



ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL EAST GOSFORD

ANTI-BULLYING GUIDELINES

Purpose

At St Patrick's 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 and responsibility that does not tolerate bullying. This policy provides clear and agreed strategies and procedures for combating bullying in the school in ways to respond to bullying behaviours and protect and support 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 marginalise or victimise 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 being bullied, those doing the bullying and those looking on (The Peer Support Foundation, 1998).

The Broken Bay Diocesan definition of bullying behaviour is:

- it is deliberate and often repeated
- it intends to cause fear, distress, hurt or harm to another
- it is the action of a more powerful individual or group over a less powerful individual or group

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress. These include:

- **physical** – hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting
- **verbal** – teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours
- **non-verbal** – writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using e-mail or text, rude gestures
- **exclusion** – deliberately excluding others from a group, refusing to sit or play with someone
- **extortion** – threatening to take someone's possessions, food or money
- **property** – stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property
- **cyber** – the use of any electronic communication that threatens or harasses another person

Conflict is an occasional 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 endeavours. It will always be present in some form in school communities. Conflict must be expected and planned for. Conflict is different from bullying and harassment. It is not ongoing. Conflict does not seek to hurt or harm another. It respects the rights of both sides, recognising that this will assist to negotiate a settlement that is satisfactory for all parties.

The Potential Impact of Bullying

Bullying has the potential to affect both the individual and the entire school community. It may:

- develop feelings of negative self-worth and isolation
- lead to abnormal absenteeism
- lead to feelings of helplessness, whereby an individual thinks something should be done about the bullying but lacks the confidence to take any remedial action
- lead to feeling frightened for their safety
- lead to feeling embarrassed or angry about being unfairly treated
- disconnect individuals from their peers
- lead to sleep and concentration problems
- lead to health problems associated with the emotional/psychological distress created by bullying
- lead to individuals exhibiting 'at-risk' behaviours,
- lead to anxiety or depression
- result in people having problems sustaining positive self-esteem and maintaining interpersonal relationships

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 the 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 safe, responsible and peaceful environment
- an abnormally high number of aggressive actions
- a perceived condoning of allowing older students to exert power over younger students
- 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

Our School Approach to Preventing Bullying Behaviour

Our school has a three tiered approach to preventing bullying behaviour. This approach provides for differences in student responsiveness due to the variations in an individual's risk and protective factors (i.e. self-management and social skill competence). It also includes a shared responsibility with staff, parents/caregivers and the wider community in working together to teach, foster, promote and encourage positive respectful behaviour.

Our three tiered approach to preventing bullying behaviour includes:

- Prevention (Tier 1)
- Early Intervention (Tier 2)
- Specialised Intervention (Tier 3)

Prevention (Tier 1) Tier I prevention programs are intended to support the vast majority of students, and also to identify students who require more specialised assistance (Tier II and Tier III). All students and staff are explicitly taught about behaving in a safe, respectful and responsible way. The emphasis is on educating students, staff and parents/caregivers about bullying prevention and management, and encouraging positive social skills, resilience and character traits.

Whole School Positive Behaviour Approaches

Our school uses a whole-school positive behaviour approach to prevent bullying such as; promoting a safe and supportive learning environment, school-wide rules and consequences, teacher professional learning, a curriculum focused on social and emotional learning (SEL), conflict resolution training, parent/caregiver education and engagement, and individual counselling. Teaching students the social and emotional learning (SEL) skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships, and responsible decision-making) are essential foundational competencies that students need in order to prevent and to respond to bullying.

Our school prevention strategies include:

- promotion of the Diocesan Anti-bullying Policy and school guidelines, including on the school website
- promotion of safe, positive school communities through the implementation of policies/frameworks such as, pastoral care, behaviour support, PBL
- promotion of safe respectful learner messages in all aspects of school life: assemblies, year meetings, newsletters and in classrooms
- professional development for staff
- parent and community education relating to bullying: policies and procedures
- provision of programs that promote SEL skills such as resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution, problem solving, 'be an upstander not a bystander' and Bullying No Way day
- classroom teachers clarify the school policy on bullying with students each year
- curriculum includes anti-bullying messages and strategies, embedded in KLAs, through wellbeing programs e.g. PDHPE, Religious Education and pastoral care and PBL lessons
- Student Representative Council (SRC), peer support leaders promote 'No Put Downs' and 'Hands Off' messages
- vigilant classroom, playground and transition supervision.

Curriculum strategies

Prevention programs are delivered as part of the curriculum across KLAs and through pastoral care and wellbeing programs. Specifically, students learn about matters related to bullying in PDHPE from Years K-10, such as, positive respectful relationships, negative impacts of violence and aggression, effects on mental health, help seeking skills, resilience, the role of the upstander, conflict resolution, effective communication, cyber-safety, belonging and connectedness, risk and protective factors.

Pastoral care and wellbeing strategies

- A range of anti-bullying initiatives are embedded into our school pastoral care and wellbeing plan, such as:
- Bully Upstander sessions with a focus on reporting bullying, and the importance of the upstander in stopping bullying
- Harmony Day develops intercultural understanding
- R U OK Day emphasises the need for strong relationships and the importance of mental health and wellbeing
- public recognition, awards and rewards for positive behaviour
- peer/mentor program
- SRC led initiatives
- transition programs such as, Kindergarten and Year 6 to Year 7

Consequences

The management of bullying incidents will be in accordance with the Diocesan Anti-bullying Policy, the Behaviour Support Policy and school anti-bullying and behaviour support guidelines. The consequences for behaviour violations around bullying should include some form of relationship restoration or remediation that helps students understand the incident and develop pro-social behaviour.

The implementation of these guidelines is supervised by the Principal and the AP and includes:

- social skills support, once identified, each bully, victim and witness, will be spoken with, and all incidents of bullying will be investigated and documented
- both the bully and victim may be offered counselling, depending on the nature of the incident and person(s) involved
- parents/caregivers should be contacted and consequences implemented, consistent with our school's behaviour support guidelines
- consequences for students will be individually-based, and may involve:
 - ❖ reinforcement of positive behaviours
 - ❖ Class/Year meetings
 - ❖ support structures e.g. Check in Check Out, Mentor
 - ❖ ongoing monitoring of identified bullies and victim
 - ❖ rewards for positive behaviour
 - ❖ withdrawal of privileges
 - ❖ community service
 - ❖ exclusion from class
 - ❖ exclusion from playground
 - ❖ school suspension
- Counselling support

Early Intervention (Tier 2)

Early intervention is critical to responding effectively to bullying. Tier 2 students whose behaviours do not respond to Tier I supports are provided with additional preventative learning opportunities, including:

- more targeted social skills instruction
- increased adult monitoring and positive attention
- specific and regular daily feedback on their behavioural progress
- additional academic supports if required

Specialised Intervention (Tier 3)

Tier 3 students whose behaviours do not respond to Tier I and II are supported with intensive preventative strategies, including:

- individualised academic and/or behaviour intervention planning
- more comprehensive, student-centered and case management/wrap-around processes
- school – family – community mental health supports as required.

Our School's Response

Bullying may be reported:

- in person by a student to a teacher or via email
- by a parent via phone, email, or in person
- by a teacher to another teacher

Recording Incidents of Bullying

All incidents of bullying that have been reported will be recorded and relevant staff will be notified. The report will include the type of bullying, number of incidents and the action taken by staff. This information will form the basis of data collection for the review of bullying in the school by the Principal, AP and Wellbeing Team.

Evidence based responses

Our school uses a range of evidence based methods to respond to bullying as outlined below. Methods of intervention will vary according to the incident and persons involved. They will include:

- No Blame Approach
- The Method of Shared Concern
- The Traditional Disciplinary Approach
- Restorative Practice
- Strengthening the Victim
- Mediation
- The Support Group Method

Referral and the School Counsellor

Students may be referred to the school counsellor for support, depending on the nature of the incident and person(s) involved. Parents should contact the school if they believe their child requires school counselling support. For high risk cases a referral can be made to the CSO Wellbeing or Child Protection Teams for additional support.

Communication with parents/caregivers

The Principal/AP will make contact with parents/caregivers as required in a timely manner. The communication will focus on what the school can do and what the family can do to support the child. When required the family may be referred to appropriate support.

Bullying prevention is a shared responsibility

Preventing and responding to bullying is a shared responsibility of all staff, students, parents/caregivers and members of the wider school community.

Incidents involving assault, threats, intimidation, or harassment

Staff are to report these types of incidents to the Principal/AP. They will assess the situation and a decision will be made of the appropriate action to be taken. Reports will be made to the Police Youth Liaison Officer, Local Area Command and the CSO as required.

Reporting to the CSO Child Protection or Wellbeing Team

Staff are to report concerns of child wellbeing to the Principal, AP or to the school counsellor. The Principal in consultation with the AP and/or Counsellor will assess the situation and a decision will be made on the appropriate action to be taken and if a referral is warranted to the CSO.

Complaints Handling Policy

The Principal deals with formal complaints by following the procedures outlined in the Diocesan Complaints Handling Policy. Parents/caregivers can contact the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay if dissatisfied with the school's response.

Additional Information

School Liaison Police Officer: Senior Constable Rebecca Armitage Gosford Police Station [4323 5599]

Police Youth Liaison Officer: Senior Constable Jamie Tommerup Gosford Police Station [4323 5599]

Local Police: Beyond Blue: 1300 22 46 36

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

Headspace: 8785 3200

Useful Websites

Department of Education Victoria – Bullying Prevention Resources

Bullying. No Way!

Cybersmart website

Safe Schools Hub

National Centre Against Bullying

KidsMatters

MindMatters

Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS)

Social and Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention

CSO Pastoral Care & Wellbeing website

Guidelines development

The Principal, with delegated responsibility to the Leadership Team and Staff members will be responsible for the planning, implementation and review of this policy.

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Date of next review: 2019

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

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