation, manipulation, stalking, coercion;
- Social: exclusion, spreading rumours, encouraging others to isolate a person;
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, harassment related to sex or sexuality;
- Cyber: misuse of digital technologies to harass, threaten, humiliate, or target others.

While cyberbullying is a significant concern, in-person bullying within the school environment remains the most prevalent form and is treated with equal seriousness.

Impact of Bullying

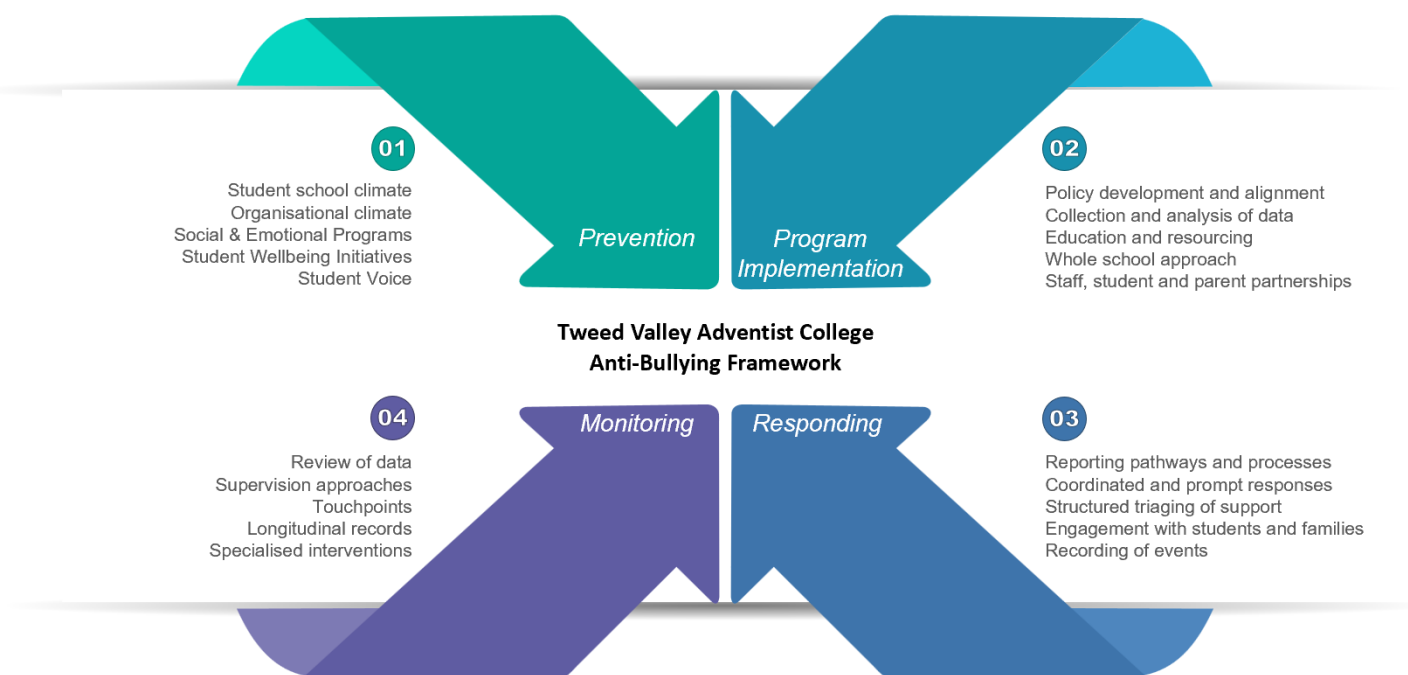
Bullying can have significant and long-lasting effects on students' wellbeing, learning, and development. Research indicates that students who experience bullying are at increased risk of:

- anxiety, depression, and emotional distress;
- social withdrawal and relationship difficulties;
- reduced engagement and academic achievement;
- physical health complaints; and
- self-harm or suicidal ideation.

Students who engage in bullying behaviour may also experience negative long-term outcomes if behaviour is not addressed through appropriate intervention and support.

Bullying Framework – Tweed Valley Adventist College

The following framework has been developed by Tweed Valley Adventist College, in order represent the strategies within its anti-bullying initiatives. Following the framework is an explanation of each part of the framework.



Section 1: Prevention

- a) School climate is the collective subjective experiences of students at school and includes aspects such as student-teacher relationships; connectedness to school; order, safety & discipline; academic support; opportunities for engagement; and the social atmosphere. Positive school climate has been shown to reduce school bullying.

- b) Organisational climate is the shared perception of employees regarding their work environment. This has an impact on many aspects of a school's culture, including the way in which bullying is dealt with.
- c) Social and emotional programs can be provided at a whole class, small group or individual level. These can assist in developing empathy, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making, assisting in developing positive school climate.
- d) Student wellbeing initiatives can operate at a number of levels, from supporting individual students through to delivering programs designed to enhance the wellbeing of students.
- e) Student Voice provides the opportunity for student feedback to help inform 'next steps'.

Section 2: Program Implementation

- a) Anti-bullying policies need to be reviewed at least annually, ensuring there is alignment with research, related policies and with school needs.
- b) Whole school data needs to be collected and analysed on an annual basis. This should inform both policy and practice.
- c) Ongoing education needs to be provided to each part of the school community.
- d) The approach to anti-bullying needs to be part of a whole school approach.
- e) Staff, students and parents need to work together.
- f) Recommendations from external agencies are valuable in adding to the information that the school is working with.

Section 3: Responding to Bullying Events

- a) It is important to have multiple reporting pathways that students can use to report events.
- b) It is important for any reported events to be followed up on quickly.
- c) There needs to be a structured team approach to responding to reports of bullying.
- d) Students and their families need to be part of the conversation and part of the solution. Parents of both the bully and the victim need to be part of the conversation.
- e) Events and the way in which they are dealt with should be carefully recorded.

Section 4: Ongoing monitoring

- a) The data the school collects needs to be ongoing and to be reviewed at regular intervals.
- b) The approach towards supervision of students needs to be carefully planned and thoroughly implemented.
- c) Touchpoints need to be had, where those who have had previous issues with bullying are 'checked-in' with.
- d) It is important that records are ongoing and that 'touchpoints' are recorded.
- e) Specialised interventions may be necessary to provide additional layers of monitoring and support.

Cyberbullying

The College may respond to cyberbullying that occurs outside school hours where it has a direct impact on student wellbeing or school safety. Matters may be referred to external agencies, including police, where required.

Support Services

Students may access support through classroom and roll teachers, Heads of School, chaplaincy, and counselling services. External referrals may be made where appropriate. All support is provided in a confidential, respectful, and restorative manner.