2026

Al Zahra College
Anti-Bullying Policy

Last reviewed: November 2026

Policy owner	Headmaster / Wellbeing Team
Applies to	All students, employees, contractors, volunteers and College activities
Effective date	November 2026
Review cycle	At least annually and following significant changes or incidents
Framework	Preventing · Responding · Partnering · Implementing

1. Purpose and commitment

Al Zahra College is committed to a safe, inclusive and respectful K–12 learning environment. Bullying is not tolerated. The College will prevent bullying, respond promptly and proportionately to concerns, work with students and families, and regularly evaluate implementation. This approach reflects the College's Islamic values of respect, justice (adl), mercy (rahmah), care and responsibility, alongside its duty of care and legal responsibilities.

2. Scope

This policy applies during lessons, breaks, excursions, camps, transport and College events, and to online or off-site behaviour where there is a clear and close connection to the College. It addresses student-to-student bullying, including cyberbullying, concerns involving adults are also managed under the Child Protection Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and other applicable procedures.

3. Definitions

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social or psychological harm. It can occur in person or online, be overt or covert, and may have potential to be repeated through the ongoing sharing of digital content.

Examples include physical intimidation, persistent insults, repeated exclusion or rumours, and online threats, humiliation or impersonation. Single acts of aggression, disagreement and mutual conflict do not ordinarily meet the definition of bullying, but must still be addressed, recorded where appropriate and monitored for escalation. A power imbalance, repetition and the impact on the student should be considered; staff must not dismiss a serious incident solely because it is a first report.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Headmaster	**Provides leadership and oversight; ensures serious matters, safeguarding, appropriate consequences and external reporting are managed; oversees policy evaluation.**
Wellbeing Team	Coordinates triage, student support, safety planning, case oversight, parent contact, follow-up, record review and escalation.
PYP and MYP Coordinators	Support implementation, age-appropriate prevention and response within their programmes and liaise with teaching

	staff and the Wellbeing Team.
Teachers, mentors and all staff	Model respectful conduct; listen and act; secure immediate safety; report and record concerns promptly; implement agreed supports and monitor recurrence.
Counsellors and psychologist	Provide specialist wellbeing assistance, risk assessment and referral within professional scope; escalate protection concerns.
Students, parents and carers	Report concerns, participate respectfully in safety and follow-up plans and support positive behaviour and responsible online conduct.

5. Preventing

The College maintains a whole-school, evidence-informed and tiered approach to prevention and early intervention:

- Teach respectful relationships, empathy, conflict resolution, social and emotional regulation, help-seeking and safe online behaviours through age-appropriate curriculum, assemblies and wellbeing learning.
- Promote positive relationships, student belonging and inclusive conduct, including respectful treatment of students with disability, different backgrounds and diverse needs.
- Teach positive bystander behaviour and accessible ways to report concerns without retaliation.
- Use supervision, student feedback, incident trends and risk assessment to identify vulnerable students, locations and patterns requiring prevention action.
- Provide targeted check-ins, small-group support, mentoring, adjustments and individual plans for students requiring additional support.
- Inform staff and families regularly about bullying, cyberbullying, how to seek help and the distinction between bullying and other harmful behaviour.

6. Responding — reporting and step-by-step procedure

6.1 How to report

Students, parents and carers are encouraged to report any bullying concerns as soon as possible. Reports may be made verbally or in writing to a trusted staff member or directly to the following College contacts:

Wellbeing Team: wellbeing@azc.nsw.edu.au
Headmaster: headmaster@azc.nsw.edu.au

- All reports will be taken seriously and managed confidentially, in accordance with the College's Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures.
- Students and parents may contact the Wellbeing Team or Headmaster directly without first approaching a classroom teacher or Grade Mentor.
- Where a concern involves immediate danger or a serious threat to student safety, urgent action must be taken without waiting for an email response.

6.1A Escalation and ownership

- Ordinary pathway: staff member receiving the report → Wellbeing Team (case coordination) with class teacher/Grade Mentor and relevant PYP or MYP Coordinator → Headmaster for serious, repeated, high-risk or unresolved matters. This is an operational pathway, not a restriction on directly reporting to a senior leader.
- If the concern involves a staff member, reportable conduct, suspected abuse or imminent danger, use the Child Protection Policy and statutory reporting pathway immediately. Do not treat child protection as an ordinary peer-bullying investigation or delay mandatory reports for internal approval.
- The Wellbeing Team identifies and records a named case lead for each concern. The case lead owns the response timeline, communications, plan, monitoring and closure; relevant teachers implement agreed support on a need-to-know basis.

6.2 Triage and immediate safety

1. Immediately address injury, threats, serious harm, unsafe online content or an urgent child-protection concern; call 000 where an emergency exists and follow the Child Protection Policy and legal reporting requirements.
2. The Wellbeing Team or assigned case lead must commence an initial triage typically within two school days of the College becoming aware of a concern. This is a timeframe for the initial assessment and response, NOT completion of an investigation. Immediate threats, injury, serious harm and safeguarding concerns require action without waiting two school days. The triage assesses impact and urgency, immediate safety and care, recurrence or repetition, possible power imbalance, student vulnerability, protective actions, and necessary escalation or external referral.
3. Record in Sentral (or the College's approved restricted-access child-safety system when sensitive information requires it) the report date, initial assessment, safeguarding steps, case lead, communication and next action. Refer serious, persistent or high-risk cases promptly to the Headmaster. Protective measures are precautionary and do not presume that an allegation is substantiated.

6.3 Gather and assess information

4. Hear separately from the student reporting harm, the student alleged to have engaged in the behaviour and relevant witnesses. Review available records or digital evidence and avoid repeated, distressing questioning.
5. Assess whether the conduct is bullying or another unacceptable behaviour, taking account of context and reasonable alternative explanations. Child-safety concerns are referred under the Child Protection Policy; possible criminal matters may require police involvement.
6. Document relevant evidence, assessment, findings or an inconclusive outcome, reasons for decisions, risks, student views and communications in the approved secure system. Apply procedural fairness, protect sensitive information and do not reveal another student's disciplinary details.

6.3A Decision and communication

- The case lead distinguishes substantiated bullying, another harmful behaviour, insufficient information and no finding. All harmful behaviour is addressed as appropriate even if the technical definition of bullying is not met.

- Response choices are based on severity, frequency, developmental needs, student safety and the Behaviour Management Policy. The College may use educational, restorative and disciplinary measures together, subject to safeguarding and procedural fairness.
- Families receive an appropriate summary of the decision and relevant safety/support arrangements for their own child, without confidential information about another child.

6.4 Plan and implement a proportionate response

7. Provide practical safety and wellbeing support to affected students, including a trusted adult, supervision, separation when necessary, counselling and adjustments to reduce contact or online exposure.
8. Address behaviour through explicit teaching, restorative or educational measures where safe and appropriate, behaviour support, reasonable consequences consistent with the Behaviour Management Policy and escalation for serious or persistent conduct.
9. Contact the relevant parents/carers as soon as appropriate given the safety assessment and investigation needs. Explain concerns and actions relevant to their own child, support available, whom to contact, expected next steps and a planned review point. Record contacts and any reasons to delay notification (for example, child protection or Police advice). Do not require mediation or face-to-face reconciliation where a power imbalance or safety risk makes it inappropriate.

6.5 Follow-up, monitoring and closure

10. The case lead schedules and records follow-up according to risk (for example, an early check-in after immediate protective action, followed by further checks where needed). Ask separately about ongoing safety, wellbeing, recurrence and effectiveness of agreed measures. A case is closed only when the case lead has documented the outcome, reasonable follow-up, student supports and the rationale for closure; recurrence triggers renewed assessment.
11. Consult relevant teachers and families as appropriate; adjust supports, supervision or consequences if bullying continues or new information emerges.
12. Record monitoring, communications, outcomes and reasons for closure. Reopen or escalate where concerns recur. Students and families may raise unresolved concerns through the College complaints process.

7. Partnering

The College builds active partnerships with students, parents/carers and relevant community or specialist services. Student voice informs prevention measures and individual response plans, taking account of age, developmental needs, privacy and safety. The College encourages families to report emerging concerns early, provides accessible and culturally respectful communication, and engages external wellbeing, eSafety or child-protection agencies when appropriate.

Families will be informed of support and school actions relevant to their own child, subject to confidentiality obligations. Relevant teaching staff receive need-to-know information to support safety, while the College protects the privacy of all students.

8. Implementing

The Headmaster and Wellbeing Team coordinate a whole-school, evidence-informed and multi-tiered approach linked to the Behaviour Management Policy, Child Protection Policy, Complaints Handling Policy, ICT/Online Safety requirements and staff Code of Conduct.

- Provide induction and ongoing professional learning on recognising bullying, trauma-informed response, child safety, documentation and the triage process.
- Maintain accessible reporting channels and restricted-access Sentral records, or an approved secure child-safety record where appropriate, capturing: report date and source; incident dates and locations; involved students and witnesses; immediate safety decisions; two-school-day triage date and outcome; assigned case lead; information considered; bullying classification and reasons; family contacts; risk and support plans; interventions and consequences; scheduled follow-ups; recurrence; closure and escalation. Access is limited on a need-to-know basis.
- Review de-identified incident patterns, locations, recurrence, response timeliness, student voice and family feedback to improve practice.
- Evaluate implementation at least annually using de-identified response data, staff training, student and family feedback, survey findings, recurring risks, response timeliness and documented improvement actions. The Headmaster reports relevant assurance and improvement priorities to the Governing Council.
- Publish the approved anti-bullying policy and procedures on the College website and communicate accessible reporting information to students and families.

9. Cyberbullying and external support

When harmful content is online, students should preserve evidence where safe, avoid retaliation, use platform reporting tools and seek adult support. The College assesses connected school-related incidents under this policy. Serious cyberbullying material targeting a child may be reported to the eSafety Commissioner after first reporting to the platform and allowing the required period under applicable eSafety procedures. Visit https://www.esafety.gov.au/report/cyberbullying for current eligibility and steps. Immediate threats, crimes or child-protection matters must be escalated without waiting for platform processes.

10. Safeguarding, confidentiality and complaints

Bullying concerns may also raise issues of abuse, significant harm, threats, violence or discrimination. Staff must follow the College Child Protection Policy and any mandatory reporting and police obligations, without delaying urgent protective action. Information is handled confidentially, shared only on a lawful or need-to-know basis, and stored securely. Students and families may seek review through the College's Complaints Handling Policy without fear of retaliation.

11. Related policies and references

- Al Zahra College Behaviour Management Policy; Child Protection Policy; Complaints Handling Policy; Staff Code of Conduct; ICT/Online Safety Policy.
- NSW Anti-Bullying Framework: https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/school-regulation/anti-bullying-framework
- NESA guidance on regulation from 2027: https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/school-regulation/anti-bullying-framework/regulating-framework
- Australian eSafety Commissioner: https://www.esafety.gov.au/report/cyberbullying

12. Staff quick response checklist

- Ensure immediate safety; call 000 if necessary.
- Record the concern and notify the Wellbeing Team / relevant leader promptly.
- Commence initial triage typically within two school days (sooner if urgent).
- Gather information fairly, identify the behaviour and assess ongoing risks.
- Agree and implement proportionate supports and any appropriate consequences.
- Communicate with the students and families involved within privacy limits.
- Monitor, document follow-up and reopen or escalate if needed.

13. Implementation and evidence register (for leadership use)

- Preventing — retain teaching plans and resources, assemblies, social-emotional learning, targeted early-intervention plans, student voice and identified hotspot responses.
- Responding — retain de-identified evidence of initial triage (typically within two school days), assessment, student safety/support plans, communication, timely decisions, monitoring and closure.
- Partnering — retain parent information and engagement records, accessible reporting communications, surveys and consultation outcomes, and resulting improvements.
- Implementing — retain staff induction and training records, policy publication verification, periodic incident trend review, annual evaluation, action owner, review deadline and Governing Council assurance.
- Review responsibility: Headmaster and Wellbeing Team annually and following significant incidents, identified patterns, regulatory change or shortcomings; record responsible officer, action, target date and completion evidence.

14. Understanding bullying: definitions and examples

This appendix expands the definitions in Section 3. Staff should assess behaviour in context. Conduct that does not meet the definition of bullying may still require intervention under the Behaviour Management Policy, including where it is serious or harmful.

14.1 Core definition and identifying features

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 may involve one student or a group misusing actual or perceived power over another student who feels unable to stop it. Bullying can be direct or indirect, in person or online, obvious or hidden, and behaviour may be repeated or have the potential to be repeated through the continuing circulation of digital material.

- Repetition or potential repetition: a pattern over time, or online content that can be accessed, reshared or used to cause ongoing harm.
- Power imbalance: differences in social influence, group numbers, physical strength, status, access to information or vulnerability that make it difficult for the targeted student to protect themself.
- Harm: physical, social or psychological impacts; students may experience harm even if the person responsible disputes their intention.

14.2 Forms of bullying

- Physical bullying — repeated hitting, pushing, tripping, obstructing, intimidation, unwanted physical contact, or damaging, stealing or hiding belongings as part of a pattern of harm.
- Verbal or written bullying — repeated name-calling, insults, threats, humiliating remarks or targeted comments about a student's attributes, background, religion, disability or other personal characteristics.
- Social or relational bullying — repeated deliberate exclusion, manipulation of friendships, rumours, humiliation, or efforts to undermine a student's relationships, reputation or belonging.
- Cyberbullying — harmful conduct through social media, group chats, games, email, messaging or other online services, such as repeated threats, abusive posts, impersonation, humiliating images, fake accounts or deliberate online exclusion. Resharing harmful content can extend the impact.

14.3 What is not ordinarily bullying?

- Mutual conflict — disagreement or argument where there is no ongoing misuse of power; it still needs a fair response and monitoring because it may escalate.
- A one-off incident — a single episode of aggression, unkindness, swearing or conflict does not ordinarily meet the bullying definition, but can be serious misconduct requiring immediate action.
- Not every social disagreement or friendship change constitutes bullying. Staff consider the full context, recurrence, power dynamics and impact rather than relying only on a label.

Important: harassment, discrimination, threats, violence, online abuse or child-protection concerns must be managed appropriately even when the conduct does not satisfy the definition of bullying.

15. Recognising signs and supporting students

The following indicators are drawn from the College's earlier policy. They are possible warning signs, not proof that bullying has occurred. Staff and families should respond with care, listen without assumptions and consider other explanations.

15.1 Possible changes parents and staff may notice

- Avoidance of school, excursions or social events; frequent requests to stay home, or feeling unwell before school.
- Unexplained bruises, scratches, damaged possessions or missing belongings.
- Tearfulness, nightmares, changes in sleep, irritability or reluctance to talk about what is wrong.
- Withdrawal, low confidence, seeming lonely or distressed, or sudden friendship-group changes.
- Changes in classroom engagement, attendance or the quality of schoolwork.
- Uncharacteristic behaviour toward siblings or peers, including increased aggression or anxiety.

15.2 Possible signs of cyberbullying

- Distress after using a phone, online game, social-media platform or messaging service.
- Nervousness when notifications arrive, hesitation to go online, or sudden avoidance of devices.
- Unusual secrecy about online activity, unexpected changes in device use, or fear that adults will make the situation worse.

15.3 Suggested response for parents and carers

- Listen calmly, reassure the student that their concern will be taken seriously and avoid blaming or encouraging retaliation.
- Record relevant dates, details and witnesses. Preserve screenshots or messages where safe; do not further circulate harmful material.
- Contact a trusted teacher, the Wellbeing Team, PYP or MYP Coordinator, or Headmaster using the reporting options in Section 6.1.
- Work with the College on safety and support plans, share relevant new information and advise promptly if the behaviour continues.
- For serious online abuse, report to the platform and consider contacting eSafety; for immediate danger call 000.

15.4 Early intervention approaches and safeguards

The College may consider carefully managed, educational or restorative approaches, including a shared-concern approach for some early-stage group or relational bullying situations. Such approaches must be led by appropriately trained staff, be risk assessed and remain voluntary for affected students. They must never substitute for safeguarding, investigation, documentation or proportionate consequences where required.

Students experiencing bullying must not be required to meet, reconcile or mediate with the student responsible. No-blame or shared-concern approaches are not appropriate where there is serious violence, coercion, sexual harm, persistent bullying, significant fear or a continuing safety risk. The case lead must record the rationale, consent where relevant, safeguards and follow-up.

16. Parent, carer and student resources

These external services provide additional guidance and support. They do not replace the College's reporting pathways in Section 6 or immediate reporting to emergency and child-protection services where appropriate.

16.1 Helpful websites

- Australian Government — Let's Stop Bullying: resources for parents and carers — https://www.letsstopbullying.gov.au/resources-parents-and-carers
- eSafety Commissioner — report cyberbullying — https://www.esafety.gov.au/report/cyberbullying
- eSafety Guide — reporting and safety features on online services — https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-topics/esafety-guide
- Kids Helpline — counselling for children and young people — https://kidshelpline.com.au/
- headspace — mental health information and support for young people — https://headspace.org.au/
- NSW Anti-Bullying Framework — guidance for NSW schools and communities — https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/school-regulation/anti-bullying-framework

16.2 Reporting serious cyberbullying

Students and parents should first use the online service or platform's reporting mechanism, keep evidence where safe, and notify the College when the incident affects student safety or school life.

The eSafety Commissioner may consider complaints about serious cyberbullying targeting a child under 18, subject to legal eligibility requirements; ordinarily the material must first have been reported to the platform and at least 48 hours allowed for action. See the eSafety website for current thresholds and reporting instructions.

16.3 School and external support

At the College, students may seek support from classroom teachers, Grade Mentors, the Wellbeing Team, PYP or MYP Coordinator, counsellors/psychologist where available, or the Headmaster. The College may engage relevant external services, including NSW Police Youth Liaison or School Liaison officers, where appropriate. The policy intentionally identifies roles rather than individual names to keep contact information current.

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800. Emergency (Police, Ambulance or Fire): 000. For non-emergency wellbeing concerns, families may seek advice from their GP or a relevant qualified health professional.

16.4 Suggested parent–school communication

When raising a concern, provide the student's year group, a brief account of what happened, approximate dates and locations, any immediate safety concerns, available evidence and the support requested. The College will respond according to Section 6 and share information about the family's own child within appropriate privacy limits.