



Student Welfare Policy

Welfare policy

This policy complies with:

- The National Safe Schools Framework 2004
- State Government Anti - Discrimination Legislation
- Covenant Christian School Mission and Vision Statement

Rationale

Our Mission Statement declares that we assist "...parents in the nurture of their children, by providing a Christ – centred, biblically grounded, culturally engaging and academically rigorous education to equip the children to live for God’s glory.”

This means that as a community of staff, students and parents and caregivers, we seek to treat each other in a Christ- like way. The well-being of the students is thus closely tied to our Mission as a school.

This policy encompasses the legal requirements to protect children from harm as well as the moral and spiritual obligation to seek the best for each child.

Policy Statement

At Covenant Christian School, student welfare involves the personal, academic, social and spiritual needs of the child.

Welfare involves the key areas of **Discipline, Teaching and Learning and Community.**

Covenant Christian School aims to provide:

- A safe and nurturing environment in which students can enjoy learning from staff who are well-qualified committed Christian teachers and who seek to care for and nurture the students.
- An environment in which students can come to understand how God has given them abilities and gifts and how they can use them, whether the gifts are academic, leadership, sporting or creative.
- A fair and effective discipline system, which encourages good behaviour and seeks to improve the behaviour of students who do not behave well.
- Effective teaching and learning experiences, which engage students in the activities of the school, including extra-curricular activities.
- An understanding that we are all made in God’s image but with many different strengths and that we need to be accepting of and loving towards those who are different from ourselves.
- A community in which parents, students and staff can communicate well with and support one another.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, students and caregivers/parents. The following policies and documents should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Discipline policy
- Anti-Harassment policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Discrimination Policy
- Student Leadership Policy

Welfare Policy Overview and Structure

Covenant Christian School will abide by all laws involving child protection. All teachers are Mandatory Reporters and staff will be regularly reminded of their responsibilities as such. The Principal will report all incidents of concern where a student is considered to be at risk of significant harm to the relevant authorities. The Principal will also intervene in any issues of a serious nature where there is difficulty reaching resolution.

Our Pastoral Care System is an integral part of our Student Welfare Policy and it is through this system that our Welfare policy is put into action. It is expressed through the categories of Discipline, Community and Teaching and Learning, which are developed below.

Procedural fairness is essential in matters of welfare and especially discipline. This involves providing relevant parties with the appropriate policies, provision of details of all allegations to relevant parties and the right to an impartial response.

Roles and Responsibilities

Junior School

The Class teacher is the key person who oversees the welfare of the students in their care. The Deputy Principal Junior School and the Infants Coordinator liaise with the classroom teachers to deal with any issues. The Principal will also be involved in more serious or difficult cases

The Junior School staff have access to the Counsellors and Chaplain. Activities and talks promoting a safe learning environment and student welfare are organised for students.

Secondary School

The Deputy Principal Pastoral Care is ultimately responsible for the welfare of students in the Secondary School and will intervene in matters of a serious or on-going nature.

A Pastoral Care Year Coordinator cares for each Year group from Year 7 to Year 12. These Coordinators deal with welfare issues, arrange pastoral activities and assist with discipline. They are key people in the welfare system and

will often liaise with parents, the counsellors and with the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal Pastoral Care will meet regularly with the Year Coordinators and Counsellors to discuss issues involving students and to plan pastoral care activities.

Every secondary student is in a vertical multi-age Home Class. These Home Classes are based around the 4 sporting Houses and there are 8 Home Classes per House, 32 in total. These meet each day for about 15 minutes. A staff member is assigned to each class and stays with that group throughout the years the student is at Covenant. This makes the Home Class Teacher a key person for the individual welfare of the student. Older students are encouraged to take leadership roles within the Home Class and to mentor and support younger or new students.

Counselling Services

At Covenant, two Counsellors, one full time the other part time, ensure there is at least 1 counsellor present each day. One Counsellor is also the Chaplain. Students may see the Counsellors on an emergency basis, as a drop-in, or they may arrange a time personally or by email. Students whose family has experienced a death, divorce or traumatic event will be referred to the Counsellors as needed. Staff may refer students to the Counsellors and may talk to them about their own concerns. The counsellors assist from time to time if mediation is needed.

The Chaplain runs a prayer session that will discuss spiritual matters and pray with students and staff.

Several staff have undergone advanced PeaceWise mediation training and may be involved in mediation issues.

An offsite confidential counselling practice is available to staff at The Mindspace, Mona Vale

The above key people are instrumental in fulfilling the Welfare Policy of the school and in assisting the classroom teachers in maintaining a safe and supportive environment.

As part of its Welfare Policy Covenant has asked students to follow a student Code of Conduct. Students will work through this in their Vertical Home Classes.

Student Code of Conduct

A safe and positive learning environment depends on all students behaving in a respectful way as outlined in the table below.

At Covenant we want everyone...	Therefore, it is each student's responsibility to:
...to feel safe and to be treated with respect and understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be caring and respectful of others • Try to understand other students and teachers, and offer help where appropriate, • be fair, don't tease, bully, verbally abuse or belittle other students • speak up if you see others being bullied
...to be content with the way in which God has made them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and respect opinions of others
...to learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn all you can, and don't disrupt the learning of others • Work hard in class, complete homework and assignments on time • Be prepared for class and arrive on time • Ask for help if you need it • Listen to others • Work cooperatively with others
...to share a safe and healthy environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act in a safe and considerate manner
...to enjoy a pleasant, well-maintained school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect and care for school buildings, grounds, equipment and furniture • Put rubbish in the bin • Handle equipment carefully
...to expect their property to be safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect the property of others • Be careful with your own belongings and do not interfere with those of other people • Hand in any lost property you find • Ensure your name is on all your property

Discipline: providing a safe and supportive environment

Discipline comes from the Latin *discere* – to learn. It gives us the word *discern*. The link between learning, well-being and discipline is vital as good discipline enhances all aspects of learning.

Because we value a safe and supportive environment:

- There are clear expectations around behaviour, which are understood by all the community.
- These include respecting others, respecting and submitting to the authority of all staff and respecting the property of others and the school environment (The 3R's)
- Bullying, teasing and harassment will not be tolerated and students will be encouraged to show loving acceptance towards others.
- Support from all the relevant Pastoral Care staff is available to students. The Pastoral Care staff includes Counsellors, Year Coordinators and Home Class teachers. However, as a Christian school we consider all staff have a pastoral responsibility.
- Positive discipline will include verbal acknowledgement, written comments, comments on the parent portal or webpage, positive phone calls home and certificates of merit.
- Inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with by restorative discipline, including time-out, removal from class, detention, in school exclusion from class, suspension or expulsion. Covenant does not practise exclusion from a group of schools.
- Behaviour that involves risk to others will be managed by a risk assessment and management program. Parents will be involved in this process.

Community

Because Covenant Christian School is a community of Christians, then:

- We believe that parents are responsible before God for the education of their children.
- Staff, students and parents should work together to fulfil the Mission statement of the school: "To assist parents in the nurture of their children, by providing a Christ-centred, biblically grounded, culturally engaging and academically rigorous education to equip the children to live for God's glory."
- The welfare and learning of the students will be enhanced by the active participation and support of parents in the classroom and beyond.
- Parents, community members and staff will share responsibility for appropriate student behaviour and the welfare of students.
- Communication with parents and carers will be both formal, via student parent teacher interviews, reports and the parent portal, and informal, via phone calls and occasionally emails.
- The wider community will benefit from and appreciate Covenant Christian School as we seek to serve others with our God-given gifts.

Because we value effective Teaching and Learning, then we:

- recognise that as a school, student welfare is closely linked to teaching and learning opportunities and methods
- encourage students to become responsible for their own learning
- encourage students to recognise that learning is a lifelong process
- give parents opportunities to be informed about and involved in their children's education.
- will establish effective teaching and learning opportunities supported by good classroom management

- will support teachers in the ongoing improvement of their classroom management and pedagogy by professional development opportunities
- recognise that disruptive classroom behaviour affects the learning of the whole class and the teaching of the staff member
- understand that poor classroom behaviour may reflect an unsettled home life or frustration at work that is too challenging or not challenging enough.

Student Welfare: Anti-Harassment Policy and Procedure

Policy:

Our Mission Statement expresses our aim as assisting “...parents in the nurture of their children, providing a Bible-based, Christ-centred education which equips the children to live for God’s glory.”

This means that we aim to:

- make the school environment a safe place to work and play
- witness the Christian qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23)

At Covenant we want to relate to each other as Jesus did. Bullying is directly opposed to the way Jesus wants us to relate to each other. Working against bullying is a high priority at Covenant since it contradicts the most important principles of the school. We believe that God values every person equally, thus we should care equally for all parties involved in a situation involving bullying

This policy recognises that dealing with bullying is the shared responsibility of parents, staff and students. Its aim is to assist in the promotion of a safe school environment by reducing the occurrence of bullying and reconciling the parties involved.

Our objectives are:

- To establish procedures to ensure an effective response to incidents of bullying
- To ensure that occurrences of bullying are dealt with fairly and consistently
- To raise awareness about the dangers of bullying among school staff, pupils and parents
- To encourage clear communication that bullying is unacceptable
- To develop a culture that does not accept bullying

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying occurs when a person or group of people with more power at that time deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

There are 4 main types of bullying:

Direct physical bullying

This includes punching, hitting, pushing, tripping etc., interfering with belongings.

Direct Verbal bullying

This includes calling names, insults, verbal abuse or sexist, homophobic or racist comments.

Indirect bullying

This is the hardest to recognise and to deal with generally. It works by damaging someone's reputation or humiliating him or her.

It includes telling lies about a person, spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging another's social acceptance.

Cyber bullying

This involves the use of emails, chat rooms, SMS etc. to cause distress.

It includes many elements of indirect bullying but may also involve the use of images, comments and threats. NB it is illegal to threaten harm to another via the internet.

WHAT IS NOT BULLYING?

Often, students and parents say that students are being bullied when they are experiencing friendship issues or other conflicts. The following common problems are not bullying:

Conflict

When students are in conflict it is clear that there is disagreement but there is no unequal power balance. Everyone is upset and looking for a solution. This will require intervention by teachers but is not bullying unless it develops into it because it stays unresolved over time.

Social rejection

Sometimes, students simply do not fit in. They are alone. They seem to prefer this. No one is bothering them. This is not bullying even though it is not ideal.

One-Off episodes

If a student is pushed or verbally abused once, it is not bullying. It is aggression and should be dealt with as such.

Multi target nastiness

If one person is nasty to a range of students once only, this person requires discipline but it is not bullying.

Research shows that:

- Bullying involves one or more students exerting power or dominance over another or others.
- Bullying is deliberate, unwelcome, uninvited and repeated.
- Bullying involves behaviour that is physical, verbal, cyber, psychological or social/relational causing physical or psychological damage.

- Bullying includes a wide range of conduct that causes another person to feel embarrassed, offended, hurt, humiliated, insulted, ridiculed, angry or afraid.
- Bullying can have a serious long-term effect on the health and well-being of young people.

Procedures

Suggested responses

Students

If students feel they are being bullied or have witnessed bullying they should:

- Name the bullying behaviour.
- Tell the person that they are being a bully and to stop the behaviour.

If the behaviour continues:

- Other students should support the person who is being bullied and request help from a teacher at the time of the incident.
- The behaviour should be reported to a teacher (This may be a HCT/ JCT or a teacher on duty or a teacher of their choice.).
- All students should refrain from retaliating. The student should tell their parents.

Teachers

If a student reports a suspected bullying incident the teacher will:

- Listen to both parties and provide support to the target of the bullying.
- Evaluate the nature and seriousness of the reported behaviour.
- If bullying is suspected, then the teacher will report the incident by email to the classroom teacher in Junior School, Deputy Principal Junior School, Year Coordinator and/or Deputy Principal Pastoral Care 7-12.

If any teacher, Home Class teacher or Junior School teacher witnesses incidents of bullying anywhere in the school, they will:

- Intervene and deal with the incident by reminding the students of appropriate behaviour.
- Discipline as appropriate
- Report the incident by email to the Year Coordinator / Deputy Principal Pastoral Care/Deputy Principal Junior School.

Year Coordinator

If an incident report /report is received the relevant Coordinator will:

- Monitor the report received and inform Deputy Principal Pastoral Care or Deputy Principal Junior School.
- Liaise with the staff and parents if necessary suggesting a possible course of action.
- Implement appropriate resolution strategy with appropriate staff.
- Liaise with School Counsellor in referring students who may need counselling or coping strategies, including the victim and the perpetrator.

Parents

If a parent becomes aware of a harassment incident involving their child, they will:

- Report the incident at once to their child's HCT/ Year Coordinator Deputy Pastoral Care or Deputy Principal Junior School as applicable.
- Keep communication open between school and home and attend meetings as required.
- Discuss relevant issues with the School Counsellor if their child is referred.

If a parent becomes aware of a harassment incident involving any other child they will report the incident to the school to follow up.

Covenant Christian School will put in place various proactive procedures to help prevent the occurrence of bullying. These will include:

- Education by such means as role plays at assembly, guest speakers, information brochures
- Integration of lessons on anti-harassment K-12 in the Pastoral Care curriculum, in PDHPE or Health and in other subjects wherever possible and appropriate
- Continuation of programs developing resilience and self-acceptance such as Rock and Water and PeaceWise
- Information to parent body through the Newsletter, website, brochures and Information evenings
- Willingness to discuss and follow through issues.

APPENDIX

Covenant Christian School Anti-Harassment Policy- Responsibilities and Information

A. Responsibilities

Principal, Deputy Principal Pastoral Care 7-12, Deputy Principal Junior School should:

- Ensure that all students, staff and parents know the school's policy and procedure on bullying.

All Staff should:

- be on the lookout for signs of bullying at any time and any part of the school;
- respond immediately to any incidents of bullying they observe directly or if a report of bullying is received.

Classroom and Home Class teachers should:

- ensure that all students know the school's policy on bullying;
- make it clear that the school cares about its students and takes the problem of bullying seriously;
- inform new students of the policy;
- discuss from time to time, the issue of harassment (via Pastoral Care program);
- present activities to promote good relationships (via Pastoral Care program);
- deal with incidents involving those students in their own Home Class promptly;
- refer unresolved, more serious or recurring cases to relevant Year Coordinator anti-Harassment Coordinator and Deputy;
- where appropriate, offer support over a period to both perpetrator and target;
- contact parents in appropriate cases.

Parents should:

- give their children sensible advice. For example:
- do not encourage your child to hit back or retaliate in any way. This tends to make matters worse not better!
- encourage your child to take responsibility for their own actions - justifying their own misbehaviour on the grounds that '*he did it first*' is not an acceptable defence.
- be aware that your children may be victims of bullying or may be bullying others. (see '*Signs of Harassment*')
- encourage them to be open about all aspects of bullying. Talk to your children about suspected bullying.
- inform the school immediately if you suspect that your child is being bullied.
- try to keep an open mind until the facts of the case are known.
- keep in touch with the school to monitor the situation.

Students should:

- be good role models.
- be prepared to speak to parents and teachers to help prevent a situation developing.
- report observed incidents to the HCT/JCT.
- try to overcome any fear of telling and be confident in the support available.
- follow the student code of conduct.

B. Information and definitions

Who is involved?

The Bully ('perpetrator')

- is someone (or a group) who attempts to exercise power over someone else. Any student can be a bully. Stereotyping bullies can be misleading.
- often, bullies too, have real difficulties and we are responsible to educate and assist them.
- in many cases, bullies have themselves been victims of bullying...

The Victim ('target')

- The victim is the bully's target. Any student can be a victim, although there are some students who attract bullying from time to time.

Students at particular risk include those who:

- are new to the school
- are different in appearance, speech or background from other students
- suffer from low self-esteem or are timid, nervous or anxious
- are 'show-offs' or loud-mouthed or demonstrate 'entertaining' reactions when bullied e.g. tantrums, loss of control.
- have special needs - students whose needs arise from obvious physical factors are rarely bullied. However, those whose needs are intellectual only are at much greater risk.

Observers ('bystanders')

- Those who witness harassment without taking any helpful action also contribute to the problem as they are condoning, if not encouraging, harassment.

Signs that a student might be harassed or bullied:

Physical

- Cuts and bruises
- Lost money
- Damaged property
- Torn or missing clothing

Psychological

- Mood swings
- Uncharacteristically quiet
- Less approachable
- Nightmares and changes in sleep patterns
- Destructive or self-harming behaviour
- Depression-lack of motivation
- Overly sensitive or defensive
- Weeping
- Changes in eating patterns

Social

- Doesn't seem to have any friends
- Putting in less effort and/or standard of schoolwork declining
- Giving up on hobbies or interests
- Reluctance about going to school or frightened about the journey to school
- Secretive
- Missing personal belongings