



St Columba's School Bayswater

Grow in Faith Seek Wisdom Live in Peace

Dealing with Violence, Bullying and Harassment Policy

VISION STATEMENT

St Columba's Primary School aims to foster the total development of each individual, within a loving community, that is totally committed to supporting the Catholic faith, principles and ideals within the framework of the Mercy Values.

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RATIONALE

St Columba's School is committed to reflecting Gospel values in all aspects of its everyday life.

St Columba's community recognises its responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to eliminate violence, bullying and harassment in all forms.

St Columba's community recognises the rights of the individual to learn and interact in a safe and supportive environment.

Learning outcomes, physical health, and, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by violence, bullying and harassment.

St Columba's is committed to taking a proactive stance in dealing with violence, bullying and harassment.

OUTCOMES OF THIS POLICY

- St Columba's will be a 'safe', welcoming environment.
- The implementation of bullying and harassment prevention programs will enable the school to make clear statements about its expectations relating to acceptable behaviour and consequences of unacceptable behaviour to all members of its community.
- St Columba's will have made clear statements to its community that it will not tolerate, or support in any way, acts of violence, bullying or harassment.
- Students and staff will have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to deal with violent and potentially violent, bullying and harassment situations, including Cyber Bullying.

- Staff will have the necessary skills and confidence to educate students about violence, bullying and harassment and its prevention, including Cyber Bullying.
- Students will recognise acceptable behaviour and be aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.
- The wider community will support prevention initiatives in the school.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying (Bully)

A wilful conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten. It can be physical, and/or verbal in nature and can include racial, religious and sexual harassment, rude gestures, intimidation, social isolation and extortion. It must be recognised that bullying is ongoing in nature and that bullies are reinforced by another's pain, fear and humiliation.

As well,

'Bullying is generally seen as having these elements:

- in a situation where there is an imbalance of power favouring the perpetrator(s);
- the action being regarded as unjustified;
- experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive.
- experienced by the perpetrator as enjoyable.

Its nature may be:

- Verbal – name-calling, put downs, teasing, threats (spoken, written or electronic)
- Physical – hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing.
- Social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing.
- Psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions.

- Electronic – sending, forwarding, posting inappropriate messages or photos on any form of electronic media eg: phone, internet etc.

Relational aggression, a relatively new term is usually indirect bullying perpetrated mostly by girls. Its aim is to harm the other person by harming their friendships by ostracising, rumours, phone calls, ignoring and other behaviour which intends to draw friends away.

Harassment (Victim)

The perception by a person of being persistently disturbed, tormented or manipulated by another.

It 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.

Sexual harassment, gender-based put downs, racial discrimination and homophobia are akin to bullying.

PRINCIPLES

Principles which guide this policy.

- Bullying and harassment occur in all school communities.
- A whole school approach is necessary to reduce bullying and harassment.
- Bullying is often secret in nature and typically unreported.
- Honest and open communication assists with dealing with bullying.
- Ownership of the policy by the whole school community adds to its effectiveness.
- Actions should be based on current research about what is effective.

- The schools responses should be reviewed to determine their effectiveness.
- If bullying and harassment incidents are not addressed, they are likely to increase.
- The school has a duty of care to all its students.
- Bullying and harassment involve attitudes.
- Prevention programs must be school-wide and sustained.
- A policy must be adhered to in a consistent manner for it to be effective.
- Consequences of any Bullying and Harassment will be dealt with with reference to the Behaviour Management Policy.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy in the school.
- Being aware of all legislative requirements relating to bullying and harassment.
- Ensuring that the preparation and review of the school-based policy and procedures involve consultation with all groups within the school community.
- Ensuring that the school-based policy clearly enunciates the school's approach to bullying and harassment.
- Ensuring that the students, staff and parents are familiar with the school's approach and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to it.
- Promoting this policy within the school, with particular regard to the professional development needs of staff, and inclusion of this within the school's professional development plan.

- Ensuring the school's plans to counter bullying and harassment are monitored and reviewed at regular intervals.
- Ensuring reported incidents, intervention and follow-up are documented.
- Ensuring sensitivity, confidentiality and the protection of the rights of all individuals.

Staff, in particular teachers, are responsible for:

- Ensuring that curriculum content and teaching practices are congruent with, and support this policy.
- Helping students to develop competencies to challenge bullying attitudes and behaviours in themselves and others.
- Ensuring that claims of bullying and harassment are speedily and constructively addressed according to school-based strategies.

Students are responsible for:

- Understanding and practising their rights and respecting the rights of others to be free from bullying and harassment.
- Being aware of and using the appropriate procedures for responding to incidents of bullying or harassment.

Parents are responsible for:

- Supporting the school's policy and procedures on bullying and harassment.
- Approaching the school if they think their child is being bullied or harassed.
- Participating in meetings with the school so as to assist the staff with resolving the incidence of bullying or harassment involving their child.

PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES

At the school level

- The policy will be accessible from the school website.

- Correct behavioural expectations will be included in the Principal's address at assemblies when appropriate.
- Opportunities will be provided for staff, students and parents to increase understanding about bullying and harassment.
- Incursions and information such as 'Bully Busters', Cyber Safety will be available.
- Programs implemented across the school, eg Hero, Friendly Schools and Families Protective Behaviours.
- Developing a climate of 'It's OK to tell'.

At the Classroom Level

It is crucial that a whole school approach to bullying and harassment be supported, communicated and reinforced in the classroom.

Ways can include:

- Student participation in the development of classroom policy for behaviour.
- Developing a 'no put-down' culture.
- Developing a culture of openness and communication.
- Developing an 'it's OK to tell' culture.
- Regular sessions for class discussion of issues that concern the students.
- Teaching communication and conflict resolution skills as part of the curriculum.
- Co-operative learning strategies that involve individual and group accountability structures.
- Co-operative versus competitive classroom structures.
- Catering for a range of learning styles.
- Specialised classroom workshops involving the school social worker.
- Positive incentive structures to reward the individual, the group and the class.

- Integration of related themes in Literature, Health and Religious Education.

At the individual level

Students are to be taught ways of responding to bullying and harassment. These can be addressed in class or with individual students. These responses may need to be taught through role play situations in class. Responses may have to be rehearsed in particular cases.

Examples include

- Stand up to the bully. Look them in the eye. Confidently tell them to stop.
- Ask an adult for help eg. duty teacher, class teacher.

Other strategies include

- Predicting vulnerable situations
- Setting up a 'Circle of Friends'
- Reporting bullying behaviour.
- Do not encourage the bullying behaviour.
- Get help from a duty teacher, class teacher.
- Offer support and friendship to the person being bullied. Let them play with you and your friends.
- By telling someone, you can make a difference.

Strategies to help the bully may include:

- Counselling
- An endeavour to change the profile and reputation of the bully. Find ways for them to make a positive contribution to the life of the school.
- Have clearly articulated consequences for repeated bullying or harassment.
- Consultation with parents.
- Face to face sessions between the perpetrator and the victim

- Specialist programs for students vulnerable to bullying.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development should be planned according to the needs of the school at any given time. Any professional development should be in line with current research.

SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

These include:

- Teachers and school staff
- Parents
- School social worker
- Access to school psychologists

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

Monitoring and review of the policy is the responsibility of the Principal and staff.

- All documentation will be kept in the student files. This will include incident sheets and interview notes.
- Teachers will be alerted to those situations which trigger bullying and harassment
- Teachers will advise Principal if bullying or harassment is occurring at St Columba's.
- Principal will immediately take steps to deal with the situation.

MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS

Reporting

- St Columba's encourages a climate of openness. It is OK to tell.

- All incidences, intentional or not intentional must be reported by the students.
- Class teachers must be informed of instances involving their students.
- Intentional and ongoing bullying and harassment, and any violent act must be reported to the Principal.
- Acts of the above nature must be reported to primary caregivers.

Record Keeping

- Incidences must be recorded on and kept on student file.
- All meetings must be recorded.