



**AUSTRALIAN
ISLAMIC COLLEGE**

Bullying Policy

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Table of Contents

What is Bullying?	3
Symptoms of Bullying	3
<i>Cyber Bullying</i>	4
<i>Sexting</i>	5
<i>Cyber anonymity</i>	5
How does the College discourage bullying?	6
What should you do if you are being bullied?	7
Don't be a Victim	9
If You Are Being Bullied Tell Someone	9
Finding out	9
Resources about bullying	11

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What is Bullying?

Bullying is the deliberate intention to harm someone who does not have the power to stop it.

Bullying, harassment or any form of discrimination is immoral and can be unlawful because it interferes with the right of a person to feel safe and valued as a member of a community.

Bullying takes many forms. It can be:

- Face-to-face such as fighting, pushing, taunting, insulting, embarrassing, intimidating and invading personal space
- Behind-the-back such as writing threatening or offensive messages, sending distressing emails and writing anonymous hurtful notes.
- Done individually, such as mocking or teasing someone
- Done as a group by such means as social exclusion or hate group recruitment.
- Physical
- Psychological.
- Sexual harassment which involves behaviours such as unwanted sexual touching, inappropriate joking, exposure, making sexual advances or demeaning someone due to their sexual orientation
- Racial harassment which involves behaviours such as social exclusion, teasing, taunting and threats based on another person's race.
- The causing of hurt by traditional methods such as punching, kicking and spreading hurtful rumours
- The causing of hurt by contemporary means such as cyber bullying, sexting, engaging in identity theft or by trashing someone on social networking sites.

The key features of bullying are that it:

- Causes hurt and distress
- Is repeated,
- Involves the use of power in an unfair way.

Bullying need not always be done by the older or stronger. "Bullying up" is bullying done by the smaller, the younger and the weaker, who either use anonymous means to bully, such as cyber bullying, or overt means to bully, knowing that any retaliation would make the provoked person look like they are the bully.

Symptoms of Bullying

For behaviour to be classified as bullying, it needs to involve repeated actions that are designed to cause hurt. Not having friends or not being popular isn't necessarily a sign that a person is being bullied. It may simply mean a person lacks interpersonal skills. There is a difference between bullying behaviour and what can be described as normal interpersonal conflict.

The symptoms associated with bullying include, but are not limited to:

- Not wanting to go to school, anger, tears, depression, low self-esteem and a raft of psychosomatic symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches.
- Bedwetting and sleeplessness can also be symptoms of bullying, particularly in the young.
- Withdrawal and reluctance to 'join in' can be a warning sign, as can truancy, misbehaviour and aggressive behaviour.
- Cuts, bruising, torn clothing, requests for extra food or money as well as a decline in academic performance can also be clues that a student may be suffering from bullying.

Bullying in any form is unacceptable at the Australian Islamic College and against our Ethos. Persons identified as bullies will be dealt with firmly and may be expelled from the College (depending on the severity of the bullying).

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is causing hurt via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through smart phones and other mobile devices.

Cyber bullying is a growing problem in society. Modern technologies empower the individual, even the most unlikely of individuals, with an immense capacity to cause harm. It is also an attractive means of bullying for it can, under certain conditions, be carried out with relative anonymity.

Cyber bullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge 'audience'.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the awfulness of their behaviour.

Cyber bullying represents unlawful activity that may result in Police laying charges. Cyber bullying has been linked to depression, self-harm and even suicide.

Examples of Cyber Bullying:

- Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures via mobile phone or the Internet and by social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
- Using modern technologies to engage in the social exclusion of someone and in hate group recruitment.
- Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages or pictures about someone on the Internet.
- Stealing someone's identity in order to harm them in some way.
- Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising pictures of themselves.

- Covertly filming, recording or taking a picture of someone and posting the images on social network sites to cause hurt.
- 'Outing' and disseminating confidential information about someone.
- 'Flaming' and multi-messaging to clog up a person's electronic system and to cause them distress.
- Using aliases and pseudonyms in chat rooms and on social networking sites in order to harass and upset.
- Engaging in cyber-stalking and the invading of privacy.
- Referring to your school in a negative or disparaging way on the internet and/or social networking sites.

Sexting

Another expression of cyber bullying is sexting. Sexting is taking sexually explicit photos and making them available for others to see via a carriage service such as mobile phone or computer. Sending explicit images of anyone, including yourself, is a crime if you are under the age of 18 years. If the person in the picture is under 16 years, it can be a very serious crime resulting in charges of paedophilia.

Cyber anonymity

Students need to remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed even with a press of the 'delete' button. The image may emerge at any stage in the future and lead to serious consequences. Using pseudonyms, passwords and avatars does not protect the identity of a cyber-bully. Technologies exist to identify those who misuse modern technologies to harm others.

Do not engage in cyber bullying. Do not post any image or comment that is designed to cause hurt. It is morally wrong and in many cases, it is also illegal.

It should also be noted that even if cyber bullying is engaged in while not at school, the matter will be taken up by the College because the moral welfare of its students is of importance to the Australian Islamic College, as is anything that brings the College into disrepute and harms or has the potential to harm our students.

Students can protect themselves from some forms of cyber harm by noting the following advice:

- Never tell anyone, even your friends, your passwords, private details or access codes.
- When speaking to someone you do not know on the Net, be aware they may not be who they say they are.
- Be aware that there are predators who use the internet to lure young people into inappropriate sexual relationships. Others use tricks, such as pretending to be a bank, to get the victim to share their confidential financial details. This usually results in identity fraud and the stealing of money.
- Never tell people you do not know well what your address is, or how they can meet up with you.
- Always be careful what you say or what you show a person in confidence on the Net for it is never guaranteed to remain confidential. The information may be sent on to others.
- Know that the most frequent use of the Net is for illegal activities such as scams, pornography and gambling.

Finally, if you find yourself the victim of cyber bullying, keep the evidence and report the bullying to an appropriate adult. It is generally best not to respond to the cyber bully, or give them any satisfaction they have caused you hurt. If you do respond to the bully, do not do so while hot with anger. This can result in mutual cyber bullying which means both parties become guilty of bullying.

One's 'digital footprint' may be accessed many years after material is posted online and used by others, eg. prospective employers and the media.

How does the College discourage bullying?

Bullying is totally against the Mission and Ethos of the Australian Islamic College. The College is committed to providing an educational environment in which students feel safe and valued.

To achieve these aims, the College seeks to create a school-wide culture that:

- Allows students to flourish free from discrimination, harassment or any form of bullying.
- Does not tolerate, condone or trivialize bullying behaviours.
- Is aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour.
- Provides support to the victims of bullying.
- Deals firmly with bullies so that they either stop their bullying or leave the College.

The methods used by the College to discourage bullying will vary from time-to-time, with new initiatives being introduced when deemed appropriate.

The measures that have been used to discourage bullying at the Australian Islamic College include, but are not limited to:

- Employing a suitable range of sanctions to deal with and discourage bullies. These sanctions include suspension and expulsion.
- Putting up signage around the College to promote a bully-free environment.
- Printing anti-bullying policies into student diaries and on the College website.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in assemblies, classes and year group meetings.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in the staff handbook, in College policy documents and in occasional articles in publications such as Schoolzine newsletter.
- Promoting a bully-free environment in all classes, including PE.
- Undertaking confidential surveys of student well-being and bullying behaviour and following up on identified bullies and victims.
- Ensuring effective pastoral support for students through the appointment of Coordinators.
- Adhering to the College's Behaviour Policy.
- Employing Coordinators who have skills in helping both victims of bullying and identified bullies.
- Having a team of staff who support the College's Bullying policy and who students feel comfortable to inform about any bullying.
- Training staff to detect bullying behaviours.
- Encouraging staff to adopt classroom management techniques that discourage opportunities for bullying behaviours.
- Employing staff who model tolerance, empathy and acceptance of individual differences.

- Instilling in staff the requirement to take their supervision duties seriously so that there is a pervasive sense of staff presence when on duty.
- Reviewing the College's Bullying Policy from time-to-time, to ensure it remains effective and relevant.

The effectiveness of these strategies rests with ALL members of the College community.

The Australian Islamic College reserves the right to alter the means and ways by which it discourages bullying. Any suggestions to maintain and enhance a 'bully free' environment is welcome by all stakeholders.

What should you do if you are being bullied?

If you are being bullied, it is important that you talk to an adult who can help you and who you feel comfortable with.

There can be a reluctance to report bullying because of a fear of being labelled a 'dobber' and going against an unwritten code of student behaviour. This concern is understandable but must not prevent you from reporting bullying behaviour. Most students dislike bullying and would support your attempts to stop it.

Some students may not want to report bullying because they feel it might only make matters worse. Again, this fear is understandable, but most teachers are trained in ways to help victims of bullying in a manner that protects the victim.

It can take courage to challenge the bully, to expose them for who they are and to play a part in improving our community by ridding it of bullying behaviour. The Australian Islamic College expects its students to show this courage and not tolerate bullying as a bystander or as a victim.

Everyone at the Australian Islamic College should be committed to making the College a safe and happy community.

If you are being bullied, you must tell a responsible adult who has the capacity to help.

Options include:

- Parents, guardians or other adult relatives.
- Teachers, Coaches, Year Coordinators.
- Principal, or Executive Principal.

Others who can be informed include:

- Captains and Vice Captains.
- Administrative staff.

If needed, further help can be obtained from:

- Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Websites: <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/><https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

REMEMBER

The Australian Islamic College is committed to providing a safe and happy learning environment. Therefore, the College wants to know if there are any bullying behaviours being exhibited that will undermine this goal.

If you are being bullied, you are encouraged to do the RITE thing:

- R** **RECOGNISE** you have the right to feel safe and to operate in an environment free of bullying.
- I** **INFORM** the bullies that you want them to stop. Do this in a polite but firm way.
- T** **TELL** a responsible adult about the bullying.
- E** **EVALUATE** the situation. If it does not improve, seek further help.

When bullied, try not to get angry or show that you are angry. If your anger is obvious, the bully has the satisfaction of knowing that they have controlled your emotions.

- Admit to imperfections. It can send positive messages about you having a realistic understanding of yourself.
- Use non-offensive humour. Bullying can be blunted by a good laugh. The capacity to laugh at yourself can create a bonding with a group that might otherwise remain hostile.
- Review your own behaviours and body language. If you look like a victim you can become a victim. Squared shoulders and a smile can do much to deter a bully.
- Avoid trouble spots. There are always places that are high-risk areas for bullying. Avoid them.
- Develop your 'emotional quotient'. This includes the ability to read body language, to sense mood, to be intuitive and empathetic. Such skills not only make you less of a target, they can enable you to see where a situation may be heading.
- Early detection of possible bullying can provide options for avoiding it.
- Surround yourself with good friends. Those with strong friendships are usually less of a target for bullies.

If bullied, try not to retaliate for this can often inflame the situation.

- If you are being bullied, remind yourself that it is the bully who has the problem, not you. Try to think through what inadequacies the bully might have that causes them to behave this way. Understanding a bully is a great way to begin to solve the problem.

Don't be a Victim

- Victims can attract bullying behaviour. This is not to excuse bullying or condone it in any way; it is merely to suggest that victims can sometimes reduce their chances of being a target if they:
- Maintain good self-esteem.
- Work on fitting in, getting involved and making a rich contribution to the College.
- Model kindness, thoughtfulness and respect.
- Don't dramatise situations out of proportion.
- Develop an ability to deal with:
 - Failure and success
 - Threats and fear
 - Rejection and disappointment
 - Anger and hurt
- Try and maintain good physical fitness, as this can help with resilience.
- Having noted the above, it is vital that anyone who is a victim of bullying recognise that they have been wronged. They must report the matter and not suffer in silence.

If You Are Being Bullied Tell Someone

Parents - How can you help a child who is being bullied?

The most important thing you, as a parent, can do to help your child who is being bullied is to provide love and reassurance and to support them in their quest to solve the problem. A report of bullying by your child should always be taken seriously.

Parents can take comfort that the bully-free world they want for their child is also desired by the College. Therefore, parents you are invited to contact the College should you become aware that your child is being bullied. The College appreciates being able to partner with you in solving bullying problems.

Finding out

Sometimes, a child can be reluctant to tell their parents that they are being bullied. Creating a culture of openness within your home can help. Solutions can be as simple as having evening meals together (without the distraction of the television) and making it a regular habit to enquire how your child is feeling.

It can be useful, when you suspect your child may be being bullied, to use an intermediary such as an older sibling, grandparent or close friend to find out if they are. You can also use your family doctor, a child psychologist or our College Coordinator.

What can parents do to reduce the chances of their child being bullied?

There are things as a parent you can do to reduce the chances of your child being bullied. These include:

- Developing your child's 'emotional quotient' (EQ). Children who have been brought up without many brothers and sisters, or who spend a lot of time playing alone in front of the TV or computer screen, may need extra training in how to deal with the bumps and bruises of living in a community with others. They need to be trained in behaviours that others find

attractive. They need to learn the social graces of sharing and of adapting behaviours that are appropriate.

- This is particularly true of some cultures who may not fully understand the behavioural codes thought attractive to the predominant culture of the College.
- Teaching your child strategies when reacting to bullying behaviour. The main message is: They must tell someone.
- Have good management systems in the home to monitor the presence, or otherwise, of cyber bullying. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Making sure your child knows about the various forms of cyber bullying and how to identify them.
 - Reminding your child not to share personal details, passwords, security or access information with anyone, even their closest friends.
 - Advising your child that if they experience cyber bullying, to save the information and report it to the proper authorities.
 - Becoming more computer literate and knowing about such things as privacy settings and net filters.
 - Occasionally Google your child's name to see what is being posted about them online.
 - Encourage your child to conduct themselves properly in "Cyberia" and to ensure that their "digital footprint" is one they, and you as their parent, would be proud of.
 - Remind your child of the deceit and scams that are prevalent on the Net.
 - Encourage computer use in an open family area, so that there is effective monitoring of online activity.
 - For younger children – know your child's password and occasionally monitor social networking sites. They should be aware you will do so.
- Partnering with the College: When some parents hear that their child has been bullied they can become very angry. This is entirely understandable. However, this anger can become destructive if it spills over and alienates those that can help, such as the College itself. The Australian Islamic College takes bullying seriously, as outlined in this Policy, and actively seeks to stop bullying.
- Avoid over-protective parenting: Some parents engage in over-protection or 'helicopter parenting'. It can be difficult for schools to work with these parents as they are prone to 'bubble wrapping' their child and to catastrophizing the hurt. Children pick up on this behaviour and can become adept at feeding their parents more stories of horror to gain extra sympathy and attention.
- Avoid premature judgement: Sometimes parents will react angrily to facts reported by their child, but on investigation by their school, these 'facts' sometimes turn out to not be entirely accurate. It is wise to test facts before making judgements.
- Be patient: The College is committed to investigating all bullying allegations in a manner that protects the rights of all involved, including the bully. This is not the College failing to take immediate action to punish someone, it is the College exercising procedural fairness. It is important to let the College investigate the matter rather than challenging the bully directly, or the parents of the bully.
- Be supportive: Dealing with a child who is a bully can be difficult for the parent. Some will support their child's school, while others will not and will sometimes exhibit those same behaviours that have landed their child in trouble as a bully. There are also parents who are outraged because their child has been bullied. This can lead to the College being sandwiched

between two sets of angry parents. Support and understanding is sought from parents of alleged bullies and alleged victims when the College is investigating accusations of bullying.

Resources about bullying can be found at:

<https://www.ncab.org.au/> - National Centre Against Bullying

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/> – Bullying No Way!

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/> - Australian Government's Screen Smart Parent Tour

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/>