



Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Parents Policy

Rationale

As a Catholic school, with Jesus Christ as our founder and role model, bullying and harassment is an anathema. If the members of our Catholic school community are to be true witnesses, committed to and reflective of the Gospel values, then bullying and harassment of any kind is not to be condoned and is actively discouraged.

Students and staff all have the right to feel safe and valued, and to be treated with dignity and respect. As such, all members of our school community are expected to develop a high standard of courtesy and care for one other.

The Scottish Council for Research in Education (1993) emphasised the following:

“The single most important thing a school can do to combat bullying is to have a clear policy, to which staff, parents and students are committed, making it clear that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated”.

Therefore, St Joseph's School, Northam is to be viewed as a “Bully Free Zone” and will be committed to this policy as outlined below.

Definition

Bullying is an attitude rather than an act. Bullying behaviour and harassment is a repetitive attack on someone which causes distress (e.g. embarrassment, discomfort, hurt/pain), not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks.

Bullying behaviours are about an imbalance of power where there is a deliberate intent to cause harm or distress by more powerful individuals or groups against those who are seen as less powerful.

The nature of bullying behaviour and harassment can be characterised by the following acts:

- Verbal: put downs, name calling, teasing and gossiping
- Physical: actual contact (hitting, tripping, pushing, holding, spitting)
- Social: exclusion (isolating, hiding, ignoring)
- Psychological: interference with property of others (hiding, damaging, stealing), extortion (demanding favours or money), threats or intimidation
- Written: writing about someone, graffiti or sending notes that are derogatory (including the misuse of e-mail, chatrooms, etc.)

Indications of Bullying and Harassment

A student who is being bullied or harassed at school may display some of the following signs and symptoms:

1. Emotional

- Changes in personality
- Mood swings (e.g. angry outbursts, unexplained crying)
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Signs of depression and a lower self-esteem
- Psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches and stomach aches)

2. Physical

- Nervous tics and cowed body language
- Changes in eating habits
- Self-harming
- Signs of bruising, cuts, scratches and torn clothing

3. Social

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Reluctant to participate in social activities
- Refusal to work or play with certain class members

4. Behavioural

- Reluctant to attend school
- Changes in school routines (e.g. deliberately arriving late to school or hanging around after school)
- Truancy
- Unusual misbehaviour in class
- More easily or noticeably distracted in class

5. Home

- Bullying own brothers and sisters
- Withdrawn or aggressive behaviours towards parents
- Requesting extra money and 'losing' personal and valuable items

6. Academic

- Decrease in output of school/home work
- Decline in school grades/marks

Intervention Procedures

The lessening of bullying behaviours and harassment is the responsibility of all school members – the staff, the parents and the students.

The following procedures will be followed when an incident of bullying or harassment is reported.

Student Being Bullied or Harassed:

The student has the option to:

- Ignore bullying, walk away confidently and calmly, and tell someone; or
- Ask student/s to stop it and leave you alone; or
- Report the incident immediately to a friend, school captains operating in a peer mediation role, teacher on duty, or your class/homeroom teacher

It is most important you tell someone. Never ignore it or keep silent. You can take action and change the situation.

Students Witnessing an Act of Bullying or Harassment:

The student has the option to:

- Ask the bullying or harassing student/s to leave the other student alone; or
- Take the student being bullied or harassed away from the situation and other student/s; or
- Report the incident to the school captains operating in a peer mediation role or the teacher on duty

Never ignore a situation of bullying or harassment. Never get involved in the situation in an aggressive way or if you feel it is unsafe.

Teachers Witnessing or Receiving a Report of Bullying or Harassment:

1. Listen to both students' stories to obtain the facts. Include any witness's observations as well.
2. Encourage a mediation process between the bully and the victim immediately to help defuse the situation and work their differences out.
3. Record the incident on a special form and report immediately to the Head of Primary/Secondary.
4. Head of Primary/Secondary investigate the incident to decide on further action. This could include:
 - Further mediation to reach a resolution
 - Disciplinary action and consequences as per Discipline Policy
 - Counselling by the school psychologist or the Head of Primary/Secondary
 - Recording of the incident
5. Parents of a bully will be notified and may be requested to attend meetings with the Head of Primary/Secondary and/or school psychologist. The Principal will always be kept informed and may become involved at his/her discretion.

Parents Being Informed of Bullying or Harassment:

1. If your child reports that they are being bullied or harassed, listen to their story and obtain the facts (e.g. names, witnesses, time, place and actual characteristics of the bullying/harassment incident).
2. Report the incident to the class/homeroom teacher and/or the Head of Primary/Secondary.
3. Steps 4 and 5 from above will be put into action.
4. If your child is bullying or harassing others, it is most important to separate the child from the behaviour. Listen to their story, obtain the facts and explore reasons behind the incidents. Exploring alternative actions to these reasons is the next step. It may be necessary to seek further help or advice. Please see the School for assistance.

Preventative Measures

St Joseph's School aims to be proactive in measures to reduce and, hopefully, prevent bullying and harassment in our school. It is our responsibility and duty of care to have strategies in place to prevent bullying and harassment towards our students.

Therefore, teachers on duty in their classrooms and in the playground will:

- Promote the Catholic ethos by modelling a caring and tolerant behaviour

- Be vigilant at all times, noting incidents, however minor, that appear to be acts of bullying and harassment
- Be supportive of the victim and the bully, and act accordingly
- Report and record all incidents of bullying and harassment
- In accordance with School Policy, teach:
 - I. Strategies in assertive behaviour and appropriate responses to anti-social situations; and
 - II. Social skills that establish build and maintain relationships.

Students will be encouraged and expected to:

- Not bully and harass others
- Help any student being bullied/harassed
- Report any incident of bullying/harassment to a school captain and/or teacher
- Respond assertively towards anti-social behaviour
- Practise the social skills taught in class so that these become a habit
- Work and play in accordance with the Catholic ethos of our school

Parents will be expected to:

- Support the School's Catholic ethos and policies
- Report immediately any concerns or reports of bullying and harassment
- Listen sympathetically to their child
- Encourage socially acceptable behaviour, including tolerance and respect for all school community members