

## **Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Anti- Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure**

### **Context:**

Advance College of Education (ACE) is an independent specialist school catering for young people aged 15–19 who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Students may present with gaps in academic achievement and may experience challenges in group learning environments, which can impact their behaviour and social engagement.

ACE operates across two campuses: Rosebud and Hastings, delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and the Victorian Certificate of Education Vocational Major (VCE VM) (Units 1–4), in line with Victorian Department of Education requirements.

The VPC and VCE VM programs are based on applied learning and youth development principles, focusing on the development of literacy, numeracy, work-related and personal development skills to support pathways into further education, training or employment.

ACE is committed to providing a child safe environment where all students are respected, valued and protected from harm, including bullying, harassment, abuse and neglect.

This policy supports compliance with the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Ministerial Order 1359) and reflects ACE's zero tolerance for child abuse and commitment to child safety..

The program aims to:

- Use curriculum that builds on students' interests, abilities and strengths;
- Provide practical 'hands-on' activities to facilitate learning;
- Provide opportunities to integrate learning outcomes across one activity;
- Recognise all student achievements and value their contribution;
- Allow students to learn at their own pace and in different ways according to their preferred learning style;
- Build resilience and confidence;
- Encourage and support active participation in the community; and
- Extend learning experiences beyond the classroom.

ACE recognises the human rights of all people to access quality education in a safe and inclusive environment free from discrimination.

### **Rationale:**

At ACE, we believe that all members of the College community have the right to learn and work in a supportive setting where they feel safe, comfortable and free from all forms of harassment and bullying. Our College is committed to ensuring a caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

### **Aims:**

This policy and procedure aim to outline how ACE will seek to prevent bullying and harassment in all its forms, and how it will deal with it if it occurs.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Explain the definition of bullying (including cyber-bullying) and harassment.
- Make clear that all forms of bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.
- Ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying/harassing behaviour and accept responsibility to report this behaviour to staff.
- Ensure that all reported incidents of bullying and harassment are appropriately investigated and addressed.
- Ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators).
- Seek parental/carer and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour.
- Ensure that ACE's response to bullying behaviour is:
  - Proportionate and consistent.
  - Focused on finding a constructive and positive solution for everyone.
  - Focused on stopping the bullying from happening again.
  - Focused on restoring the relationships between the students involved.

**Policy:**

Advance College of Education is committed to providing a respectful, safe and inclusive learning environment which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification, victimisation and all other unlawful and unacceptable behaviours. This policy and related procedure outline the way that ACE will deal with bullying and harassment (including cyber bullying) should it arise.

Advance acknowledges that the safety and wellbeing of all students is the responsibility of all staff working within the College.

In addition to the Home Group Teacher, each class will be supported by: a Rotational Teacher, an Education Support Officer (ESO), the School Psychologist and the school Occupational Therapist, who will provide in-depth wellbeing support to all students.

Emphasis will be placed on meeting students' individual needs, both in terms of their learning and their wellbeing, and tailoring support to meet those needs.

**Implementation:**

The College policy on Anti- Bullying and Harassment is made available to all students, staff, parents and carers in the following mediums:

- An overview at the Enrolment Interview
- A summary in the Staff/Student Handbooks
- The College Website

The Policy is 'kept alive' through:

- Presentations and discussion at staff meetings.
- Promotion of the policy by incorporating content pertaining specifically to anti-bullying and harassment in the ACE Learning Program.
- Forums for parents, staff and students to be informed about current understandings of bullying, harassment, and resilience-building.

**Responsibilities:****The Principal:**

- Has overall responsibility (in conjunction with the Board) for ensuring that the care, safety and welfare of all students attending the College is in accordance with any applicable State and Commonwealth laws, and that all staff are advised of their obligation under those laws.

- Will ensure that the whole ACE community (including staff, students, parents/carers and volunteers) are made aware of, understand and follow all policies and procedures pertaining to bullying and harassment (including cyber bullying).
- Will ensure that staff have access to training related to the implementation of this policy.
- Has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and associated procedures.
- Will ensure all stakeholders are familiar with the common language embedded in the policy and procedures.

**Staff:**

- Will be responsible for ensuring that the College environment is safe and secure and that any bullying or harassment is acted upon.
- Will encourage students to speak up about bullying and harassment. They will promote a climate of personal resilience in curricula and extra-curricular forums.
- Will model appropriate behaviours at all times.
- Will deal with all reported and observed incidences of bullying and harassment as set out in this policy.
- Will provide students with information and awareness activities about bullying, harassment and cyber-bullying to emphasise the unacceptability of the behaviour and outline what should ensue when bullying behaviour occurs.
- Will treat all claims of bullying or harassment confidentially and will constructively address them. The rights and sensitivities of all individuals will be protected.
- The College Leadership Team and staff will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, by thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.

**Students:**

- Will be responsible for respecting staff members, their peers and their rights, and to take appropriate action if bullied or if they see someone else being bullied.
- Will inform staff if they are being bullied or harassed or if they see someone else being bullied or harassed – both at school and on the way to and from school.
- Will look out for each other and talk to staff about any bullying or harassment they have experienced or witnessed.
- Will not bully or harass others.

**Parents:**

- Will contact the College if they have a concern about bullying or harassment.
- Will talk to their child about this issue.
- Support ACE staff to maintain a safe learning environment for all students.

**Scope**

The application of the policy is relevant to the governing board, the Principal, College staff, students and parents/carers. This policy applies to all ACE activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy also pertains to usage of electronic technology and electronic communication that occurs in the College, on College property, at school-sponsored functions and activities, on College buses or vehicles and on College computers, networks, forums, and mailing lists.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure
- ACEP7 Student Engagement and Wellbeing
- ACEP20 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Overview Policy
- ACEP21 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Duty of Care Policy and Procedure

- ACEP24 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Complaints and Grievances Policy and Procedure
- ACEP28 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Digital Technologies Policy and Procedure
- ACEF32 Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Agreement
- ACEF31 Student Rules and Responsibilities

**Definitions:**

**Bullying:** Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. *Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.*

Bullying can be:

- 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 – e.g. spreading rumors, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

**Cyberbullying:** Cyber bullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example, via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters), Xanga's (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like), email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio. It can involve:

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages.
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages.
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumors about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships.
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online.
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group.
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.
- Assuming the identity of the victim online and representing them in a negative manner or a manner that may damage their relationship with others.
- Repeatedly, and for no strategic reason, attacking players in online gaming.

**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 harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours.

**Harassment:** means written, verbal, sexual (including gestures) or physical conduct which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person and is persistent or pervasive. This includes conduct that is based on a person's actual or perceived race, colour, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion or any other distinguishing characteristics. This also includes association with a person or group with one or more of the abovementioned characteristics, whether actual or perceived. It can be subtle or explicit:

- *Subtle* (the most common) this includes (but is not limited to):
  - offensive staring and leering
  - unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
  - racist or smutty comments or jokes
  - questions about another's sexual activity
  - persistent comments about a person's private life or family
  - physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
  - offensive name calling.
- *Explicit* (obvious) they include:
  - grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc.
  - unwelcome patting, touching, embracing
  - repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
  - offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
  - sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
  - displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
  - requests for sexual favours.

**General Harassment or Abuse:** General harassment or abuse is a general term covering unwelcome general behaviour. This could include a demand for general activity (subtle or explicitly) or offer of general favours, unwanted and deliberate physical contact, unwelcome general jokes, innuendos or comments of a general nature. It could also be the display of offensive pictures or publications, or the use of offensive language in the classroom or workplace.

#### **Relevant Legislation:**

##### **Human Rights & Anti-Discrimination**

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010
- Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Age Discrimination Act 2004

##### **Education & Child Safety**

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006
- Australian Education Act 2013
- Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005

- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

**Criminal / Safety**

- Crimes Act 1958
- Crimes Amendment (Bullying) Act 2011
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

**Disability & Inclusion**

- Disability Act 2006
- Disability Regulations 2018

**Vilification / Social Cohesion**

- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001

**Privacy & Information**

- Privacy Act 1988

**Online Safety**

- Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015

**Procedure for Addressing Bullying and/or Harassment:**

All staff should be prepared to deal with incidents of bullying - whether it be in a classroom, in the yard or on other College activities. It is important in the development of the College ethos that all staff members have a role in the prevention of bullying. Students should be referred on to the Home Teacher, Coordinators or the Leadership team only when there have been repeated offences or when the incident is extremely serious.

Students must be aware that it is possible to “do something about” bullying/harassment. This can be made more believable and achievable for students by:

- Being listened to regarding each complaint.
- Being taken seriously.
- Being treated with respect.

Advance College will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying:

**1. Primary Prevention**

Bullying and harassment prevention at ACE 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 our College:

- We have a positive 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.
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and harassment and how to respond to bullying/harassing behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to staff about any bullying or harassment that they have experienced or witnessed.
- Staff participate in professional development relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
- Curricular (including the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM), Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) and eSmart) to develop student awareness of strategies

to develop: resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving are integrated into the ACE Learning Program.

- Teachers regularly clarify the school policy on bullying and harassment.
- Content pertaining specifically to anti-bullying and harassment is integrated into the ACE Learning Program.
- Staff role model desired behaviours and attitudes.

## 2. Early Intervention

The College is committed to an approach of ensuring mutual respect and using restorative practice as primary intervention for dealing with situations of bullying and harassment.

At ACE:

- We promote students and staff reporting bullying incidents involving themselves or others.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems occurs regularly.

When mild bullying behaviour is beginning to be **displayed by a student**, one or more of the following non-confrontational, indirect influence strategies may be used. When these procedures are utilised, students are unaware that you are endeavoring to influence their bullying behaviour.

**Physical Proximity** - Walk over and stand next to the student while you continue your class. Also, when you notice a student outside beginning to harass or bully another or even when verbal bullying is well out in the open, placing yourself closer to the action may serve to inhibit the student's behaviour. Pause long enough for the behaviour to stop and maintain your position. When physical forms of bullying are observed, *direct intervention* practices are required that have the effect of ensuring that the behaviour is immediately stopped.

**Non-Verbal Prompting** - A practice similar to Physical Proximity, Non-Verbal Prompting involves walking past the student, touching the student's papers or gently tapping the back the student's chair in order to bring to the attention of the student that his/her behaviour is not meeting expectations and subtly redirects the student to more appropriate forms of interacting with another.

**Offer Learning Support** - Sometimes, what initiates bullying behaviour (risk factor) in the classroom is when a student is bored or frustrated. Bullying will disappear if such students can be re-directed to reengage with their school work by showing them what to do or quietly saying: "You seem like you are struggling. Can I give you some help or can you handle this?"

**Re-Direction** - In a similar way and for similar reasons, you can sometimes interrupt the chain of events that lead to or have initiated bullying behaviour by changing the task that the student is doing (e.g., Say: "Rather than finishing reading this article, can you use the computer to find some more references on this topic?").

## 3. Intervention

To protect all parties in complaints relating to bullying or harassment, principles of natural justice and restorative practice will be followed:

- All allegations of bullying or harassment will be investigated promptly.
- Once identified each person involved (person accused of bullying, victim and witnesses) will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations will be fully investigated and documented (in *Compass Chronicles*. This must include a record of any statements from: the student who

was allegedly bullied, witnesses and the student who allegedly bullied).

- All parties will be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- All allegations will be clearly explained to the person that they are made against and they will be given the chance to explain their version of events.
- Both bullies and victims will be offered 'counselling' and support.
- If bullying or harassment persists consequences (in line with *ACEP2 Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure*) will be implemented.

When an incident of bullying is observed or confirmed, one or more of the following practices can be implemented to suit the student's characteristics, the reasons for the bullying behaviour, who is being bullied, the type and severity of bullying behaviour and the student's history of bullying. They are seen as direct influence techniques as the student is fully aware that you are seeking to have him/her change behaviour.

***Assertive Communication of Zero Tolerance of Bullying/Harassment (applied to all incidents of bullying/harassment) with Follow-Up Reminder of ACE Expectations*** - Intervene immediately in a calm but firm (assertive) way to stop the bullying/harassment and reassure the student being bullied/harassed that actions will be taken to stop bullying. Remind the student who has bullied/harassed of ACE expectations, rules and consequences with regards to bullying. This practice is intended to be mostly staff member directed with more limited opportunity for student dialogue than in other practices.

The "target" can be 'checked-in' on daily at first then once a week to see how things are going. If the bullying is minor, this practice can be implemented at a later time so that the target of the bullying/harassment is not humiliated or embarrassed.

***Restorative Questioning*** - On the spot, engage the student who has bullied/harassed another student in a series of self-reflective, restorative questions directed at increasing empathy and having the student who bullies/harasses take responsibility for making the situation better for the "target." Examples of restorative questions that staff can use when confronted with a student who has bullied/harassed another includes:

- Tell me about what happened.
- What was going through your mind (thinking) that led you to behave in this way?
- What have you been thinking about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? Can you tell me about how the person has been affected by your behaviour?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative questioning is then followed up with a 'restorative justice' meeting between those involved in the incident in order for harm to be further repaired and reconciliation achieved between the student who has bullied/harassed and the target.

***"Think Time"*** - An extension of direct, restorative questioning involves having the student who has bullied/harassed another complete an *ACEF71 Step Out Reflection Sheet* that asks the student to think about what they did and what they can do differently next time.

***Hold a Private Conference*** - When a strong positive relationship exists between a staff member and the student who is bullying/harassing, a meeting can be organised where the student is asked by the staff member to make changes in their behaviour because of the harm it is doing to another and because of the negative consequences it ultimately has on the student who is bullying/harassing.

Some students who normally resist the efforts of staff to improve their behaviour may choose to do so, if they like the staff member. There are many things a staff member can do to increase the likelihood that a student will agree to change behaviour as a favour to the staff member because the student holds the staff member in high regard. If a staff member goes out of their way to help the student including solving problems the student may have in school (with classes, peers) and at home, a student will be more likely to view the staff member in a positive light.

**Expectation Discussion** - Expectation Discussion can be used when a staff member needs to speak individually to a student about the way they have been treating other students. The purpose is to remind the student of the expectations regarding the treatment of other students. It can be used for minor violations of these expectations. Expectation Discussion is a positive strategy because it allows the student to internalise the expectations and correct their own behaviour with minimal intervention on the staff member's behalf. By referring to the expectations when correcting the student's behaviour, it is less likely that the student will perceive the correction as a personal attack. The structure of an Expectation Discussion is:

- Step 1: Gain Attention
- Step 2: Prompt Expectation(s)
- Step 3: Request Student Follows Expectation
- Step 4: Praise cooperation

**Hold a Problem-Solving Classroom Meeting** - When a student has been bullied/harassed by one or more students, a problem-solving meeting can be called for students to express their opinions and to brainstorm a solution to the problem. In the problem-solving meeting, students (with the guidance of the staff member) attempt to resolve either individual or group problems that are important to class members. The purpose is to expose students to the values and opinions of others while providing an opportunity for them to practice thinking and brainstorming in a group. Peer support and pressures also evolve to promote the improvement of behaviour. The students help to set the conditions regarding meeting conduct (e.g., turn-taking, proper language, etc.). The tone of the meeting is always positive in nature. Fault finding and criticism are downplayed. The staff member is never judgmental as this can stifle interaction and communication. The staff member may, however, express an opinion on a topic under consideration. Students are encouraged to constructively challenge one another in a non-demeaning, respectful manner. While it may initially be difficult to direct the meeting and prevent the voicing of negative comments, with time and practice, meetings become more productive as students seek socially acceptable solutions to problems. These solutions should not blame or punish anyone. Students should seek solutions, not blame.

#### **4. Post Violation:**

The ACE Leadership Team will deal with severe, repeated or ongoing bullying/harassing behaviour through applying a range of consequences which will be individually based and may involve:

- Exclusion from class (*Step Down – refer to Classroom Consequence and Leadership Consequence Zone Procedure in ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure*).
- School suspension (*Step Down – Suspension – refer to Classroom Consequence and Leadership Consequence Zone Procedure in ACEP2 Student Behaviour Management Policy and Procedure*).
- Withdrawal of privileges.
- *ACEF51 Positive Behaviour Support Plan* which has a strength-building rather than punitive orientation.

- Mediation/Restorative Practices.
- Other support structures including: BSEM Triage conversations, meetings with wellbeing staff and/or the School Psychologist.
- Ongoing monitoring.
- Rewards for positive behaviour.
- Other actions deemed appropriate by the College including Police notification.

### Cyber-Bullying:

At ACE we support the right of all members of the school community to access safe and inclusive learning environments, including digital and online spaces. *ACEF32 Digital Technologies Acceptable Use Agreement (signed by all students at enrolment)* and *ACEP28 Student Care, Safety and Welfare: Digital Technologies Policy and Procedure* outline the College's roles and responsibilities in supporting safe digital learning, as well as the expected behaviours we have of our students when using digital or online spaces. In regards to cyber bullying this includes:

- Respecting others and using appropriate language when communicating online and never participating in hate mail or acts of harassment;
- Never participating in online bullying (e.g. forwarding messages and supporting others in harmful, inappropriate or hurtful online behaviours).

The College will adopt the same four-phase approach to cyber-bullying or harassment as it does to all other forms of bullying or harassment (*refer to 6 above*):

Any use of social media forums outside of school hours that impact on the wellbeing of a student when at school will be dealt with under the same intervention post-violation processes as any other incident.

### Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required due to legislative, regulatory or operational changes.

The Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented and maintained.

### Approval:

<b>Policy last reviewed</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026
<b>Consultation</b>	College Board 22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2026
<b>Approved by</b>	College Board and (Principal)
<b>Next review date</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2029