ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR POLICY – A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Rationale:
- The college recognises that bullying and harassment may occur within the school and the wider community, and that such behaviour needs to be addressed for the wellbeing of all concerned. The college will provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted, and in so doing, all will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment. Students will also be prepared for coping in the wider community.

Aims:
- To reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- Everyone within the school community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to have a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

Definition:
A person is bullied when he/she is intentionally exposed regularly and over time to negative or harmful actions by one or more other people. Bullies are people who deliberately set out to intimidate, exclude, threaten and/or hurt others repeatedly. Bullying is a clear form of harassment. It includes:
- Repeated name calling, teasing or put-downs
- Purposely leaving someone out of activities
- Damaging, removing or hiding belongings
- Demands for money or possessions
- Physical violence or threats

Effects of Bullying:
Students who are victims of bullying may exhibit a number of symptoms, some of which may be observed by parents in the home, whilst others may be more obvious to teachers and some students. The list below is not exhaustive but covers some of the more common signs and symptoms of bullying.

Emotional:
personality changes, mood swings, sleep disturbance, insomnia, nightmares, depression, frequent tears, eating disorders - over/under eating

Physical:
signs of torn clothing, unexplained injury, psychosomatic symptoms (headaches, stomach aches), negative body language, nervous habits

Social:
loss of confidence, withdrawal from friends, increased sibling rivalry, outbursts of temper, mood swings, problematic behaviour

School:
unwillingness to go to school, withdrawal from peer group, truancy/misbehaviour, requesting changes in transport, decline in work standards or output

Home:
unwillingness to leave house, withdrawal from family members, bullying behaviour towards parents and/or siblings, demands for extra money for school

Community:
unwillingness to be out in community or to participate in social events
Implementation:

Research shows that the best ways to combat bullying and harassment are:

- to develop a whole school community approach where teachers, parents and students work together to communicate the message that bullying is unacceptable
- to build a safe and supportive school environment
- to provide students with the opportunities to develop social competencies, including resilience and positive behaviours
- to encourage the reporting of bullying, act to stop it and support those involved

The school will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying.

A. Primary Prevention: anti-bullying strategies which create a safe and supportive school environment
- encouraging a climate of cooperation and mutual respect through the college’s leadership, teaching practices and modelling of desired behaviours
- providing professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and the strategies that counter-act them.
- promoting the ‘Addressing Bullying Behaviour ‘policy by all staff at the start of the year and regularly thereafter
- providing programs which promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving. (See the Student Wellbeing Policy)
- providing counselling sessions for selected students on issues such as: Meeting, making and keeping friends; Developing positive self-esteem; Stress management skills; Anger management; Goal setting and study skills; Coping with grief and loss.
- providing curriculum programs and activities which address bullying behaviour eg Health and Physical Education curriculum topics; Police in Schools program; drama performances on Bullying
- providing curriculum programs which specifically engage students at risk eg Year 9 Life skills unit
- implementing a comprehensive transition program
- using teaching teams in Year 7 to improve teacher/student relationships and staff knowledge of student needs
- ensuring the consistent and fair application of the Student Code of Conduct
- promoting community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school’s programs and response
- acknowledging positive students behaviours eg House Achievement awards, publication of student achievements in the college newsletter, encouragement/affirmation cards for senior students, exhibition of student work
- providing opportunities for students to promote conflict resolution and positive behaviours eg leaderships positions, peer mediation, SRC.
- providing a rich and diverse co curricular program e.g. sport, musical, instrumental music, debating
- providing structured activities for students at lunchtime.
- providing appropriate supervision of students by teachers on yard duty, especially in known trouble spots
- reviewing student movement protocols and the security requirements of the college to minimise opportunities for bullying and harassment

B. Early Intervention:
- Promote students reporting bullying incidents involving themselves or others.
- Promote ways to report bullying incidents (see Appendix 1: student pamphlet)
- Classroom teachers on a regular basis reminding students to report incidents, and that reporting is not dobbing.
Parents encouraged to contact school if they become aware of a problem. (see Appendix 2: Information for parents)

Designated safe and quiet places for children to access at recess and lunch times eg Curriculum Resource Centre, rooms where organised lunchtime activities are held, Student Services building.

Public recognition and rewards for positive behaviour and resolution of problems.

Monitoring of absences patterns: Check for any correlations between student absences and possible bullying and harassment issues; establish mechanisms of response to problems of bullying which relate to attendance issues

Act upon information provided in surveys about bullying and harassment.

C. Intervention:

Once identified; bully, victim and witnesses spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented.

Both bully and victim offered counselling and support.

If bullying is ongoing, parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school’s Student Code of Conduct.

D. Post Violation:

For the bully, consequences may involve:

- formal discussion of student’s anti-social behaviour and its effects upon other students with year level/ sub school coordinator, Student Wellbeing coordinator and Assistant Principal
- parent meeting/discussion
- counselling
- peer mediation
- allocation of mentor/buddy to assist student
- drawing up an agreement covering acceptable behaviour
- official warning about future consequences if bullying continues
- acknowledgement and rewarding of subsequent positive behaviour

Where there are further offences or the bullying is of a serious nature, consequences may involve:

- exclusion from class.
- exclusion from locker area and/or yard.
- school suspension.
- withdrawal of privileges.
- ongoing counselling

Support for the victim:

- Affirmation that the student was a victim of bullying, that the matter did need to be reported and that there has been an appropriate consequence. Appreciation also extended to supportive friends and witnesses.
- If required, assistance with developing friendships via classwork, sporting or cultural programs, involvement in lunchtime activities
- Ongoing counselling
- Mentor/buddy
- If required, assistance with coping strategies eg Seven ways to say no to bullying

For the school,

- Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies.
- Opportunity for students to be reminded again (eg at Year level meetings) that bullying is unacceptable and that concerns must be reported.
- Rewards for positive and supportive behaviour.

Developing Partnerships
• Develop local student and parent surveys to monitor issues of bullying and harassment
• Provide positive parenting programs
• Use community resources to enhance a positive and caring school environment

**How the policy will be disseminated**

- The policy will be made available to existing and new families on an annual basis.
- Information will be publicised through the school's newsletter and on its website.
- Key information for students will be published in the college's student diary.
- Key information for staff will be published in the Staff Manual.
- Student Management and Wellbeing staff will regularly promote the policy through discussions with students, both individually and in larger groups.
- Posters will be placed in key areas of the College.
- Brochures will be distributed to students.

**APPENDIX 1: INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

A person is bullied when he/she is intentionally exposed regularly and over time to negative or harmful actions by one or more other people. Bullies are people who deliberately set out to intimidate, exclude, threaten and/or hurt others repeatedly. Bullying is a clear form of harassment. It includes:

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- Purposefully leaving someone out of activities
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- Physical violence or threats

**IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERYONE TO MAKE SURE BULLYING AND TEASING STOP. TELL SOMEONE.**

**SEVEN WAYS TO SAY NO TO BULLYING**

1. By showing that you are not upset or angry you are giving the bully the message you are strong. (It’s okay, if you yell or get upset later.) Taking some strong breaths will help you stay calm.
2. When you let your hands hang loose by your sides, you are giving them the message that you’re relaxed and you’re not afraid. (Even though you are a bit.)
3. When you stand up tall, you are giving the message that you’re not going to be pushed around.
4. When you look a bully in the eye, you are giving them the message that you are in control and they can’t be the boss of you.
5. When you speak in a clear and steady voice, you are giving them the message that you know what you want and you’re going to get it. (Think of the voice your parents use when they say ‘NO’ and really mean it.)
6. When you tell the bully ‘Stop it’, or “Stop it, I don’t like it when you ……. I want you to stop” you are giving them the message that you are boss of your self.
7. When you calmly turn and walk away you are giving them the message that you are not going to let them hurt you.
APPENDIX 2:
INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Background Information on Bullying Behaviour

As a parent you may suspect or know that one of your children is being bullied or is bullying others. Your feelings could include anger, guilt, or despair. You may realise that more than one person is suffering, that the hurt is multi-faceted and is not isolated to your child only. You want to know that when your child is at school they are in a safe, secure and happy environment. When bullying occurs you expect it to be dealt with promptly.

Research indicates that bullying has long-term mental health effects and that bullying doesn't just happen at school. You may have seen or experienced bullying in the workplace, in someone's home, at a shopping centre or on the sporting field.

What do I do if I believe my child is being bullied at school?

1. Listen to your child
It is important to gain an understanding of what your son or daughter is feeling and experiencing at school. By listening to them you can reassure him/her that the problem can be resolved. If you believe that a meeting with the school is necessary, let your child know this and treat this step as part of a normal process.

2. Ring the school to make an appointment
Arrange a suitable time to meet one of the following people to discuss the situation: the Year Level Coordinator, the Sub school coordinator, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator or the Assistant Principal.

3. Prepare for the meeting
You may have made notes from the discussions you had with your child. It's best to have some prepared notes as you may forget important points. The first meeting may or may not involve your child so discuss this with him/her.

4. Attending the meeting
In order to promote a partnership approach to this issue, it is important to establish a positive relationship at the meeting. During the meeting it is important to focus on your child's educational wellbeing rather than dwelling on the person who has been bullying your child. The following suggestions are presented to assist you during the meeting:

Outline the problems for your child as you see it.
- Ask what the school can do to address the issues.
- Take notes of any strategies that the school suggests.
- Offer suggestions that you think may be helpful.
- Let the staff member know that you are willing to support the school with the suggested strategies and ask if there is anything that you can do at home to assist.
- Suggest that the strategies be monitored over a two week period and are followed by another meeting to discuss progress.
• It is important for you to raise any issues or concerns that arise during the meeting as this maintains an open and honest partnership.
• If your child has not attended this meeting, decide how he/she will be informed about the decisions you have reached with the school.
• Acknowledge the positive outcomes from the meeting and set the next meeting date.

5. After the meeting
Having established a partnership approach to dealing with bullying issues you can now reflect on the meeting and the agreed strategies. If further issues or ideas arise at any time, your established relationship with the school will assist you in working through these.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: My partner believes that being bullied at school is just a normal part of growing up. What do you think?
A: When bullying is seen as just a normal part of growing up, it allows such behaviours to continue. Research tells us that bullying is a long-term mental health issue and that young people who experience bullying are three times more likely to be at risk of having depressive symptoms when compared to those not reporting such experiences. Failing to address bullying behaviour sends the message that bullying is acceptable. Bullying is not normal, nor is it acceptable.

Q: On a daily basis my daughter is followed around the playground by two other girls who whisper and laugh behind her back. When she asks them if there is a problem they just laugh at her and walk off, leaving her confused and upset. Is this bullying?
A: Yes this is bullying. Girls generally tend to bully in different ways to boys. Ostracising other girls, spreading rumours, whispering and laughing about a girl’s appearance or clothes are some examples. Your daughter does the right thing when she questions the girls about their behaviour. Her next step could be to let them know that she doesn’t like what they are doing and that she would like them to stop doing it. By speaking clearly and assertively to the girls she is letting them know that she will not tolerate bullying behaviour.

Your daughter may also like to talk to a teacher about what has been happening. The school may want to address the issue through specific classroom activities. These activities could include reminding students of strategies that the school has in place to respond appropriately when bullying incidents arise and the importance of letting an adult know when school rules are being broken. The classroom teacher may choose to organise some role-plays - where students take turns in 'acting out' the various options available to them when bullying occurs. These activities will help to reinforce what is and what is not acceptable behaviour.

Q: Our son won’t tell anyone at school that he is being bullied. He thinks that dobbing will only make the situation worse. What should we do?
A: Students are more likely to report incidents of bullying when it is part of normal school practice. Students need to feel that they will be taken seriously when they do report and that there is no stigma attached to reporting bullying behaviour.
Some students believe that it’s not cool to dob and this view unfortunately is reflected in some sections of our society. The code of silence is another example of how bullying, harassment and violence can thrive in the school grounds as it does in some sports. Schools and families can explore how concepts and terms such as dobbing and the code of silence can actually allow bullying to continue unchallenged and unreported. Let your son know that dobbing is a term often used by students who bully and it allows bullying to continue unless the behaviour is reported.

Q: My son was given a detention because he hit a boy who had been bullying him for months. I don’t think the school has done the right thing and I want to know what I should do about this.

A: Any acts of violence or aggression are unacceptable and schools are expected to respond to such behaviour in line with the school’s Student Code of Conduct. Unfortunately, some children don’t tell their parents or the school when they are being bullied and attempt to stop the bullying - like in your son’s case - by taking inappropriate action. The school will have anti-bullying strategies in place to help students respond effectively to bullying and other unacceptable behaviours. You may like to arrange a meeting with the school to discuss the issue and to ensure that your son knows what to say and how to act if he experiences bullying in the future.