

## BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

### BULLYING AND HARASSMENT WILL NOT BE TOLERATED

### DEALING WITH BULLYING AND HARASSMENT (STUDENTS)

#### RATIONALE

Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to eliminate bullying and harassment in all forms. Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being can be adversely affected by bullying and harassment.

#### DEFINITIONS

Bullying involves:

- ❖❖ A desire to hurt
- ❖❖ Hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational)
- ❖❖ An imbalance of power
- ❖❖ An unjust use of power
- ❖❖ Typically repetition is experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying. The terms are often used interchangeably. Bullying can be characterised as:

- ❖❖ Repetitive, causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks
- ❖❖ An imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt)

Its nature may be:

- ❖❖ Verbal: name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken or written)
- ❖❖ Physical: hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- ❖❖ Social: ignoring, hiding, ostracising
- ❖❖ Psychological: stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions
- ❖❖ Electronic: insulting/threatening phone calls, text messages, e-mails or any other form of electronic communication

#### PRINCIPLES

- 1 Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students
- 2 Catholic schools provide supportive environments which promote respect for self and others physical/emotional well-being and positive mental health
- 3 Dealing with bullying and harassment requires a whole school approach within the school's Pastoral Care framework
- 4 When bullying and harassment are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone and reinforce the behaviour



## PROCEDURES

The roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents with regard to bullying and harassment:

### 1.0 Staff

- 1.1 Staff members should inform the relevant Year Team Leader if they become aware that a student or students from a particular year group has/have been the victim of bullying.
- 1.2 The incident will be documented and the following action will be taken.

### Meeting with the student alleging the bullying

When the Year Team Leader/College Counsellor finds out that bullying has happened he/she begins by speaking to the student alleging the bullying about his/her feelings and enquires as to who was involved. A student incident report will be generated to record the allegations. If unaware, parents will be informed that their child is alleging bullying and that they will be contacted throughout the process. Parents will also be informed of any proposed measures to ensure their child feels supported.

### Conduct a meeting with the people involved

The Year Team Leader/College Counsellor arranges to meet with the group of students who were involved.

### Explain the problem

The Year Team Leader/College Counsellor tells them about the way the student alleging the bullying is feeling and the purpose is for those students to be made aware of how their behaviours may be impacting on another person.

### Share responsibility

Blame is not allocated to the group. The Year Team Leader/College Counsellor does not attribute blame but asks the group what they think they could do about it to help the situation.

### Ask the group for their ideas

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a change in their behaviour whereby the outcome would be for the student alleging the bullying to feel happier/safer.

### Allow the students to problem solve

The Year Team Leader/College Counsellor passes the responsibility to the group to solve the issues presented. It is stated that if the "bullying behaviour" continues then the Year Team Leader/College Counsellor needs to be informed and then another meeting may need to be scheduled.

### Follow up session with student alleging bullying

The Year Team Leader/College Counsellor discusses with the student how they are feeling and how things have been going.

- 1.3 For more serious incidents of harassment/bullying, the Year Team Leader will consult with the Assistant Principal and take the above action to stop the bullying/harassment. Counselling for both the victim and the perpetrator of the bullying will be provided through the College Counsellor or an outside agency if deemed appropriate. The student bullying will receive the normal college sanctions such as suspension, community service or detention. Parents will be contacted and involved in the discussion and outcomes where appropriate. Appropriate detailed written records of the incidents and follow up will be placed on the files of students involved.
- 1.4 Very serious or recidivist incidents may result in the College Principal reviewing the student's enrolment.
- 1.5 Staff will be provided with appropriate in-service training with regards to bullying and harassment.

## 2.0 Students

- 2.1 Students will be educated to understand that it is their responsibility to inform the class teacher or Year Team Leader when they are aware that a student or students is/are being bullied.
- 2.2 Peer Support Leaders, Student Leaders and Representatives will be empowered to take a role of mediation or appropriate intervention when they perceive that bullying is taking place. They will also help to develop student centred strategies to reduce bullying, e.g. student anti-bullying sub-committees may be formed as part of the College ministry program.

## 3.0 Parents & Guardians

- 3.1 Parents will be contacted and involved to whatever extent is appropriate in cases of bullying.
- 3.2 Parents will be consulted in any reviews regarding the effectiveness of the College's anti-bullying or pastoral care programs.
- 3.3 Parent education opportunities related to the issue of bullying will be offered in both the Primary and Secondary schools.
- 3.4 Information on bullying will be provided to all parents and guardians in the College community via the College website.
- 3.5 The College will provide information on College policies and procedures related to bullying via Parent Meetings and the College website.

## 4.0 What Parents Can Do

- 4.1 If your child reports any type of bullying i.e. being teased, intimidated or threatened (verbally or physically), treat the concern seriously.
- 4.2 Encourage your child to talk about how she/he is feeling about the situation.
- 4.3 Contact your child's Year Team Leader or the College Counsellor if you detect any signs of changes in your child's behaviour that indicate unhappiness or if you are concerned about aggressive, intimidating or anti-social behaviour that your child is exhibiting.
- 4.4 The matter will be dealt with in a sensitive and caring manner.

## 5.0 School Programs & Support Systems

- 5.1 The College will provide awareness through the curriculum (*The Forum Theatre Program* and presentations by the School Police Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Jason Roughley) to educate students on the power of the bystander, bullying, personal safety and how to get along. This will also be achieved through the Religious Education and Health Education Programs, personal development courses, Camps and Student Leadership programs.
- 5.2 Leadership time will be allocated to the promotion of *Student Wellness* throughout the College through the development of a Positive Behaviour Support strategy that will be implemented in conjunction with the Adolescent Support Team from the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta.
- 5.3 Pastoral Care Committees will regularly review the extent of bullying in the College and the effectiveness of strategies put in place to combat it.
- 5.4 Relevant Professional Development will be offered to all staff involved in pastoral care of the students.
- 5.5 Active supervision of the yard and school bus stop by teachers.
- 5.6 Any graffiti that denigrates or seeks to humiliate or defame another member of the College community will be removed immediately upon being reported after photographs have been taken of it for records and to assist with identification of the culprit(s) if this is possible. Students will be reminded regularly of their responsibility to ensure that the College environment is kept clean and free from graffiti of any kind.



- 5.7 Small group and individual counselling for students who allege they are being bullied will be offered.
- 5.8 Counselling will be offered for students who bully others and they will be encouraged/educated to change their behaviour.

## 6.0 Strategies that may be used for students being bullied

- 6.1 Standing up for yourself does not mean fighting back or being aggressive. Instead, asserting yourself by letting the person know how their actions are affecting the way you feel can help you feel empowered. If you feel that they are bullying you then you can let them know how their behaviour is affecting the way you feel. For example, saying "When you.....I feel.....". However, remember you cannot control the reaction of the person you are asserting yourself to.
- 6.2 Be mindful that while you may have an expectation of how you would like them to respond, it is out of your control. At least you know that you have asserted yourself and it can feel empowering doing that.
- 6.3 If the bullying behaviour becomes too much for you to handle on your own, then please inform your Year Team Leader/Teacher/College Counsellor.
- 6.4 When you ask for help, be sure to clearly describe:
- Exactly what happened
  - When and how often it has happened
  - Where the "bullying behaviour" took place
  - Who was involved
- 6.5 Nobody should feel like they "are being bullied". Maybe it might be worth thinking about new friends who treat you with kindness and respect. If the friends who are "bullying you" are "part of your group" and they continue to "bully you" even after you have expressed your feelings assertively then it means taking another pro-active step and informing your Year Team Leader/Teacher/College Counsellor as mentioned above.
- 6.6 Here are many ways to make new friends. You can join sporting groups, organizations out of the school such as drama clubs or even participating in school-organised events.
- 6.7 Just remember that you are supported and there are people who care.

## 7.0 Strategies that may be used by students if they are aware of someone being bullied

- 7.1 You could choose to intervene as the bullying occurs by telling the bully to "stop".
- 7.2 Refuse to join in with the bullying.
- 7.3 Support students who are being bullied. For example on *Facebook*, you could let the student know that what was written was "not okay". Just reading that kind of support can help the person who is being bullied.
- 7.4 Tell an adult if you are concerned about the bullying.