



### **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 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:

- typically, repetition is experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable.
- a desire to hurt
- hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational)
- an imbalance of power
- an unjust use of power

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 (Cyberbullying)

## **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 wellbeing 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:

Staff

### **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/Head of School/College Psychologist finds out that bullying has happened he/she begins by speaking to the student alleging the bullying about his/her feelings and inquires as to who was involved.

## **Conduct a meeting with the people involved**

The Year Team Leader/Head of School/College Psychologist arranges to meet with the student /group of students who were involved.

## **Explain the problem**

The Year Team Leader/Head of School/College Psychologist 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 maybe impacting on another person.

## **Share responsibility**

Blame is not allocated to the group. The Year Team Leader/Head of School/College Psychologist 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/Head of School/College Psychologist 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/Head of School/College Psychologist needs to be informed and then another meeting may need to be scheduled.

**Follow up session with student alleging bullying**

The Year Team Leader/Head of School/College Psychologist 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 relevant sub-school Head and take the above action to stop the bullying/harassment. Counselling will be offered for both the victim and the perpetrator of the bullying through the College Psychologist or an outside agency if deemed appropriate. The student bullying will receive the normal College sanctions such as suspension, community service or probation. 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 synergetic files of students involved.
- 1.4 Very serious or recidivist incidents may result in the College Principal reviewing the perpetrator's enrolment at St Brigid's College.
- 1.5 Pastoral care staff will attend professional development/training with regards to bullying and harassment.

**2.0 Students**

- 2.1 Students will be educated to understand that is their responsibility to inform the class teacher or Year Team Leader when they are aware that a student or students is being bullied.
- 2.2 Peer Support Leaders, Student Council 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 centered strategies to reduce bullying.

### **3.0 Parents and Guardians**

3.1 Parents will be contacted and involved to whatever extent is appropriate in cases of bullying.

3.2 Parent Education opportunities related to the issue of bullying will be offered in both the Primary and Secondary schools.

3.4 The College will provide information on College policies and procedures related to bullying via College website and via e-mail to all parents and students annually.

### **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, Head of School or the College Psychologist 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 Programmes and Support Systems**

5.1 The College will provide awareness through the curriculum programs Restorative Practice to educate students on bullying and how to get along with others and also through the Religious Education and Health Education Programmes, personal development courses, camps and student leadership programmes. Students will also have the opportunity to be educated through the various guest presenters/organisations to convey these important life skills.

5.2 Relevant Professional Development will be offered to staff involved in pastoral care of the students.

5.3 Active supervision of the yard and school bus stop by teachers.

5.4 Small group and individual counselling for students who allege they are being bullied will be offered.

5.5 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 doesn't 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 e.g. 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 Act unimpressed or ignore the bully and show that you are not going to be upset by it.

6.4 Use humour to diffuse the situation.

6.5 If the bullying behaviour gets to be too much for you to handle on your own then please inform your Year Team Leader/Teacher/College Psychologist.

6.6 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

6.7 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 Psychologist as mentioned above.

6.8 There are many ways to make new friends. You can join sporting groups, organisations out of the school such as drama clubs or even participating in school-organised events such as Art/Maths club, football/netball/basketball.

6.9 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 e.g. on Facebook/MSN, you could let the student know that what was written was 'not cool'. 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.

#### **Definitions:**

- **Bystanders** are students who stand around and watch bullying behavior and don't do anything about it. Don't observe bullying behaviour, either support the victim or get help.
- **Dobbing** is when a person tries to get attention or to get someone else in trouble BUT asking for help is when someone feels the situation is out of their control and they are unable to deal with it on their own.
- **Silence/Secrecy feeds bullying behaviour** when friends are sworn to secrecy 'not to tell anyone' because the victim says it will 'only make things worse'. If you know a friend who is being bullied then tell someone like your Year Team Leader, School Counsellor or a trusted adult. Staying silent means the bullying may continue, give the bully more confidence/power (which is what they want) and sends a message to the bully that you are not bothered about what is happening.

#### **8.0 Strategies that may be used by parents if their child is involved in bullying either as a victim or a bully**

- If your son/daughter is being bullied

8.1 Encourage your child to talk about what happened. Show empathy.

8.2 Listen calmly and determine what the facts are. It's important not to over react.

8.3 Reassure your child that the situation can be addressed swiftly, sensitively and confidentially so that they can feel 'safe'/comfortable at school again.

8.4 Make your child aware that this is not their fault and no-one should feel 'unsafe'/uncomfortable in any environment.

8.5 Reassure your child that bullying can happen to anyone. Explain that bullying is experienced by many people and that it will eventually stop or be less traumatising.

8.6 Inform your child that through this experience they can build resiliency.

8.7 Provide your child with strategies help them feel empowered.

8.8 Share ideas and experiences with other parents.

- If your son/daughter is bullying others

8.9 Explain that bullying for any reason is not acceptable.

8.10 Explain that consciously hurting others or distressing another person suggests that they may have emotional problems and may need support dealing with these issues. Encourage this gently.

8.11 Educate them about the difference between assertive and aggressive behaviour (excellent handout on Centre for Clinical Interventions website – Click on Resources, Mental Health Practitioners, Interpersonal and then Assertive Communication).

8.12 Determine whether your child is seeking attention/love. Is there any specific home or school situation contributing to your child feeling angry, alone or having low self-esteem?

8.13 Has your child been the victim of bullying? Explore this issue sensitively and with patience.

8.14 Explore the need for the development of improving their self-esteem.

### Review History

Version	Date Released	Next Review	Author	Approved
1.0	2016	2018	K Stearne	
2.0	2018	2020	F Hepi N Lee	
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