



# **Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment Policy**

## **Rationale:**

- The school will provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted, and in so doing, all will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment at all times.

## **Definition:**

A person is bullied when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons. Bullying towards any St Mary's community member is not accepted.

## **Types of Bullying**

There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. Direct physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. Direct verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. Indirect bullying – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation.

## **Indirect bullying includes:**

- lying and spreading rumours
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- mimicking
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone
- damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
- cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress

**Cyber-bullying** (as defined above) that occurs either online or via a mobile phone or electronic device. This may include electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.

## Aims:

- Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.
- To reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- To alert everyone within the school community of the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported to staff whether a person is an observer or a victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

## Implementation:

- Our school has adopted a zero tolerance position on bullying.
- Our school will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment for all.
- We have adopted a four-phase approach to bullying.

### **1. Primary Prevention:**

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify with students the types of bullying, as well as the consequences and impact of bullying.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and response, complemented by clear processes for reporting suspected bullying.
- The provision of programs that promote inclusiveness, resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving will form an integral part of our curriculum. In particular, assertiveness training and bystander training that builds skills in children to challenge and/or report unacceptable behaviour will be central to our curriculum.
- Use of survey tools administered and responded to at least annually.
- Staff and students to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- Teachers will be trained in **cybersafety**. **Cybersafety** awareness programs will be provided for parents and **cybersafety** will form part of each child's ICT curriculum.

### **2. Isolated, Infrequent or Less Serious Incidents:**

- All instances of suspected bullying or inappropriate behaviour must be responded to by staff.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect a bullying or behaviour problem.
- The school will reinforce with children the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others, and the imperative that staff respond appropriately and proportionally to each allegation consistent with the school's expectations.
- Parents are to be contacted if their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced inappropriate behaviour, or if their child appears to have behaved inappropriately or bullied someone else.

- Appropriate and proportional consequences may include a verbal apology, writing a letter of regret, completing a 4W form to be sent home to parents, loss of privileges etc.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems will occur as appropriate.

### 3. **Repetitive or Serious Incidents:**

- Serious incidents and/or repetitive incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour must be reported, responded to by staff and documented.
- Serious incidents are those that include physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats or homophobic bullying etc.
- All such incidents or allegations will be properly investigated and documented. Depending upon the nature of each incident, they may be also be reported to and investigated by police, reported to the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit, and/or reported to the CEM.
- The school may contact support professionals such as Welfare officers, Welfare coordinators or Councillors and/or Student Support Officers for assistance and support.
- Students, staff and parents identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations.
- Both bullies and victims will be offered counselling and support.
- All repetitive or serious incidents must be brought to the attention of the principal
- The most appropriate staff member will contact parents of the targeted child. The Principal will contact alleged perpetrators unless advised by police etc. not to do so.
- The Catholic Education Office Melbourne will be contacted to provide support as appropriate, and the principal will monitor the investigation and review the situation until matters are appropriately resolved.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include criminal charges, suspension, expulsion, loss of privileges, counselling, conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the school community expectations as derived from the **Child Safety Policy**.
- A management strategy for all parties will be developed in consultation with the students and parents involved.
- Parents or community members who bully or harass or abuse staff will be provided with official warnings, and if necessary referred to the police, and/or have trespass restrictions placed upon them by the principal consistent with the Summary Offences Act.

### 4. **Post Incident:**

It is important that appropriate strategies are put in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Appropriate strategies may include:-

- conciliation meetings between all parties
- ongoing monitoring of students involved.
- identification of an agreed key contact staff member for each student involved.
- follow-up meetings regarding each child's management strategy.
- ongoing communication with parents.
- counselling from appropriate agencies of support officers etc. for both parties if necessary.
- reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies.

**Disciplinary consequences** for bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment will comply with the school's Student Well-being policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education

and Early Childhood Development (DET) guidelines

### **Level 1**

For all bullying or harassment incidents, a 4W Sheet should be completed and submitted to the Deputy Principal or Principal, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- think time detention
- private conference
- shared control discussion

### **Level 2**

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Principal.

Here, the Principal may:

- meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
- conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and “target”

### **Level 3**

For ‘at risk’ students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual ‘behaviour management’ plan should be developed by the Principal in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual behaviour management plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student’s inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

### **Level 4**

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. The Principal may make contact with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student’s family.

### **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school’s four-year review cycle.