

ANTI - BULLYING POLICY

Rationale

Our community is united in its stance that bullying will not be tolerated at St Margaret's. This means that all members of our community – students, staff, parents and carers treat each other with dignity and respect by modelling appropriate social behaviour at all times.

Definition

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. *(National definition of bullying for Australian schools)*

Types of bullying behaviour may include

- verbal – for example name calling, teasing, abuse, humiliation, sarcasm, insults, threats
- physical – for example hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting, gestures
- social – for example ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating, making inappropriate gestures
- psychological – for example spreading rumours, glaring, hiding or damaging possessions, malicious SMS and email messages, inappropriate use of camera phones or social media.

Bullying intervention strategies

After an incident has been reported, one or more of the following approaches will be implemented:

- Children involved interviewed by class teacher to gain further information.
 - All stakeholders (students, parents and teachers) are involved in the process of resolving the matter.
 - If parents are unaware of the situation, a member of the leadership team will notify parents if a child is accused of bullying or a child discloses that they are being bullied.
 - Staff informed to monitor specific children at playtimes and record incidents in Behaviour Book (Observation Book System).
 - Disciplinary consequences applied to student using bullying behaviours.
 - Measures taken to reduce the bullying behaviour and to protect the person being bullied.
 - Where applicable, Restorative Practice Strategies are employed to maximise outcomes.
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Bullying Prevention measures

- Religious Education program based on the explicit teaching of Christian values
- Explicit teaching of social and emotional intelligences
 - Organised playtime activities where students need support in socializing with friendship groups.
 - Curriculum initiatives to support awareness and appropriate socialisation: eg. Bounce Back, games from variety of Wellbeing Programs, anti-bullying posters, inclusion of anti-bullying content in inquiry units, understanding of cyber bullying and appropriate use of social media and social skills programs.
 - Students are introduced to Appropriate Use of ICT Agreements.
 - Programs to support student-student relationships, eg. Buddies, Peer Mediation, Peer tutoring.
 - Inclusive practices that promote connectedness and acknowledge positive behaviour. (SWPBS).
 - Development of positive student-teacher relationships.
 - Encouraging a safe and welcoming environment in the school.
 - Parent Resources are available via our school library.

Serious offences

In the rare, but still possible, scenario of a serious offence occurring, the following CEO guidelines will be implemented.

The students' parents are contacted where they will be expected to attend a Discipline and Welfare Conference Group (DWCG) meeting where the nature of the child's enrolment at St Margaret's is discussed.

Arrangements could include: -

- reporting to a designated teacher at specified times to discuss the student's progress in modifying unacceptable behaviour.
- school/community service.
- reparation
- exclusion from activities.
- withdrawal of privileges
- formulation of an individual student contract.
- referral to outside agencies
- in-school suspension, where the student is withdrawn from the class/playground until considered able to return.
- home suspension (up to a maximum of nine school days/ non-consecutive)

In drastic circumstances, where all other avenues are proving fruitless: -

- part time placement at St Margaret's
- negotiated transfer
- expulsion, according to CEO procedures

Suggested composition of the DWCG

- Parent(s) or guardian(s) of the student;
- If requested, a parent advocate;
- The principal, or in exceptional circumstances his/her nominee;
- Class teacher, or the teacher nominated as having responsibility of the student;
- The student wellbeing co-ordinator;
- Specialist personnel who may assist (eg; psychologist/ school counsellor)
- The student where appropriate

Where the meeting is likely to be difficult or contentious it may be advisable to utilise the expertise of the CEO Pastoral Care Team either as a mediator or parent advocate.

Definition of a serious offence

Conforming to the *Education Act 1958* (Education Regulations 1988), the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria proposes that a serious offence should be defined as activities or behaviour of a student which:

- i) seriously undermines the ethos of the Catholic school; or
- ii) consistently and deliberately fails to comply with any lawful order of a principal or teacher; or
- iii) is offensive, or dangerous, to the physical or emotional health of any staff member or any student; or
- iv) consistently and deliberately interferes with the educational opportunities of other students

Some serious offences are by their nature criminal offences. Where this is the case the school is obliged to observe certain legal requirements.

Evaluation

This policy will be constantly reviewed in the light of changing demographics and advances in ICT, and in view of the ongoing development of the School Wide Positive Behaviours Support system.

References:

Bullying. No Way (<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au>)

Updated: 2019

Review: 2023