1. Belief Statement

Aitken College seeks and endeavours to create an environment where everyone feels happy, safe and valued, by encouraging responsibility for actions and awareness of the need to care for and value the rights of others. All staff, students and parents are required to honour and support this commitment.

The College seeks to affirm each person’s worth and dignity. Bullying strikes at the base of these values and prevents people attaining their full potential.

Bullying is unwelcome and repeated behaviour which causes harm or distress. These behaviours can take many forms:

- **Physical** (eg. hitting, kicking, gestures, unwanted touching, tripping)
- **Verbal** (eg. name calling, discrimination, harassment, rumours, comments about family, threats)
- **Social** (eg. exclusion)
- **Psychological** (eg. stalking, email, text messaging, social media, website imaging, invasion of personal space)
- **Property** (eg. damaging possessions, stealing, extortion, graffiti)

Bullying affects everyone and will not be tolerated.

2. Educational Program

Activities and sessions that affirm individual worth are conducted as part of the programs of the College. These programs include aspects of self-esteem, resilience, conflict resolution and relationships. Positive behaviours are reinforced and include matters such as bullying, discrimination, sexual harassment, cybersafety and privacy issues.

Students and staff will be guided towards developing skills and strategies for dealing with unwanted behaviours. They will be led to reflect on their own behaviours and responsibilities in relation to the respect and care of others.

3. College Response to Bullying

All members of the College Community have the responsibility to take appropriate action in response to incidents of bullying.

*The School Undertakes to:*

- Act on all reports, observations or suspicions of bullying.

*The School requires students to:*

- Promote a positive and caring environment
- Refuse to be involved in a bullying situation
Be proactive in reporting and preventing actions of bullies
Breaking the code of silence which can prevent speaking out about incidents of bullying they experience or observe.

The School requires staff to:
- Promote a positive and caring environment
- Role model appropriate language and actions for students at all times
- Actively supervise students in the school grounds and during activities
- Encourage victims to speak out and take steps to help them
- Inform HOS of all bullying incidents.

The School encourages Parents to:
- Promote a positive and caring environment for all, including modelling the desired standard of behaviour at home and when visiting the school
- Discuss issues and strategies with their child to develop relationship skills and understanding
- Watch for signs of distress in their child, eg unwillingness to attend school
- Inform the school if bullying is suspected
- Discourage their child from retaliating to an incident of bullying
- Be willing to actively participate at interview if your child is involved
- Consider the possibility their child may bully other people
- Not to make a direct approach to the alleged bully.

4. Dealing with Bullying Incidents

The College response to bullying will vary to suit the situation. Every complaint will receive a response. We will be sensitive to the way in which the victim wishes a problem to be handled.

The highest priority in considering the response will be protection of the victim and the elimination of the inappropriate behaviour.

The College reserves the right to consider the full range of responses available (counselling, contracts, report card, warnings, detention, suspension, expulsion) depending on the seriousness of the bullying and/or response of the bully to counselling.

Wherever appropriate and possible, there will be an attempt to restore relationships.

Parents will be informed of incidents as part of completing a Bullying Incident Report.

The HOS will document and file all relevant details. Information will be shared with appropriate staff. The victim is advised to inform HOS immediately if there is any further incident.

The College response to a bullying complaint will include, but is not limited to, the following:

- On receiving a complaint, the Head of School will seek a written statement from the victim and will interview the victim, making additional notes for an incident report. The interview, with or without the victim’s parents, will include discussion of strategies the victim could use to address the behaviour. The meeting will decide whether further action will proceed at this stage.

- The Head of School or delegate may choose to meet with the alleged perpetrator(s) to make them aware of the complaint, obtain additional information and seek their cooperation in resolving the issue. The HOS will decide at this time whether a disciplinary response is needed, which will
include contacting parents. The discussion will include a clear warning that any continued bullying behaviour will attract more serious consequences.

- Feedback will be given to the victim and/or their parents about the actions taken. The victim will be encouraged to immediately report any further behaviour; the Head of School or delegate will monitor the situation.

- The Head of School may choose to refer the victim and/or the perpetrator(s) for counselling or mediation. A restorative practice approach is beneficial in some circumstances.

- If further bullying behaviour occurs following appropriate warnings, the Head of School will make another incident report, meet with the perpetrator(s) and implement appropriate disciplinary action which will include contact with parents of both parties.

5. Communication of the Policy

A copy to be provided to staff on the Staff drive and to students and parents via the intranet and the electronic diary.

HOS to discuss at Information Evenings and Assemblies.