St Mary’s School
To do ordinary things extraordinarily well

Dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence - 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 encourage the development of positive relationships between students to reduce all forms of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. The policies and practices that a school employs should enhance the dignity of the human person and reflect the Principles of Pastoral Care as espoused in the Pastoral Care Framework (2007).

Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. Students who are bullied, subject to aggression or harassed tend to have poorer health, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, depression, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety. They are also more likely to have a dislike of and want to avoid school, higher absenteeism and lower academic competence. The effects of bullying can begin early in life and, for some, last a lifetime.

The Australian Government’s National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues.

The National Safe Schools Framework is based on the following overarching vision:

- All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing.

In the NSSF, a safe and supportive school is described in the following way:

- In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.

The Guiding Principles of the National Safe Schools framework

This Framework is underpinned by the following guiding principles that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a pre-requisite for effective learning in all school settings.
Australian schools:

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning
- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfil the school’s child protection responsibilities
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

The nine key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

DEFINITIONS

Bullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, 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, written, electronic or cyber which may also apply to the following points)
• physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
• social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing
• psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions²

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of ‘difference’. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status. (Bullying. No Way! website cited in the National Safe Schools Framework, 2003). Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, cited in the NSSF, 2003).

PRINCIPLES

1. Catholic schools are safe and supportive environments where the 6 guiding principles and 9 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practiced.

2. Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students.

3. Catholic schools provide supportive environments which:
   • act to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence
   • encourage socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management and direct teaching of curriculum in areas such as interpersonal and self-management skills
   • promote respect for self and other
   • develop physical/emotional well-being and resiliency
   • develop interpersonal skills and positive mental health

4. Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence requires quality leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained change, together with a whole-school community approach that is consistent with the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia’s Pastoral Care Framework, the school’s Pastoral Care practices and the school’s Evangelisation Plan and which partners with parents and other agencies.

5. Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student’s learning and behaviour in school, Catholic schools take action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.

6. All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. When bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders, (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.
7. While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, school policy and procedures shall contain clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration should be given to other circumstances which may have bearing such as family or mental health matters.

8. All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.

PROCEDURES

All schools shall develop a school-based policy on bullying, harassment, aggression and violence, based on a comprehensive risk and needs assessment, which includes:

1. an expanded definition statement which states that the school shall not tolerate bullying, harassment, aggression and violence and which encourages all members of the school community to take a pro-active stance that promotes safety and wellbeing

2. examples of behaviours that are considered to be bullying, harassment, aggression and violence

3. specific statements relating to cybersafety including cyberbullying, cyberharassment and sexting

4. statements of school and student rights and responsibilities in relation to safety issues (including cybersafety, bullying, harassment, aggression and violence) that occur outside of school hours and off school grounds that involve or affect students and staff

5. statements, and where possible, flowcharts defining and advising the responsibilities of each of the major parties to the policy, the Principal, staff, students, parents and families, and, encouraging help-seeking through designated staff members when bullying, harassment, aggression or violence is experienced or witnessed

6. strategies and responses (including curricula, programs and pedagogy and, where school resources are limited, forming partnerships with parents, families and the wider community) to address:
   - the development of supportive environments, positive relationships and student connectedness to the school
   - social decision making and empowerment of students
   - skills in conflict resolution
   - promotion of tolerance and understanding, the encouragement of inclusion and the celebration of difference
   - acceptance of difference, and, a culture of cooperation, empathy and respect
   - the resolution of bullying incidents involving those who bully or aggress and those who are bullied or subject to aggression and which includes the early and appropriate involvement of parents
• the support and restoration to wellbeing of students who have been harmed by hurtful behaviour. This includes working with parents and families to assist in retaining a connectedness to school and facilitating reintegration in those whose attendance may have lapsed as a consequence of bullying, harassment, aggression or violence

• the amelioration of the behaviour and attitudes of students who bully

• the pro-active engagement of bystanders to discourage bullying behaviour

• the broader needs of the school community

• the prevailing attitudes within the school including the ‘culture’ of the school to promote safety and wellbeing

• teaching and learning programs to support the strategies and promote good citizenship skills in students, staff and parents

7. school support systems that promote positive social health, mental health, safety and wellbeing

8. reporting, recording and data collection procedures to be used when investigating incidents, as a basis to facilitate evaluation and justify any modification to approach, and to inform prevention and management activities

9. a case management model to be used when bullying, harassment, aggression or violent behaviours persist

10. a statement on appropriate confidentiality

The school-based policy shall be developed using a broad consultative and educative process involving students, staff, parents and families. The completed policy should refer to any other relevant policies or procedures and should be disseminated and promoted to the school community.

Schools shall provide professional development and appropriate resourcing to meet the needs of their staff in implementing the school policy.

The policy developed by schools shall be monitored and regularly reviewed. A recommended period is every 3 years or immediately following any incident that raises issues in respect to policy and practice.
ATTACHMENTS

NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROVISION OF A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Australian schools:

1. affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
2. promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
3. implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment
4. recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
5. develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
6. ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
7. recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
8. have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
9. focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
10. regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
11. take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures
3. Provision of education/ training
   - School staff
   - Students
   - Parents
4. Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation
5. Providing support for students
6. Working closely with parents
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St Mary’s School endeavours to create a comfortable atmosphere for all children which will enhance their self-esteem, confidence, dignity, respect and willingness to learn. The school is committed to the education of the whole child based on Gospel values to foster growth in our Faith Journey to become more like Christ.

We strive for excellence in all areas and involve the parents and community in the education of the children of our school. We hope to lead the children to an integration of faith, life and learning and in doing so prepare them for their place in society.

We strive for this in a caring environment where individual needs are catered for in a spirit of compassion, understanding and encouragement.

POLICY STATEMENT ON BULLYING

Rationale

The St Mary’s School community respects the rights of its students to be free from all forms of bullying and is committed to providing a safe environment for all students.

Principles

Through our shared vision and whole school policy we are committed to addressing all incidents of bullying. At St Mary’s School, we aim to ensure that all students are valued and that engaging in ‘bullying behaviour’ is unacceptable. Disregarding bullying behaviours or participating as a ‘bystander’ is unacceptable. It is the responsibility of ALL community members to ensure the safety, security and respect of all individuals.

The process (action plan) is aimed at targeting individuals engaged in bullying and empower witnesses to be more proactive in addressing this behaviour.

At the classroom and playground level, teachers will endeavour to educate students about appropriate and acceptable social behaviour.

At the school community level, issues of bullying will be addressed by relevant students and staff, and where necessary, the school Leadership Team.

Resistance to behaviour change and repeated offending will require the school’s discipline procedures to be enforced.
WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is seen as behaviour by one or more persons, which is used to intimidate, exclude, frighten or dominate others. An individual or a group can carry out bullying.

FORMS OF BULLYING

Bullying can take many forms including:

PHYSICAL

• Hitting, punching, tripping
• Kicking, biting
• Negative body language
• Damaging someone’s property
• Stealing someone’s property

VERBAL

• Making hurtful and racist comments/jokes about another person
• Name-calling
• Commenting on social and/or family backgrounds
• Picking on others

EMOTIONAL

• Spreading rumours, gossip
• Taking or damaging property
• Sending hurtful notes
• Attempting to intimidate, threaten or belittle
• Forcing an individual to do something he/she doesn’t want to do
• Manipulating others – setting others up to get in trouble

SOCIAL

• Deliberately ignoring or avoiding
• Excluding from the group

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Signs of being bullied may be:

• Feeling frightened, angry or embarrassed
• Finding it hard to concentrate on school work
• Not wanting to come to school
• Not getting along with others
STUDENT ACTION PLAN

If you think you are being bullied.....

Ask yourself –

Was it deliberate?  Yes or No

If Yes follow these steps –

- Ignore the behaviour and show it doesn’t upset you.

If the bullying behaviour continues...

- Tell the individual/s engaging in bullying behaviour to stop it. Ask the bully to leave you alone

If the bullying behaviour continues...

- Move to a safe area

If the bullying behaviour continues...

- Tell a staff member.

WITNESS ACTION PLAN

Ask yourself –

Does this look or sound like a bullying situation? Yes or No

If Yes follow these steps –

- Tell the person who is bullying to “Stop it.”
- Offer friendly help to make the individual/s feel safe.

If the behaviour continues ...

- Take the individual/s to a staff member and report what you saw or heard.

SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

A staff member on playground duty will assess the situation and speak with the students involved.

If necessary:

- The Class Teacher is notified by Duty Teacher regarding the Bullying behaviour. The Class Teacher will investigate the matter further if required.
- Class Discussion about bullying will be included in lessons across learning areas such as Religious Education and Health.
If necessary:

- Refer to the Leadership Team who will take appropriate action and make contact with parents if necessary.

PARENT ROLE

Parents can help by –

- Discussing school expectations about behaviour and how best to deal with bullying
- Teaching children to respect differences and be tolerant of others
- Showing an interest in your child’s school, social, sporting and cultural life.
- Developing children’s self-esteem by offering encouragement, saying and doing positive things, nurturing their positive qualities and valuing them for who they are.
- Setting a good example, as role models, when resolving their own conflicts.
- Informing the Class Teacher of any bullying incident so that it can be stopped.
- Assisting their child to understand and practice the strategies stated here.