

BULLYING POLICY

CHILD SAFE STATEMENT

At St Mary's College we hold the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental expectation of our college. St Mary's College is committed to protecting students from abuse or harm while at school and in our care.

RATIONALE:

St Mary's College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at St Mary's College will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at St Mary's College or in our partner schools.

When responding to bullying behaviour, St Mary's College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

St Mary's College acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

PRINCIPLES:

Definitions

Bullying occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one-off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct physical bullying* – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct verbal bullying* – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *indirect bullying* – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyber bullying is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

IMPLEMENTATION:

Bullying Prevention

St Mary's College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect. All other schools with who St Mary's partners, also have proactive approaches to increase inclusivity and prevent bullying behaviour within those communities.

Bullying prevention at St Mary's College is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families, partner schools and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- In our classes, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing policy.

Incident Response

Reporting concerns to St Mary's College

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their Teacher of the Deaf or Head of Campus. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including partner school staff, St Mary's youth worker or partner school wellbeing staff.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at St Mary's College should contact the appropriate Head of Campus/Deputy Principal by phone or by email.

Intervention

Primary Prevention:

- Professional development for staff and community awareness relating to bullying, harassment and proven counter measures to include restorative practices processes through partner school programs
- Learning programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- Each Teacher of the Deaf to clarify at the start of each year the school policy on bullying including cyber bullying
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems as per our PBL program

Response:

- SMC Behaviours' Flowchart used to determine the severity of an incident.
- If identified as a major behavior, each bully, victim and witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented.
- Students, staff and partner school staff identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations
- Both victims and/or the alleged bully will be referred for counselling or other avenues of support
- Parents to be contacted
- If student bullying persists parents will be contacted and consequences of actions (consistent with the school's Code of Conduct)

Post Violation:

Sanctions will vary according to the nature and frequency of the bullying or harassment, involvement of members of the partner school community and the individual circumstances of the victim and the offender. The severity of sanctions will be increased for repeat offenders.

Sanctions which the College may impose includes any one or a combination of the following:

- Warning (written or verbal – this is to be recorded on Compass)
- Loss of privileges including exclusion from yard or yard restrictions
- Informing and consulting parents/carers
- Mediation/Restorative Practices
- Ongoing counseling for both victim and bully
- Social skills training – Wellbeing program
- Detention
- Exclusion from class
- Internal or external suspension

- Expulsion
- Other actions deemed appropriate by the College
- Police notification
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours
- Classroom meetings
- Support structures (Language support etc.)
- Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies
- Rewards for positive behavior

Please refer to the Social Media Guidelines document and partner school Bullying guidelines and expectations for detailed information about useful terminology, student responsibilities and expectations, suggested strategies to assist parents and caregivers and consequences of the misuse of social media.

It must be noted that any use of social media forums outside of school hours that impact on the wellbeing of a student when at school will be dealt with under the same intervention post violation processes as any other incident.

St Mary's College understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by St Mary's College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

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