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## ST PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

# POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS NO BULLYING POLICY STATEMENT

St. Patrick's Primary School places great emphasis on the wellbeing and pastoral care of its students and all members of the school community. This is underpinned by our wish to 'live out the Gospel Values' as stated in our school Vision and Mission statements. We believe that we have a responsibility as a Catholic school to see every child as unique and equally deserving of **respect, dignity and opportunity**. We also believe it is every child's right to feel safe at school and to experience a supportive school environment.

St. Patrick's Primary School believes it is the responsibility of all students, staff, parents and the wider school community to respond to any potential and/or realised incidents of bullying that may occur in the school environment.

The school acknowledges the following key issues in relation to bullying in schools:

- It is often hidden and not easily observable
- Reduction of the problem relies on communication to those most able to act (*silence by victims, their parents, staff and other students only contributes to the problem*)
- The implementation of a whole school approach is desirable and would involve the following key areas of school life: curriculum teaching and learning, school organisation, ethos and environment and school community partnerships
- Staff, students and parents are all involved in some aspect of addressing the elimination of bullying and dealing with bullying incidents if and when they occur in the school
- Everyone in the school community needs to be familiar with the school's policy / approach to bullying and harassment
- There is a need for ongoing review, evaluation and education
- Effective measures for dealing with bullying need to include a variety of approaches which are both educational and include processes and procedures for dealing with perpetrators and victims of bullying – punishment alone is generally not an effective measure.

### DEFINITION

***Bullying (or harassment) is defined as subjecting another person to any form of behaviour that is hurtful, threatening or frightening. This behaviour is usually repeated over time.***

## WHAT CONSTITUTES BULLYING? (NOTE: refer to appendices for further information)

- Physical and verbal aggression by a student/s or person/s towards another student/s or person/s
- The use of 'put-down' comments or insults
- Name calling
- Damage to a person's property
- Deliberately excluding someone from activities or friendship groups
- Setting up humiliating experiences
- Threatening gestures
- Written / text messages that contain threats, put-downs, etc.

## WHAT THE SCHOOL WILL DO IF BULLYING OCCURS

While the school takes a very clear stance against bullying and harassment, our response to reports of bullying will depend upon the individual circumstances of each incident.

We encourage students and parents who become aware of bullying to report it to a trusted member of staff (eg: class teacher, support staff, Deputy or Principal) who will act to determine a helpful course of action.

*(refer to appendices for further information)*

All instances relating to bullying behaviour that are reported to staff will be investigated. If substantiated, a 'Warning Slip' sheet will be forwarded to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator for action and / or monitoring purposes via the 'Bullying Register'. *(refer to appendices for copies of these documents)*

## PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

### **Staff members are asked to respond to a report of bullying and/or harassment in the following ways:**

- Listen to the student (or parent) in a caring and sensitive manner
- Be sensitive to how the victim would like the problem dealt with and resolved
- Issue an official 'Warning Slip' if the claim is substantiated \* - this provides a record of essential details *(refer to 'Warning Slip' document in appendices)*
- Attempt to 'reconcile' the students involved
- Offer a number of options / strategies to all parties involved
- Monitor and observe

*\* sometimes an investigation may suggest that a student/s be put on 'notice' (via a 'harassment notice') before going to the next level of an official 'warning slip', thereby allowing the student/s an opportunity to modify their behaviour. Only members of the Leadership Team may issue such a notice after an investigation & considering all factors (refer to appendices for more details)*

### ***In some cases the following action may be required:***

- Refer matter directly to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator (SWC) or Principal
- SWC / Principal to notify and involve parents or guardians
- Refer to counsellors or other relevant professionals
- Monitor and observe

It should also be noted that our school's 'Assertive Discipline Policy' clearly outlines expectations for student behaviour - both in the classroom / learning environments and within the school grounds. This document also clearly outlines the agreed school rules

and relevant consequences for behaviour – both positive and negative. (*refer to 'School Discipline' documents for further information*)

## ***APPENDICES to POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS/NO BULLYING POLICY***

### **APPENDIX 1 - PREVENTION EDUCATION and AWARENESS RAISING INITIATIVES**

As a school, we re-introduced the '**Bounce Back!** Classroom Resiliency Program' in 2016. This program includes materials on bullying, tolerance, resilience and the development of prosocial behaviours and will form part of the P-6 'Personal Development' curriculum. It is our belief that this program will greatly assist the efforts of students, staff and families to minimise bullying at St. Patrick's and to promote the development of positive relationships across the school community.

Other measures include:

- The provision of professional development and professional learning opportunities for all staff
- The provision of structured time at staff meetings to discuss bullying, review policy and give opinions and information about current issues and current thinking / research (*Note: Induction plan to be developed for all new staff to St. Patrick's School*)
- Random surveys to be conducted with students, staff and parents each year to gauge occurrence of bullying behaviours and sites deemed 'at risk'
- The provision of information to parents (via information sessions, newsletter, handbook, enrolment, SSG, foyer display) to inform them of initiatives undertaken to address bullying and harassment and to promote positive relationships across the school community

- Working with student/s across the school to establish and develop a culture that is positive, where bullying behaviour is not tolerated and where there are clear processes and procedures to assist the school community to report incidents of bullying
- Involve and empower the school leaders (SRC, House Captains) to support the whole school approach to positive relationships
- Teachers actively intervene to eliminate 'put-downs' that may occur within the school environment (eg classroom, yard, assembly areas, etc.)
- Establish safe places and stimulating playground environments and activities that keep children actively occupied and engaged in a range of interesting educational play activities.

**Staff members are asked to respond to a report of bullying in the following ways:**

- Listen to the student (or parent) in a caring and sensitive manner
- Be sensitive to how the *victim* would like the problem dealt with and resolved
- Attempt to 'reconcile' the students involved
- Offer a number of options / strategies to all parties involved
- Monitor and observe

***In some cases the following action may need to be taken:***

- Refer matter directly to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator (SWC) or Principal
- SWC / Principal to immediately notify and involve parents or guardians
- Refer matter to the CEO, counsellors or other relevant professionals □ Monitor and observe

## APPENDIX 2 - INTERVENTION

Intervention procedures will vary according to each case – for example, whether the bullying behaviour is observed and identified by a staff member or whether communicated by the victim, an observer or their family.

In the case where staff observe bullying behaviour, the primary goal will be to stop the behaviour. Be aware that there are often two sides to a story – do not automatically take one student / person's word – ***investigate!***

The staff member will intervene and immediately direct the student who is bullying to be removed from the immediate environment if it involves physical danger or obvious distress

The 'victim' is given appropriate support and offered suggestions / strategies for coping.

If bullying behaviour is established, the staff member will speak to the 'perpetrator', revisit and discuss the school's bullying policy statement. S/he will be asked to explain clearly why their action was wrong and to give a commitment not to repeat the behaviour.

At this point, resolution will normally occur, with both parties understanding how they must interact appropriately in future. The *victim* of the bullying/harassment will be monitored over the next few weeks and periodically after this to ensure that the perpetrator has fulfilled his or her commitments.

***NOTE:*** *Details of all substantiated cases must be noted and must be forwarded to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator for action and/or monitoring purposes.*

### APPENDIX 3 - OTHER POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION / CONSEQUENCES

When a referral is made to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator and/or the Principal, the following may occur (depending on the individual circumstances of each incident):

*Once bullying behaviour is established...*

- The person being bullied and the person/s reported for bullying will be interviewed separately
- Be sensitive to how the 'victim' would like the problem dealt with and resolved
- Attempt to 'reconcile' the students involved
- Parents/guardians may be contacted
- The Catholic Education Office 'Wellbeing' unit may be contacted for advice and support
- School based instruction / counselling may commence (*ie: engaged in a program designed to bring about a POSITIVE change in behaviour - refer to 'Bounce Back' program*)
- Referral may be arranged (for either or both parties) to provide external professional help
- Situation will be monitored by the family, class teacher and/or other relevant personnel

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *Continued incidents of bullying or harassment – when all attempts at reason and reconciliation are found to be ineffective - will be treated very seriously, as will any case of retaliation against a person for reporting bullying. Contact will be made with parents / guardians who may be asked, together with their child, to meet with the Principal (or nominee). This could lead to internal/external suspension, and/or the involvement of the local police or other relevant authorities.*

*The parents of any victim of such bullying behaviour will be informed of the school's handling of the matter and the perpetrator's behaviour will be monitored regularly in the following months.*

Support is available and will be offered to any person being bullied. Students who bully others will be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and every effort will be made to help them to change their behaviour.

***Parental support in this area is essential to achieve an acceptable outcome for all concerned.***

## APPENDIX 4 - SITUATIONS WHICH ARE NOT BULLYING ('Bounce Back')

There are some negative social situations which contain similar elements, but which are not bullying. In some situations it is difficult to assess whether an action constitutes bullying or not. For example, 'stirring' can be hard to separate from bullying. Sometimes there is a fine line between stirring and bullying. Students who bully will occasionally take advantage of this fine line to claim that they were only having a bit of fun, not bullying. A helpful response to this claim is, 'If it was just a bit of fun, both parties would be enjoying it, not just one.'

Conflict: bullying is not the same as conflict. Conflict has mutuality to it and there is usually an issue at the core of the disagreement. Both parties are distressed (although not always equally) and both want a resolution.

Social rejection and social isolation: bullying is not the same as social rejection unless it is intended to distress. Intention to distress is seen in the enjoyment of those doing it and in the intensity and deliberateness with which it is done. Seeing a student left out and not included in a game is distressing but it needs to be dealt with by using strategies such as classroom activities about prosocial values, requests for cooperation, and sometimes skills training.

Random acts of aggression and intimidation: bullying is not the same as aggression or intimidation. In the general culture, some people call anyone who intimidates another a 'bully'. However, a student who uses aggression or intimidation has no preference for one specific victim and hence there is no repeated pattern and we do not, in the school context, refer to it as bullying. Aggression and intimidation are antisocial behaviours and totally unacceptable and must be dealt with strongly. However, the most successful strategies for dealing with random acts of aggression and intimidation are often subtly different from strategies that are most successful with bullying.

## APPENDIX 5 - WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO

All students can and should act to help stop bullying and harassment at school.

### **If you are being (or have been) bullied:**

- tell the person to STOP – be clear, be firm and be confident – tell them that their behaviour offends you (they may not be aware of this)
- get away from the situation as quickly as possible
- look for support from those nearby
- TELL SOMEONE YOU TRUST – this is not 'dobbing', you have a right to report and discuss the situation

### **If you witness bullying:**

- Try to tell those who are bullying to stop - tell them that their behaviour is offensive
- Don't join in – being part of a group which is bullying someone is just as bad as being a bully - refuse to be involved in any bullying situation
- Support the person being bullied and encourage them to do something about it
- Report it – so that both the person being bullied and the bully can receive help. Remember that everyone has the right to feel safe.

## APPENDIX 6 - WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Speak to your child and take an active interest in what they are doing at school
- Discuss appropriate and inappropriate behaviour/s and encourage your child/ren to be open with you about bullying behaviour
- Be alert to signs of distress in your child/ren (bullying can often occur out of the sight of teachers) – symptoms such as not wishing to go to school, apparent sadness, uncharacteristic quietness and so on may be indicators of a person being harassed
- Model positive and caring behaviour for your child/ren by discussing and demonstrating how to treat others with respect
- Report incidents – notify your child’s teacher, Student Wellbeing Coordinator or the Principal as soon as possible (it often assists if you write down the main areas of concern)
- In many cases your child may not wish you to contact the school in case ‘things get worse’ – it is very difficult to deal effectively with bullying if it is not reported
- Support the school procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying

## WHAT IF I THINK THAT MY CHILD IS INVOLVED IN BULLYING?

- Speak to your child and listen to their opinions and explanations of why they behave in this manner
- Reinforce values of honesty, tolerance, dignity and respect and the difference between right and wrong
- Discuss ways of avoiding bullying types of behaviour
- Try to remain calm and look for positive solutions to the problem
- Explain that St. Patrick’s does not tolerate bullying or harassment
- Suggest that you and/or your child notify the school to explain the situation

## APPENDIX 7 - HELPFUL HINTS

- Be alert to bullying behaviour and signs of distress in students
- Model positive behaviour
- Comments such as: “We didn’t mean it”, or “They’re only being boys” do not excuse bullies from their actions
- Students have a responsibility to ensure that their behaviour does not provoke or invite aggressive responses from others

## APPENDIX 8 - SOME COMMON BULLYING MYTHS AND 'EXCUSES' EXPOSED

*Sometimes stated by 'perpetrators'...*

- **"I was only joking / mucking around – can't they take a joke?"** – *this is the most common response to bullying. It is not a joke to put someone down, ridicule them, make them feel uncomfortable, push them around or take their things. This is bullying.*
- **"Only weak people do!"** – *it takes courage and strength of character to stand up for your rights and those of others. Bullying continues because people do nothing.*

*Sometimes stated by 'victims', parents & teachers...*

- **"I'll just ignore it and see what happens"** – *if anything, ignoring it makes it worse. It gives the impression that bullying is OK with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.*
- **"I don't want to cause any trouble"** - *Students have a right to feel safe at school. You are not causing trouble, you are standing up for yourself and for your rights and the rights of others.*
- **"No-one can do anything about it"** – *most cases of bullying are sorted out very simply, especially if is reported straight away. The school is committed to addressing and solving these problems.*

*Sometimes stated by parents and teachers...*

- **"It's just a natural part of growing up"** - *there is nothing natural about being victimised. Students have a right to feel safe at school, as well as at home.*

## APPENDIX 9 - INDUCTION

Staff: All staff at St. Patrick's will be given a copy of the 'Positive Relationships Policy'. Time will be allocated during staff and level meetings to discuss and clarify aspects of the document, particularly those relating to responding to and investigating reported incidents. This will be done at the commencement of each new school year and at other relevant times as required. Staff new to St. Patrick's will receive further induction from the Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

Students: It is important that all students are made aware of the main aspects of the school's 'Positive Relationships Policy' so that they have a clear understanding of the school's expectations and their responsibilities as students. This will initially be done by classroom teachers and should be revisited at the beginning of each new school year and at other relevant times (eg: when working on relevant 'RE' or 'Bounce Back' units or when issues arise in the class, yard or following parental concerns). The SRC will also be used to introduce and explain aspects of this policy during.

Parents / Guardians: All parents / families will be given a copy of the 'Positive Relationships Policy Statement'. Multiple copies of the 'Appendices to the Positive Relationships Policy' document will be made available for families to borrow from the school office. We encourage all families to read these important documents and discuss them with their children at home.

Families who are new to St. Patrick's will also receive a copy of the 'Positive Relationships Policy Statement' upon enrolment. These documents will also be made available to any families inquiring about enrolment at St. Patrick's.

## APPENDIX 10 - INITIAL WARNING

If a teacher or staff member become aware of what they believe to be **potential** harassment or bullying behaviour/s, they can make explicit to the student who is harassing that they understand the motivation behind the harassing behaviour as one way of giving a first warning. They can then restate the rule.

For example:

*'Jodie, it seems to me that you are trying to make Carly feel small and impress other girls with your social power. This is not acceptable and is against the rules of our class / school. Please stop doing it now. There will be a penalty if the harassment is repeated'.*