

## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

### **POLICY INTENT**

Our school environment is aimed at ensuring a safe and supportive place of learning for every child. The intention of this policy is to take a proactive and positive stance against bullying.

### **RATIONALE**

The mission statement of St. Maria Goretti School, stresses the Christian values in the tradition of the Sisters of St Joseph. Some of these specific values speak in terms of children being cared for and nurtured, of dignity and respect, of the promotion of self esteem through inclusion and the notion of fairness. The uniqueness of each person can only be respected in a Christian environment where Gospel values are the basis for all school structures and activity.

Ensuring that the St Maria Goretti's learning environment is safe and free from all forms of bullying is therefore critical to the successful fulfilment of our mission.

### **GOSPEL VALUES**

Respect, personal dignity, individual worth, freedom, integrity, trust, justice, understanding, forgiveness, honesty, care, compassion and inclusion.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

St Maria Goretti School, as part of the wider Christian community, embraces the belief that each person has the right to be safe at all times. The school 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.

Because our school and church community believes in the dignity of the human person, every effort will be made to ensure that the issue of bullying is well understood by all, and that anyone who is being bullied is supported and helped. St Maria Goretti School will challenge cultures that support bullying and other forms of abuse in society, and will address situations of such with due recognition of the Catholic Church context and the pastoral care of individuals.

### **CONSEQUENCES**

Through this policy we hope that all who are present at St Maria Goretti School will....

- Respect each other

- Show empathy and understanding.
- Identify bullying behaviour without compromising their safety
- Show support for those being bullied by speaking out against this behaviour
- Have an understanding of what bullying behaviour looks and feels like
- Encourage appropriate behaviour
- Mirror good behaviour

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- St Maria Goretti School Mission Statement
- Catholic Education Board Policies
- Legislation

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES**

*Every member of the St. Maria Goretti Community has the right to feel safe and to be valued. It is the role of this educational community to create an environment of respect and acceptance and a place where all are free from fear or threat. In creating such a safe environment we are endeavouring to assist all members of our community to achieve their optimum potential.*

## **DEFINITIONS**

- 1. Bullying** involves an initial desire to hurt. This desire is expressed in action. Someone is hurt, the action is directed by a more powerful person or group, it is without justification, it is typically repeated, and it is done so with evident enjoyment." Ken Rigby (1998).
- 2. Bullying** constitutes unsolicited, offensive treatment through: vindictive, cruel, malicious or humiliating attempts to undermine an individual or group. These persistently negative attacks on personal and professional performance are typically unpredictable, irrational and often unseen. Bullying normally consists of repeated behavior.
- 3. Intimidation of weaker person:** the process of intimidating or mistreating somebody weaker or in a more vulnerable situation.
- 4. Bullying** is behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack, physical, psychological, social or verbal in nature, by those in a position of power which is formally or situationally defined, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or satisfaction.
- 5.** A person is **bullied** or victimised when he/she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons.
- 6.** There are three main parameters of **bullying**: it is repetitive (prolonged over time); it involves an imbalance of power; and it may be verbal, physical, social or psychological.

**7. Bullying** is a repeated abuse of power against others in a vulnerable position which is designed to hurt.

**8. Bullying** is an attitude rather than an act.

Some of the characteristics of this repeated bullying behaviour may be seen as

- **POWER**: Children who bully may acquire power through various means – physical size and strength; status within a peer group and recruitment within a peer group so as to exclude others. Basically, bullying involves an **imbalance of power**.
- **FREQUENCY**: Bullying is **not a random act**. It is characterised by its **repetitive** nature (prolonged over time).
- **INTENT TO HARM**: Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not be fully conscious of the **harm** they cause. This harm may be **verbal, physical, social** or **psychological**. Causing harm is deliberate!

Bullying may include some or all of the following behaviours:

**(In all forms e.g. physical, verbal and indirect)**

- Name calling
- Teasing and taunting
- Threatening
- Making fun of someone (their appearance, their physical attributes, etc)
- Racist or sexist remarks
- Social ostracism
- Malicious gossip
- Physical force
- Inappropriate texting
- Cyber bullying in the form of inappropriate E-mails, entries on social networks (ie Facebook)

Essentially bullying relies on an **imbalance of power** in the relationship between the bully and the victim.

Whilst any aggressive act is deemed unacceptable, it has to be borne in mind that every aggressive act is not necessarily bullying. **When two individuals engage in a process of attacking and counter-attacking one another this does not necessarily constitute bullying.** Bullying becomes quite overt in nature when one person uses power (in any form) to make the other party feel powerless.

**DESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES**

**RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

All students and staff have the right to:

- Feel safe, cared for and respected at St Maria Goretti Primary School.
- Deserve to be valued and respected.
- Be free of threat and intimidation.
- Leave school each day with a sense of enjoyment for what has occurred.
- Learn in a safe environment.

#### Responsibilities of Students

1. Not to bully others.
2. To confide in a staff member or parent if they are being bullied or believe someone else is being bullied.
3. To accept that when they are involved in any incident that is viewed or might be viewed as bullying, they will need to account for their actions.
4. Be aware there is a distinct anti-bullying policy at this school and everyone is bound by it.

#### Responsibilities of Staff

1. To be models of correct behaviour.
2. Do everything they can to ensure St Maria Goretti School is a safe and secure environment.
3. Be aware of those signs that may lead to more serious situations i.e. bullying.
4. Support students by ensuring bullying is totally unacceptable.
5. Encourage students to be proactive and to exhibit those leadership qualities which will reduce or eliminate bullying.
6. Be a proactive presence when undertaking playground duty.
7. Educate students about preventative strategies.
8. Create a climate of trust in the classroom by following through those matters that may be linked to bullying.
9. Fully support the school policy and the requirements undertaken in employment by Catholic Education.

#### Responsibilities of Parents

1. To have an understanding of bullying and of the definition of bullying.
2. To be vigilant in watching for any signs that may suggest their son/daughter is a victim of bullying and to make contact with the school.
3. To make staff / principal aware if they suspect their child is being bullied.
4. To know what your children are doing, who their friends are etc.
5. Not to take matters into your own hands but involve the school as quickly as possible if in fact the bullying has a school connection.
6. Emphasize with your child that staff should be informed if there is a bullying incident.

7. Instil your child with confidence.
8. Emphasize to your child NOT to retaliate but to seek support.
9. Cooperate with the school in making sure incidents are handled in the most appropriate way and to the satisfaction of all parties.
10. Speak with your children about school based incidents when they are brought to your attention ensuring they are treated in an open, unbiased and informed manner.
11. Encourage your child to speak with you if they are being bullied.

#### Responsibility of the School Administration

1. To provide for staff necessary and pertinent Professional Development about bullying, its consequences and strategies for dealing with it.
2. Ensure that there are adequate resources available to assist staff professional development and to support this policy.
3. To fully support staff in ensuring this policy is implemented in the right spirit.
4. To regularly publicize this policy to the school community.
5. To ensure that the policy is regularly reviewed and updated given any changing circumstances.

#### ACTION:

1. Approach your child's classroom teacher to discuss the issue.
2. Fill in the *Alleged Bullying Report Form for Parents* form and submit it to the school office.

(The school will deal with the matter within).

#### STRATEGIES TAKEN BY THE SCHOOL

These may include the following:

1. Openly talk about bullying – what it is, how it affects us and what we can do about it.
2. We will conduct a student survey biannually.
3. Establish a peer mediation program.
4. Survey students.
5. Encourage the reporting of bullying.
6. Establish comment boxes.
7. Teach our children the skills that will build their self-esteem and empower them to take the responsibility for themselves – and give them the opportunity to practice these skills.
8. Keep parents informed and educated via parent nights etc.
9. Initiation of the ***You Can Do It Program.***

#### RESPONSES TO OCCASIONS OF BULLYING

When a bullying incident is reported or observed we will use the following graded steps:

1. **First Incidence** - Warning – sit out. Inform other staff – record incident. The student will be told that future incidents of bullying will be dealt with at the next level. **This corresponds to Step 1 of the Behaviour Management Policy.**
2. **Further Incidence** – The Principal meets with the victim, to talk about his/her feelings, who is involved, how he/she can be supported. The Principal meets with those involved in the bullying, to discover what happened and to speak about how the victim might feel. The Bully is warned of future consequences. At this stage, the bully fills in Think Sheets, positive behaviour plan. Exclusion from classroom activities and lunch time may be applied. Parents are informed with a FYI sheet. **This corresponds to Step 3 of the Behaviour Management Policy. Except that in the cases of bullying, Step 2 may be omitted. Depending on the case, the bully will not be allowed to participate in representative activities or go on excursions for the remainder of term (minimum of 10 weeks)**
3. **Repeated Incidences** – After speaking with both the victim and bully, peer mediation is organized, supervised by the Principal. Parents are informed. The focus of the meeting is to encourage empathy and positive relations with the victim. At this stage, the bully fills in Think Sheets, positive behaviour plan, exclusion may be applied. Subsequent meetings are arranged in order to monitor progress. **This corresponds to Level 4 of the Behaviour Management Policy, but is more involved, as befits the nature of bullying.**
4. **Intolerable Repeated Bullying** - If mediation is unsuccessful, and after concerted efforts with the above procedures, a student persists in bullying behavior, punishment may be applied (ie suspensions, detentions, withdrawal). Parents will be informed, and notified that unless behavior improves, the student may not be allowed back in class or to participate in the normal life of the school. Consultation will occur with CEO for advice and further action. **This corresponds to Step 5 of the Behaviour Management Policy, but is necessarily more involved.**

The staff will be responsible for implementing the program and ensuring that incidences of bullying are dealt with in a consistent manner with the policy and as soon as possible after it is reported or observed.

**MORE INFORMATION ON BULLYING CAN BE FOUND ON**

**<http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/>**

## ALLEGED BULLYING REPORT FROM PARENTS

**Alleged Victim's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Suspected Bully's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Person Making the Report:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Numbers:** Home \_\_\_\_\_ Mob \_\_\_\_\_

### Description of concerning incident:

Please include names of others involved or eyewitnesses (add and sign further pages if required)

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I understand that the school will investigate this report as a matter of urgency. Further I understand that I shall be required to attend a meeting with the Principal or his representative to (i) provide any additional information that may be required and (ii) to hear the outcomes of the investigation.

I have read and become familiar with;

☐ St Maria Goretti's Primary School's *Safe at School (anti-bullying) Policy*

☐ The definition of Bullying as outlined in the *Safe at School (anti-bullying) Policy*

I have discussed this issue with my child's teacher or a member of the St Maria Goretti's Primary School Staff.

☐ No    ☐ Yes    If yes who \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Submitted to School: \_\_\_\_\_

*NB: The school's intention is to respond to any report of Bullying promptly. Our goal is to action any report within two (2) school days.*

### OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received:

\_\_\_\_\_

Received

By: \_\_\_\_\_

Handed

to: \_\_\_\_\_