ST PATRICK'S ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Purpose
At St Patrick’s School, we believe that all members of the community have the right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring which will not tolerate bullying. This policy builds on the school’s pastoral care policy to provide clear and agreed procedures and strategies for combating bullying in the school, responding to bullying behaviours and protecting and supporting all parties involved.

Policy Framework
Flowing from the Christian vision expressed in the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy, schools are called to establish relationships which are grounded in love, compassion, reconciliation and justice. In witnessing Christian values we reject ideas, beliefs and behaviours which marginalize or victimize people.

Definitions
Bullying Behaviours are about an imbalance of power where there is a deliberate intent to cause harm or distress. These repeated behaviours can be verbal, social, psychological or physical. They impact on the lives of the person/people being bullied, those doing the bullying and those looking on. (The Peer Support Foundation, 1998)
The Broken Bay Diocesan definition of Bullying Bullying behaviour is that it:
Ø is deliberate and often repeated
Ø intends to cause fear, distress, hurt or harm to another
Ø is action by a more powerful individual or group over a less powerful individual or group

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress. Examples of bullying include:
Physical: hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others.
Verbal: teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours
Non-Verbal: writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using e-mail or text messaging to hurt others, rude gestures
Exclusion: deliberately excluding others from group, refusing to sit next to someone
Extortion: threatening to take someone’s possessions, food or money
Property: stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property
Cyber: any form of bullying which is carried out through electronic means such as email, chat room, ‘sms’, web page etc

Conflict is a disagreement or argument between two or more individuals where one or both sides may feel their needs are not being met. Conflict occurs in all human relationships and in all school communities. Conflict must be expected and planned for.
Conflict is different from bullying and harassment because it respects the rights of both sides.
The Potential Impact of Bullying

Bullying has the potential to affect both the individual and the entire school community. Students who are bullied may:

- Develop feelings of negative self worth
- Feelings of isolation and abnormal absenteeism
- Feelings of helplessness, feeling they ought to be able to do something about it but lack the confidence to take any remedial action
- Feel frightened for their safety
- Feel embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- Disconnect socially from peers
- Project anger onto others
- Suffer problems in concentration or in sleep
- Develop health problems associated with the emotional/psychological distress created by bullying
- Exhibit "at-risk" behaviours, such as anxiety or depression
- Have long term problems in maintaining interpersonal relationships and in sustaining self esteem

The Possible Impact on the School Community

Although the effects of bullying may be most painful for the individual victim, bullying can create "shockwaves" across an entire school community. It may be responsible for some of the following:

- Feelings of anger, tension or disharmony amongst students or staff
- An atmosphere which seems unsafe or uncaring
- A perceived lack of trust and cohesion between members of the school community
- A lack of faith amongst the student body in the ability of staff to maintain a controlled, peaceful environment
- An abnormally high number of aggressive actions
- A perceived condoning of "preferencing" where older students exert power over students in younger year groups
- Tension and frustration within the parent body as a result of their fears for the safety, happiness and well-being of their children
- Feelings of guilt, shame or helplessness as the result of knowing about or witnessing bullying
- A reluctance by a section of the community to participate in activities, especially those which are non-compulsory

How do we prevent bullying at St Patrick's School?

Ultimately, strategies to prevent bullying will only be effective when placed within the context of a culture in which respect for others is consistently taught and demonstrated across all facets of school life. The Christian values, which represent the antithesis of bullying, must be continually affirmed in words and actions. Strategies to prevent bullying will fall within the following broad categories:

- 'moral education' in the context of religious education, liturgies and assemblies where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, reconciliation, tolerance, respect and justice are encouraged
- 'across the curriculum' values teaching (eg looking at the problem of prejudice within the context of a novel or a history lesson)
- clear statements from staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying
- teaching specifically related to bullying in the PDHPE curriculum
- teaching more positive ways of resolving conflict, such as working co-operatively within the classroom and playground
• staff and students as role models, particularly those in leadership roles such as peer support, school captains, house captains etc.
• provision of activities which develop a culture of caring for one another and acknowledging the worth and contribution of others and which help to develop compassion
• appropriate provision of counselling or other support services
• provision of support for parents through information seminars, support networks etc.

How do we respond to Bullying at St Patrick’s School?

Bullying is viewed as a breach of the school’s behaviour code. Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken. The response to bullying will provide:

• guidance and other support for the victim
• appropriate and consistent sanctions and support for the bully

Staff will be encouraged to report suspected incidents of bullying to the class teacher of both the victim and the bully. If they encounter an incident of bullying, they should first take steps to protect the victim. All staff are expected to pass on information about any bullying to the Principal/Assistant Principal, for further action.

The School seeks to promote a culture in which students will be encouraged to:

• take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident
• report the bullying incident to a teacher as soon as possible
• make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted

Victims of bullying will be encouraged to:

• initially ignore the bullying and not show that it is upsetting. Many bullies will stop if they do not elicit a response.
• confront the bully and let him/her know that his/her behaviour is unwanted and unjustified. This step should be taken if initial tactic is unsuccessful.
• discuss the problem with friends and parents, who may be able to assist with strategies to deal with the problem
• notify their class teacher

What Parents can do

Parents play a key role in the support of both the victims and the perpetrators of bullying. The school must work in partnership with parents in the disciplinary process. Parents can assist in the following ways:

• Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable. Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously.
• Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault.
• Don’t call your child names, like “weak, sook, wuss”. Don’t tell them “not to worry, to forget it, to toughen up.”
• Avoid bullying tactics around your child, so they don’t get mixed messages.
• If the bullying is verbal, help your child develop the skills to ignore it so that the bully does not get the satisfaction of a reaction. Practice the way to walk past looking confident with head up. Practice a supply of quick (not insulting) responses—for example ‘that’s your opinion’, ‘talk to someone who cares’.
• Avoid the urge to take everything into your own hands unless absolutely necessary, as this will make your child feel less in control.
• Help your child feel good about the other things in their life. Feed their self-esteem.
• When it is clear that your own child is the bully, recognise the seriousness of the issue and support the school in implementing this policy.
Procedures to deal with Bullying

All initial cases of bullying will be dealt with by the respective class teacher who will keep the Assistant Principal/Principal informed.

- An interview(s) will be conducted to ascertain the specific nature of the bullying and its effect on the victim, in an attempt to develop mutual empathy. Decisions will be made as to the level of severity of the incident and whether the parents (of both parties) need to be informed. The interview should also focus on appropriate strategies to assist both the victim and the bully.
- Further support may be offered, if required.
- The initial interview should also include a clear statement on the consequences if the bullying continues, or if there are any reprisals as a result of the reporting of the incident.
- A record of the interview must be placed in the student's records. Notify the Assistant Principal/Principal.
- A less formal post-interview follow up of both parties should be conducted a week after the initial incident, to ensure that there have been no problems.
- If the student continues to engage in bullying behaviour, he/she will be interviewed in the presence of his/her parents by the Principal/Assistant Principal and the Class teacher. Direct consequences will include calling on internal and external assistance re development of a plan of action to manage student behaviour, conflict resolution, anger management etc.
- The victim of the bullying may need further support to develop strategies to overcome the situation. The class teacher will seek to involve the parents in the formulation of the plan.
- When action plan(s) have been implemented, all those engaged in their development will continue to monitor and formally follow up at regular intervals.
- Any further recurrence of bullying may result in an issue of warning re suspension and could lead to the implementation of suspension procedures and, if necessary, removal of the student from the school through:
  - Suspension pending negotiated transfer,
  - Negotiated transfer or
  - Expulsion
- Any extra assistance needed can be sought from the School’s Liaison Police Officer. St Patrick’s liaison officer is Senior Constable Jamie Tommerup from Gosford Police Station. She can be contacted on: 43235599.

Consequences are what happen as a result of behaviour. Consequences can be positive or negative depending on the type of behaviour. Consequences should be fair, predictable and certain to happen. They should be related to the rule that has been broken.

Major Sanctions are last resort actions which only occur with due process in the event of serious breaches of the school’s behaviour code. All major sanctions are options that can be undertaken if deemed appropriate for the situation.

Policy Dates
Next Review: 2015