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# Anti-Bullying Policy for Students

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JUNE 2012

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| <b>Document Number</b>      | PO-DO2012.4  |
| <b>Responsible Officer</b>  | Assistant Directors of Schools   |
| <b>Effective Date</b>       | 1 May 2012   |
| <b>School Actions</b>       | <b>School Policy</b> – Each school is to develop its own policy consistent with and aligned to the principles and practices outlined in the systemic policy.   |
| <b>Review Date</b>          | September 2015   |
| <b>Associated Documents</b> | Privacy Policy (2002)<br>Censorship Policy (2005)<br>Critical Incident Management Policy (1999)<br>Pastoral Care Policy (2003) Addressing Harassment & Bullying in the Workplace (2010)<br>Workplace Internet, Email and Network Usage Policy (2010) |

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# STUDENT ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

## CONTENTS

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Preamble .....       | 3 |
| 2. Definitions .....    | 3 |
| 3. Rationale .....      | 4 |
| 4. Aims .....           | 4 |
| 5. Implementation ..... | 4 |
| 6. Budget .....         | 6 |
| 7. Evaluation .....     | 7 |

## 1. PREAMBLE

Catholic schools have the responsibility to promote cultures of trust, cooperation and respect in the lived experience of the Catholic Christian setting. Bullying in a school mitigates such a culture and inhibits the development of positive relational outcomes for the common good of students, teachers and caregivers.

It is the goal of every Catholic School to promote a safe environment where individuals may grow and develop. Well articulated, understood and implemented policies and procedures facilitate such a goal and minimise the risk of inappropriate behaviours becoming accepted, tolerated or even endemic.

*".....(Catholic) schools will have as their goal the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate world view, character and behaviour."* (Catholic Schools at the Crossroads , p14)

The modelling of positive behaviours and anti bullying strategies in schools has become an important aspect of student learning and parent reporting. There have been recent court precedents that have brought to light the dangers to students and schools in relation to bullying. What is clear for schools, as an outcome of the research and recent court judgements, is the critical issue for careful and well documented implementation of school policy. It is also necessary for students to be involved in the evaluation of processes, for regular policy review and dialogue at staff level and for easy policy access for parents and the community.

*"We now know that students' social and emotional learning facilitates their academic learning (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004) and that a student's level of social competence and their friendship networks are predictive of academic achievement (Caprana, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000). The goals of anti bullying initiatives also align with the teaching in schools of socio-moral values such as respect, support/care, cooperation, acceptance or difference and inclusion (McGrath & Noble, 2003). In summary, there are significant moral, social, emotional and educational advantages to addressing bullying problems in schools."* (McGrath and Noble 2006 -from Bullying Solutions- Evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools p.xvii)

## 2. DEFINITIONS

Whilst there is no definitive and universally accepted definition of bullying, the most influential research in the area of what constitutes bullying has been proposed by Olweus (1993):

*"...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."*

The *National Safe Schools Framework* (2011) defines bullying as repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

*"...Bullying is thus conceived largely in behavioural terms, that is, it involves negative actions on the part of the perpetrator."* [Rigby (2006) from Bullying Solutions p.4]

It is important to note that cyber bullying 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."* In other words, technology now allows the bully to inflict psychological harm on his or her victim anywhere and any time without respite. (Schools and the Law - Des Butler and Ben Matthews p.46)

The Commonwealth Code sets as an offence the use of a carriage service (such as a mobile or internet) in a way that is menacing, harassing or offensive. The maximum penalty for committing the offence is 3 years imprisonment.

'Sexting' is an occurrence that may be considered bullying. Under present legislation perpetrators place themselves in the serious position of making, viewing and or sending inappropriate and unlawful material.

Conflict or fights between students or single incidents are not usually defined as bullying.

### 3. RATIONALE

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. The culture and atmosphere of the school plays a significant role in students developing a balanced approach to life and learning. With this in mind 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 all schools work towards an authentic Christian school culture.

*".....the school must be concerned with constant and careful attention to cultivating in students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgement, will, and effectivity; to promote in them a set of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behaviour; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life, and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding. For all these reasons, the school enters into the specific mission of the Church." (Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith p.110)*

### 4. AIMS

This policy aims to:

- 4.1. Provide clear directions for schools to formulate an Anti bullying school policy
- 4.2. Assist schools in the prevention, reduction and response to bullying behaviour (including cyber bullying)
- 4.3. Promote a proactive attitude to and clear understanding of school processes when addressing allegations of bullying
- 4.4. Facilitate a consistent approach to the management of school record keeping processes in relation to bullying investigations
- 4.5. Ensure the right of students and staff to expect a school that is actively promoting a school environment free from the fear of bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimisation.

### 5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1. Each Diocesan school will develop its own Anti bullying policy.
- 5.2. The implementation section of the policy will include:

#### **5.2.1 Preventative programs:**

- a. programs and strategies to promote positive behaviours and prevent bullying within the school (including programs to be used)

- b. early intervention strategies when given notice of an enrolment of a student who has been identified as having been bullied or having engaged in bullying behaviour in a previous school
- c. a list of resources available in the school to support the process of restoring justice

#### **5.2.2 Reporting and record keeping:**

- a. procedures for the reporting of incidents by students, parents and staff (including documentation and how these procedures will be communicated within the school community) – see Support Document 5 (Alleged Bullying: Initial Action tool, exemplars of possible letters to parents of victims/perpetrators)
- b. school based record keeping and record sharing procedures (what and where records are kept, who signs off)

#### **5.2.3 Investigations:**

- a. specify the expected timeline for an investigation process and those who would normally be interviewed
- b. procedural steps that set out the process to be followed as a consequence of bullying allegations (including those to be involved in the investigation, investigator proformas to be completed, see support document 3.)
- c. the victim – it is important that appropriate support measures are documented and put into place for an alleged victim especially where heightened fear and concern is evident
- d. the perpetrator – it is important an alleged perpetrator has a complete understanding regarding what behaviours and communications must not occur

#### **5.2.4 Possible Disciplinary measures:**

- a. A statement identifying the possible disciplinary steps that may be taken as an outcome of bullying

#### **5.2.5 Police intervention**

- a. situations when police intervention is required in cases of bullying (e.g.possession of weapon, extreme assault) and cyberbullying (e.g.sexting) – see Support Document 4. Advice for Principals
- b. the school based processes to be used in relation to police interviews at school
- c. Contact information for the School Liaison Police and other support services available (future BOS School Registration requirement)

#### **5.2.6 Post investigation support services:**

- a. those programs, counselling services/external agency to be used to support any student affected
- b. provide easy access of the school's complaints and appeals procedures (brochure) that apply to bullying matters
- c. Outline any follow-up /monitoring process of students

#### **5.2.7 Communication of Policy/procedures:**

- a. Explain the process for ongoing teacher awareness training in relation to school anti bullying procedures (e.g. annually at initial staff, faculty meeting)

#### **5.2.8 Links to School Policy:**

- a. Strategies for dealing with bullying behaviour must be linked with school policy(s) that pertain to discipline and pastoral care of students. These should encompass a range of options available to deal with unacceptable behaviours, including exclusion, suspension and expulsion.

## 5.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 5.3.1 The Principal will:

- 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. Monitor student understanding and satisfaction of school processes
- j. Identify patterns of bullying behaviour and initiate school action to address them
- k. Engage students in the evaluation of anti bullying processes within the school

### 5.3.2 School staff will:

- 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 (see Support Document 3)
- 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

### 5.3.3 Students will:

- 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
- e. Participate in the annual evaluation of school anti bullying processes and procedures

## 6. BUDGET

- 6.1 The Catholic Schools Office will make provision each year in its annual budget for professional development opportunities for schools in this area
- 6.2 The school will budget for anti bullying resources that develop ongoing understanding and ownership of programs

## 7. EVALUATION

- 7.1 The school will annually revisit the procedures explicit within the Anti bullying policy and evaluate their currency
- 7.2 As part of the school Policy review and development cycle, the Anti bullying Policy will be reviewed by staff/committee at regular interval