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BULLYING BEHAVIOR AND PREVENTION POLICY

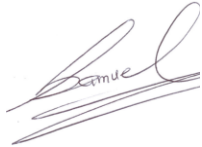
Document Status: **Approved**

Date Issued: **09 January 2024**

Approved by: **EDUQUEST COLLEGE (PTY) LTD
(Governing Board)**

Date for Review: **08 January 2026**

Record of Policy Review:

<i>Date Policy was Issued</i>	<i>Date of Next Review</i>	<i>Reason for Review</i>
09 January 2024	08 January 2026 or as the need arise.	to ensure that the policy remains up to date
Signature		

Purpose

EDUQUEST COLLEGE will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. A student shall not intimidate, harass, or bully another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation and none is acceptable.

EDUQUEST COLLEGE is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment 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 EDUQUEST COLLEGE community
- make clear that no form of bullying at EDUQUEST COLLEGE will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at EDUQUEST COLLEGE 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 accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff and management
- 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 and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at EDUQUEST COLLEGE.

When responding to bullying behaviour, EDUQUEST COLLEGE 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.

EDUQUEST COLLEGE acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

To ensure bullying does not occur on our school and community, EDUQUEST COLLEGE will provide staff development training in bullying prevention and cultivate acceptance and understanding in all students and staff to build each school's capacity to maintain a safe and healthy learning environment

Teachers will use the Second Step Bullying Program to discuss this policy with their students in age-appropriate ways and should assure them that they need not endure any form of bullying. Students who bully violate this policy and are subject to disciplinary action, including expulsion.

Scope

This policy addresses how EDUQUEST COLLEGE aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. EDUQUEST COLLEGE recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student 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 Behaviour*
- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*
- *Inclusion and Diversity policy.*

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

Policy

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is mean or hurtful behavior that keeps happening. It is unfair and one-sided. *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 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.*

EDUQUEST COLLEGE defines bullying by three primary characteristics:

- 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.

Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the:

- *Student Code of Behaviour*
- *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*

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. EDUQUEST COLLEGE will use its **Student Wellbeing 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 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.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at EDUQUEST COLLEGE and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. EDUQUEST COLLEGE will use its **Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy** to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this **Bullying Prevention Policy**.

Bullying Prevention

EDUQUEST COLLEGE has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school environment and culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and utmost respect.

Bullying prevention at EDUQUEST COLLEGE 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. At EDUQUEST COLLEGE:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts, including special presentations from Bully Stoppers.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum in the **Love World Foundation** Program teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- 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.
- We shall participate in any Programme and Action against Bullying and Violence.
- Students hear from members of the wider community (South African Police Officers, cyber security presenters and other Safety and Security Personnel) in regard to the law and consequences of bullying.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to EDUQUEST COLLEGE

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 who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and guardians reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by EDUQUEST COLLEGE are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

We encourage students to speak to classroom teachers, head teachers & Head Managers. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff & Assistant Principals.

Parents or guardians who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at EDUQUEST COLLEGE should contact the school by calling on +27 87 711 1235 or +27 61 729 7343 or making contact via our parent portal.

Investigations

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

1. record the details of the allegations in our behaviour management data base; and
2. inform Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal or Principal.

The Assistant principal or Principal is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Assistant principal or Principal 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 parents 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 Assistant principal or Principal 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 South African Police (SAPS).

When the Assistant principal or Principal 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 Student Wellbeing Team, teachers, Assistant Principal, Principal, Department of Basic Education and Training specialist staff as appropriate.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When deciding about how to respond to bullying behaviour, EDUQUEST COLLEGE will consider:

- the age and maturity 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, including any element of provocation.

Assistant principal or Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the target student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, Social Auxiliary or Social Workers, external provider
- Offer counselling support to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to Student Wellbeing Team, Social Auxiliary or Social Workers, external provider
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to Student Wellbeing Team, Social Auxiliary or Social Workers, external provider
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students 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 involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Facilitate a **Student Support Group meeting** and/or **Behaviour Support Plan** for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including linking with wellbeing programs such as resilience programs, social skills, anger management
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example cyber safety project
- Implement 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 published Government Gazette, Regulations and policy on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.

EDUQUEST COLLEGE 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 guardians with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

Our Assistant Principal and Principal team are 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 www.eduquestcollege.co.za
- Included in staff induction processes
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions
- Discussed at student forums and via student communication tools
- Made available in hard copy from 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 Code of Conduct
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Inclusion and Diversity Policy

Our school also follows Department of Education 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
- Kids Helpline
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!
- Student Wellbeing Hub

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 will be collected through:

- discussion and consultation with student groups, including members of the Student Representative Council, and parent/guardians
- regular staff surveys
- 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
- Attitudes to School Survey
- Parent Opinion Survey