



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY FOR STUDENTS

SEPTEMBER 2017

1. PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- i. Assist staff members to prevent, reduce and respond appropriately to bullying behaviour, including cyberbullying.
- ii. Promote a proactive attitude to and clear understanding of school processes when addressing allegations of bullying.
- iii. Facilitate a consistent approach to the management of record-keeping processes in relation to bullying investigations.
- iv. Actively promote a school environment free from the fear of bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimisation.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- i. The role of the Catholic school, in partnership with parents and caregivers, is to nurture young people by providing optimum levels of support in learning, positive interpersonal relationship experiences and social support networks. Bullying behaviour is in conflict with the core values and purpose of a Catholic school. Bullying needs to be recognised, named and addressed to ensure that St Patrick's Primary School works towards an authentic Christian school culture.
- ii. St Patrick's Primary School has a responsibility to promote a culture of trust, cooperation and respect within our school. Bullying mitigates such a culture and inhibits the development of positive relations among students, staff members and caregivers. It is therefore the goal of St Patrick's Primary School to promote a safe environment where individuals may grow and develop. A well articulated, understood and implemented policy facilitates such a goal.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students, staff members and parents at St Patrick's.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- i. **Preventative programs and procedures:** The following programs and procedures will be implemented as a means of promoting positive behaviour and preventing bullying:
 - a. **Positive Behaviour For Learning:** A school-wide behaviour initiative which addresses problem behaviour, encourages positive behaviour from students, and thereby aims to improve students' self-concept and motivation to learn.
 - b. **Risk assessment:** An assessment of:
 - The likelihood that bullying episodes will harm a victim, and:
 - The likely extent of such harm
 - c. **Individual behaviour support plan:** A series of proactive strategies and reactive strategies that will be implemented as a means of assisting the bully to modify his/her behaviour.
 - d. **Personal safety zone:** A zone of usually two or three metres in radius that surrounds the student who has experienced unsafe behaviours towards him or herself. An identified perpetrator is excluded from entering the PSZ at any time and in any school context. The only exception to this is an instance where there is direct and specific supervision by a member of the school's staff.
 - e. **Behaviour contract / agreement:** A document which describes the undesirable behaviours of the bully, and which the bully signs as a means of undertaking to modify his/her bullying behaviour.

- f. Social story: A story written or tailored to a student to help them to understand and behave appropriately in social situations with the aim of improving the social skills of the student.
- g. Behaviour T-Chart: A chart which aims to improve student behaviour by:
 - Making explicitly known to the bully the behaviour considered to be inappropriate, and:
 - Making explicitly known to the bully the corresponding replacement behaviour (the behaviour goal).
- h. Small group social skills programs which include:
 - Friends For Life: A school-based anxiety prevention program which helps the victims of bullies cope with feelings of fear, worry and depression by building resilience and self-esteem and teaching cognitive, and emotional skills in a simple, well-structured format.
 - Cool and Friendly: A school-based social skills program.
 - Talk About: A school-based social skills program.
- i. “You Can Do It”: A whole school-based program for developing the social and emotional capabilities of students by teaching the five core social and emotional skills - confidence, persistence, organisation, getting along and resilience.

ii. Reporting and record keeping

- a. Incident reports of bullying incidents should include:
 - Name of the staff member investigating the incident.
 - Names of students involved, including witnesses.
 - Dates and times.
 - Location of the incident/s.
 - The nature of the alleged bullying incident.
 - Various people’s accounts of the incident/s.
 - Action taken.
- b. All reports of bullying – including those which are sustained and those which are not sustained – must be uploaded to Gate21 by the staff member who is handling the situation. The report must be uploaded to the profile of the alleged bully and, if it deemed to be appropriate, to the profile of the alleged victim. This documentation enables the school to track bullying behaviour.
- c. Parents of both the bully and the victim should be notified about the incident/s and kept updated with investigations.

iii. Investigations

The investigation of an alleged bullying incident should take place as soon as possible after it is reported. Those to be interviewed should include the alleged bully, victim/s, witnesses and (if appropriate) parents.

iv. Possible disciplinary measures

The severity of the disciplinary steps that may be taken will depend on the scale and duration of the bullying, and its effects on the victim. Some or all of the following disciplinary measures may be adopted:

- a. Notify parents.
- b. Lunchtime detention.
- c. Immediate suspension. (The student’s parents or caregivers are contacted and asked to collect the student from the school immediately).
- d. Short internal suspension.
- e. Short external suspension.
- f. Long suspension.
- g. Expulsion.

Disciplinary measures will be applied in accordance with the Catholic Schools Office Pastoral Care Policy (2003).

v. Police intervention

In a situation involving possession of a weapon, extreme assault and cyberbullying that involves sexting, police intervention will be sought.

vi. Post investigation support services

The services of the school counsellor will be made available to any students who are affected by a bullying incident or series of incidents. Parental consent (written referral form) is required for school-based counselling. The school's complaints and appeals procedures will be made available to anybody who wishes to question the school's handling of a bullying incident.

vii. Communication

This policy will be communicated to all staff members and families at the beginning of every school year. The policy will also be made available to parents and carers on the school portal.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

i. Principal:

- a. Develop a shared understanding with staff and community members of bullying behaviour that involves all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.
- b. Ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of preventative strategies and programs to promote student safety and wellbeing.
- c. Provide support to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour.
- d. Be responsible for the implementation of the school's anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- e. Initiate police support (police liaison officers) and or intervention when required.
- f. Provide regular updates to parents or caregivers regarding the management of specific incidents.
- g. Ensure that an annual communication of the contents of the policy be made to the school community.
- h. Maintain an ongoing and annual evaluation process of the policy with students, staff and caregivers.
- i. Identify patterns of bullying behaviour and initiate school action to address them.

ii. Staff:

- a. Respond to a student's call for assistance, after his/her reporting of inappropriate behaviours in relation to all forms of bullying. This includes the use of technology (e.g. text messaging or social networking site usage). Failure to take action may indicate a breach in the duty of care owed to the student.
- b. Seek advice from their supervisor(s) if they require confirmation or clarification regarding an incident of alleged bullying behaviour.
- c. Maintain an up-to-date knowledge of school policies relating to bullying behaviour.

iii. Students:

- a. Promote positive relationships that respect and accept individual difference and diversity.
- b. Follow the school procedures in reporting and responding to bullying behaviour.
- c. Work collaboratively with staff and peers to resolve incidents of bullying.
- d. Have an awareness and understanding of what constitutes bullying while being charged with the responsibility of being respectful of one another.

6. BUDGET

The school will make provision each year in its annual budget for professional development opportunities for the staff in regard to this area.

7. **NEXT REVIEW DATE**

This policy will be reviewed in 2020 in consultation with relevant staff.

8. **DEFINITIONS**

- i. There is no definitive and universally accepted definition of bullying. However, for the purpose of this policy, the following definition will be used: *“Bullying may be defined as a student being exposed, repeatedly and over time, to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more other students. This may include physical contact, verbal assault, making obscene gestures or facial expressions, and intentionally excluding the student.”* (Olweus, 1993).
- ii. Furthermore, cyberbullying has become a significant area of concern and action in recent years. Cyberbullying may be defined as *“any form of bullying that utilises technology such as instant messaging, online chat rooms, online bulletin boards and email. In many ways this is a more insidious form of bullying since it may reach into a victim’s home.”* (Schools and the Law – Des Butler and Ben Matthews, p. 46).
- iii. Conflict or fights between students or single incidents are not usually defined as bullying.

9. **LEGISLATIVE / PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES**

- i. Anti-Bullying Policy For Students, Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2012.
- ii. Anti-Bullying Resources and Implementation Guidelines, Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, 2012.