

LIBRETTO

SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to protect students, staff and volunteers from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur as members of the Libretto School of the Arts (**Libretto Studios**) Community.

Scope: Students, parents/guardians and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements. It is the aim that all parents/guardians and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements will be aware of the contents of this policy and how it applies to the students and each other.

Status: Approved

Superseded: N/A

Authorised by: Principal Director
LIBRETTO SCHOOL OF THE ARTS
(LIBRETTO STUDIOS)

Date of Authorisation: August 2023

References:

- *Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) Enrolment Policy*
- *Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) Child Protection Policy*
- *Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) Student Code of Behaviour*
- *Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) Complaints Handling Policy*
- *Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) Complaint and Dispute Resolution Procedures*

Review Date: Every two years

Next Review Date: August 2025

Policy Owner: Principal Director | Libretto School of the Arts Townsville

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POLICY STATEMENT

Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) and its wider community has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. Libretto Studios is committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur. Bullying behaviour seriously undermines the ethos of Libretto Studios, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

In order to prevent bullying from occurring, Libretto School of the Arts (Libretto Studios) will implement the following actions:

- raise awareness of the school community's shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to with regard to all school activities; and
- develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students.

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, Libretto Studio) has and will continue to:

- Develop an appropriate mechanism for students, staff and parents/guardians to report bullying.
- Educate students, staff and parents/guardians on how to recognise bullying and respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying, and how to then report all incidences of bullying.
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying.
- Take appropriate action, which might include support for victims of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

Libretto Studios Respectful Relationships: Anti-Bullying Policy, explains the bullying reporting mechanism for students, staff and parents/guardians, and how responses to reports will be managed. It is important to stress that all reports of bullying will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Respectful Relationships: Anti-Bullying Policy the following words have the specific meaning as set out below:

A '**student**' means a person who is or was enrolled in, or who is seeking enrolment in, a program, lesson, activity, course or event (including a production) offered by Libretto Studios or Alyssa Kelly.

A '**member**' of Libretto Studios includes students, parents/guardians and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

'**Policy**' means this respectful relationships -anti- bullying policy as updated from time to time.

Bullying means the following: the agreed national definition for Australian schools describes bullying as:

- 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;
- involving an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening;

- happening in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records); or
- having 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.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

However, these conflicts are still considered serious and need to be addressed and resolved. Libretto Studios will work to quickly respond to any matters raised of this nature in collaboration with students and parents.

WHAT CONSTITUTES BULLYING?

What is Bullying? In addition to the definition of Bullying above we view it as helpful to further enunciate behaviours that are considered Bullying, ie. a systematic and repeated abuse of power. Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, intentionally upset or create risk to another person’s health and safety – either psychologically or physically – or their property, reputation or social acceptance. There are three critical points associated with bullying:

Power: Children who bully may acquire power through various means; physical size and strength, status within a peer group, and recruitment within a peer group so as to exclude others.

Frequency: Bullying is not a random act. It is characterised by its repetitive nature. Because it is repetitive, the children who are bullied, not only have to survive the fear and humiliation of the attack itself, but live in constant fear of its reoccurrence.

Intent to harm: Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be fully conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical or emotional harm, however, is usually a deliberate act. Bullying is ‘recipient defined’. Saying it was ‘only a joke, or ‘she doesn’t mind’, is an unacceptable excuse. The intention of the bully is irrelevant. The important factor is the harm done to the other person. Bullying is a form of harassment and is exemplified in many ways, including (but not limited to) the following:

- name calling, teasing, ridiculing, sarcasm, spreading rumours;
- spitting, pushing, or threatening violence;
- putting down others and their achievements;
- Damaging, removing or hiding belongings;
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others;
- Making disrespectful comments about family, birth origin, or religion;
- Making disrespectful comments about another person’s physical appearance, or clothes;
- Hurtfully excluding another from a group; and/or
- Cyberbullying; ie. harassment or offensive behaviour using electronic devices and online communications.

What Bullying is not

The following is not an exhaustive list of actions that are not bullying however it is a helpful guide:

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- Mutual conflict; where an argument or disagreement occurs but both parties are upset and want resolution to the problem.
- Social rejection; this is not bullying unless directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- Single episode acts of meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation. These will not be ignored, but are not acts of bullying.
- Changes in peer group dynamics and composition. It is not unusual for a shift in friendship groups to occur as students move through adolescence and interests and personalities change and develop.

Relational Aggression

Social or relational aggression is a common form of bullying among adolescent girls and, as such, it is an area of particular focus at Libretto Studios. Relational aggression refers to deliberate acts which are *"directed toward damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expression or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumours or social exclusion"* (Galen and Underwood 1997, p. 589). Relational aggression can impact on a young person's self-esteem, self-worth and sense of self and identity. These behaviours can be difficult to detect and to differentiate from social rejection or changes to social dynamics. However, where it can be identified, this type of behaviour should be taken seriously with restorative practices used to help rebuild relationships and reduce hostility wherever possible and appropriate.

Trauma-Informed Responses

Libretto Studios aspires to respond to student behaviour in a way that is not only respectful and fair, but is also trauma-informed. Being trauma-informed means that staff are aware of how traumatic experiences can impact on the behaviour of young people. According to the Australian Childhood Foundation (2010) the behaviour of traumatised children and young people *"is an insight into the responses of their brain-body system to toxic stress and trauma. It represents a complex interplay of the experiences of their past, their reactions to the present and the cumulative impact of relational exchanges over time"*. Sometimes, young people who have been impacted by traumatic experiences may act out in aggressive, impulsive or inappropriate ways. In cases where a young person's bullying behaviour has been identified as being impacted upon by earlier traumatic experiences, Libretto Studios will aim to respond to that young person in a sensitive and responsive manner, whilst still taking all actions necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other students at the school.

GENERAL AWARENESS OF BULLYING & BULLYING INITIATIVES

Libretto Studios is committed to wider community and national awareness events such as the National Day against Bullying and R U OK? Day. Such awareness campaigns strengthen knowledge and understanding about the issues around bullying and the associated impact within the wider community. These below types of interventions or approaches are suitable for low risk cases of bullying allegations, where some allegations may have been found to be isolated, not severe or unsubstantiated. In these cases, it is considered that the wider cohort may require more information and general strategies for dealing with interpersonal difficulties.

Circle Time Program

Circle Time for Emotional Literacy is a program developed by Sue Roffey (2006) which provides a structured framework for group interactions; where students regularly meet to 'think, talk and grow' together. The program does not seek to change behaviour, however, behaviour may change as a result.

This program involves regularly bringing together a group of students whose relationships with other members of the group may have been fractured or damaged as a result of bullying. Through activities designed to increase connectedness, positivity, self-awareness and compassion, the group will re-connect with each other to reduce

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animosity which may have contributed to incidents of bullying.

This approach is suitable for all levels of bullying risk, however, high risk cases may not be able to proceed until the bullying perpetrator has received individual support to encourage appropriate behaviour.

RESPONSIBILITIES

School Responsibilities

Libretto Studios acknowledges its responsibility to:

- Raise awareness of bullying and how the school will respond to it.
- Take action to help prevent bullying.
- Educate students, staff and parents on how to respond to bullying and how to report it.
- Investigate and act upon reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support and consequences.

Employee Responsibilities

At Libretto Studios employees have a responsibility to:

- uphold and consistently apply this Policy;
- respond appropriately to reports of bullying;
- all reported incidents will be managed on an individual basis and will be investigated and followed up in a timely manner. The relevant teacher/contractor in consultation, will recommend the best pathway for further action. This may include mediation, notifying parents/guardians, student counselling or reporting to the Principal Director; and
- some wrongful behaviours of a serious nature are, by definition, criminal offences and consultation with the Police will occur.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

At Libretto Studios parents/guardians have a responsibility to:

- Encourage their child to engage in positive behaviours and not to bully others.
- Encourage their child to report bullying to themselves or others.
Encourage their child to take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Respectful Relationships-Anti-Bullying Policy.

Student Responsibilities

At Libretto Studios students have a responsibility to:

- engage in respectful behaviours and not engage in bullying behaviours;
- report bullying occurring to them or others (not engage in a bystander role); and
- take steps to stop bullying as directed under the Respectful Relationships-Anti-Bullying Policy.

REPORTING

The following general principles apply to reporting of bullying:

1. All students take responsibility for their own actions and ensure they always act in a respectful manner which supports the dignity, safety and wellbeing of others.
2. Students are encouraged to report any incidents of misconduct they have witnessed, and to intervene where it is safe to do so as detailed. The details on the reporting procedure.
3. Libretto Studios encourages students to report and supports the safety of those who report.

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4. Libretto Studios ensures all parties are treated with dignity and respect once a report has been made.
5. **Parents/Guardians** are encouraged to report concerns directly to the Principal Director.
6. **Students** may report concerns to any staff member and will then be referred immediately to the Principal Director.
7. **School Staff** are to report any observations or suspected incidents of bullying to the Principal Director.

Key contacts for students and parents to report bullying:
Principal Director – Alyssa Kelly, 0428 452 434

REPORTING AND INTERVENTION – HOW WILL LIBRETTO STUDIOS RESPOND?

Action to be taken following reports of bullying:

1. Reported Concern

2. Decisive Action

In the case of sufficient evidence of High-Risk Bullying Behaviour (see risk assessment table below), the Principal Director reserves the right to discontinue the enrolment of students engaged in activities or classes run by Libretto Libretto Studios.

3. Refunds and Compensation

Refund of enrolment fees pertaining to activities and classes following termination of enrolment is at the sole discretion of the Principal Director.

4. Further Investigation

In the case of insufficient evidence of High-Risk Bullying Behaviour, each of the students who have been implicated as a direct participant in a bullying scenario will be interviewed by the Principal Director. These interviews will be documented and students informed accordingly.

Based on these informal interviews, contact will be made by telephone to parents/guardians of each of the students implicated to advise parents/guardians that concerns have been raised about relationships within the school. These phone calls will then be followed up with an email. These phone calls will be made by the Principal Director.

5. Risk Assessment for Response and Intervention

Based on the information gathered during interviews with students and parents/guardians, a risk assessment will then assist to inform the level of intervention necessary (see below).

6. Decision on Intervention

Staff involved in the investigation will meet with the Principal Director to discuss the risk assessment and determine a course of action based upon the outcome of this assessment.

BULLYING RISK ASSESSMENT

RISK ASSESSMENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AND RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF INTERVENTION		
Level of Risk	Risky Behaviour	Level of Intervention

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High Risk	Children assessed as being at the highest risk of engaging in bullying others report high levels of aggression, externalising problems and delinquency or are identified as experiencing early signs of or symptoms foreshadowing mental, emotional or behavioural disorders. Problems are consistent and relatively stable over time. Several family, individual or school risk factors associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour are Present.	Indicated intervention: These children require greater support for behaviour change and an intervention that includes their family, as many of the risk factors are beyond the scope of school-based programs. This level of intervention is best used for the more entrenched cases of bullying problems.
Moderate Risk	Children are involved in bullying infrequently or in a short-lived way. These children may exhibit early warning signs that indicate a risk of future involvement in bullying, and consequently the emotional, behavioural and social problems associated with bullying others.	Selective intervention: Children exhibiting non-severe bullying behaviour are likely to benefit from a selective program designed to address and prevent the developmental continuity of their peer relationship problems.
Low Risk	Children assessed as being at low risk do not engage in bullying others and have few, if any, family, individual or school risk factors.	Universal intervention: These children are likely to benefit from school-based universal programs that aim to develop awareness of bullying and empower children to intervene on behalf of victims.

Table 1: Sourced from the Australian Institute of Family Studies

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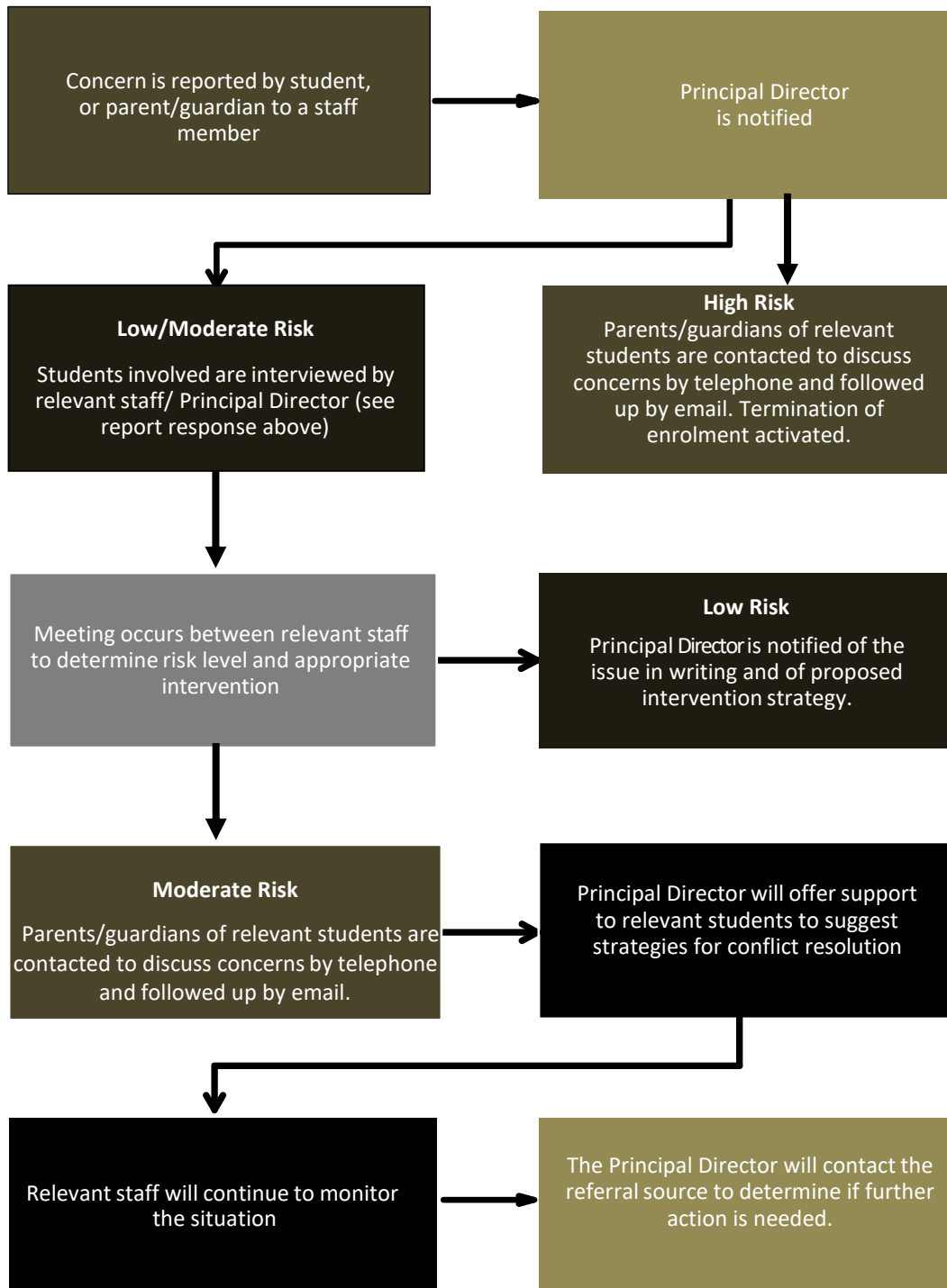
REPORT RESPONSE

The following flowchart explains the actions Libretto Studios will take when they receive a report about student bullying, including bullying which may have occurred online or outside of the Libretto Studio setting (provided it relates to Libretto Studios or students thereof). Please note that the indicative timeframes will vary depending on the professional judgment of teachers/member who receive the bullying complaint and their assessment of immediate risk to student/s. Please note the application of the below flowchart will also be dependent on the risk assessment and level of risk assessed.



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REPORTING, INTERVENTION AND FOLLOW-UP GENERAL FRAMEWORK



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