Bullying of Students – Prevention and Response Procedure

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1. Introduction and Purpose

Catholic Education in the Diocese of Parramatta is a ministry of the Church whose purpose is to transform the lives of students so that they can reach their potential using their gifts and talents at the service of their communities. Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese (CSPD) is committed to developing learning communities that are safe, respectful and just. Students and staff will protect and promote the dignity of all people recognising that each is created "in the image and likeness of God" (Genesis 1:28). Bullying behaviour, racism and discrimination of any type will always be unacceptable in CSPD schools and some bullying behaviours can be found to be criminal.

The focus of this policy two-fold:

a) Preventing bullying through the creation of safe, respectful and supportive school cultures

b) Responding to bullying behaviour in ways that are just and effective, with a focus on safety, restoring relationships and educating students about respectful relationships.

A caring and supportive school culture that promotes positive relationships and reflects Gospel teachings is a core aspect in the prevention of and response to incidents of bullying. This is only possible when there is a positive relationship between parents and the school. Bullying behaviours are in conflict with core values of the Catholic faith including dignity, respect, justice, equity, and compassion. Bullying can adversely affect the wellbeing of students and is always unacceptable. School bullying is the single-most important modifiable risk factor for mental illness in children and adolescents. (Scott et al. 2014). [1] Therefore, successfully preventing and responding to bullying will have positive, life-long benefits.

Governed by the principles of the Student Wellbeing Policy, this document guides the work of school leaders, staff, students and parents/carers to enable them to work together to create learning communities characterised by safe and respectful

relationships. It also directs how schools must work to prevent and address issues of student bullying and to respond effectively, fairly and sensitively to the needs of each person involved.

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2. Definitions

Bullying - Bullying behaviour has three key features:

      a) It is an intentional misuse of power

      b) It is ongoing and repeated

      c) It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

CSPD refers to the Catholic Schools Parramatta Diocese, schools and the central office.

School-related settings include school grounds, school-related activities and outside of school settings where there is a clear and close connection between the school and the conduct of students. This connection may exist in situations where Online Services and/or Digital Devices, including BYODs, are being used outside of school grounds where:

- there is discussion about school taking place outside of school hours

- a student is wearing their school uniform but is not on school premises

- interactions occur between students (including other CSPD students)

- students are online in digital classrooms

- where online behaviour between students has flow-on consequences at school and duty of care requires the school to respond once an incident is reported.

Staff means employees (casual, temporary and permanent employees), contractors, religious, volunteers and any other person appointed or engaged by CSPD to perform work or functions for CSPD.

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3. What is Bullying?

3.1.   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.

3.2.   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.

3.3.   Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

3.4.   Bullying behaviour can be verbal, non-verbal, physical, sexualised, discriminatory, inappropriate communication using technology and exclusionary.

3.5.   Bullying behaviour is repeated over a period of time, however, Conflicts or fights between students and single incidents are not defined as bullying. Bullying behaviour **is not**:

    3.5.1.   children not getting along well

    3.5.2.   a breakdown of a friendship

    3.5.3.   a situation of mutual conflict (e.g. disagreements)

    3.5.4.   single episodes of nastiness

    3.5.5.   random acts of aggression, cruelty or intimidation

    3.5.6.   isolated incidents of conflict separated by many months or years does not constitute a pattern of bullying behaviour.

Whilst the behaviours above do not meet the definition of bullying, any poor or anti-social behaviour is unacceptable and will be responded to appropriately.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Teachers and support staff are responsible for:

4.1.1. modelling and promoting appropriate relationships and behaviours

4.1.2. promoting a school culture where bullying is not acceptable

4.1.3. Engaging in professional learning about safe and supportive school cultures and responses to bullying behaviour

4.1.4. teaching students to identify, report and respond to bullying

4.1.5. managing reports of bullying and escalating matters to the principal (or senior staff) when necessary

4.1.6. documenting allegations using the relevant Compass Chronicle.

4.2. Students are responsible for:

4.2.1. being respectful towards other students, staff and members of the school community

4.2.2. reporting incidents of bullying behaviour they have experienced or witnessed

4.2.3. modelling effective bystander behaviour, so that bullying and harassment are discouraged through peer influence

4.2.4. Following any instructions from school staff to support good behaviour and safety and follow any behaviour management plans developed by the school to support good behaviour.

4.3. Parents and carers are responsible for:

4.3.1. modelling positive social behaviour in interactions with the school community, including in interactions with teachers, other parents and students

4.3.2.   notifying a staff member if a child is experiencing bullying

4.3.3.   familiarising themselves with the school's behaviour management procedures and these Bullying Prevention and Response Procedures and assisting their child(ren) in understanding bullying behaviour

4.3.4.   working collaboratively with the school to resolve bullying when it occurs.

4.4.   The Principal is responsible for:

4.4.1.   providing opportunities for students to learn about positive behaviours to promote a school environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated

4.4.2.   maintaining a positive school climate that promotes respectful relationships

4.4.3.   ensuring there are safe and accessible ways for students to report bullying

4.4.4.   building collaborative relationships with families to create a shared understanding of how to prevent and respond to bullying

4.4.5.   ensuring that teachers and other school staff are provided with support and professional development to prevent, identify and respond to bullying

4.4.6.   identifying patterns of bullying behaviour and initiating school action to respond

4.4.7.   ensuring that allegations of bullying behaviour are responded to quickly and effectively and that consequences for bullying include restorative practices and opportunities to learn positive social skills

4.4.8.   Making the 'Bullying - 'Parent Fact Sheet' available to parents/carers who are supporting their children through a bullying incident.

5. Prevention

5.1.   School learning programs must include [bullying prevention strategies](). These strategies should include teaching students the universal expectations of safe behaviour and respectful, inclusive relationships

    5.1.1.   Respectful behaviours and social emotional skills

    5.1.2.   What bullying is and what it is not

    5.1.3.   How to respond to a situation where students are either experiencing or witnessing bullying

    5.1.4.   The important role of the bystander and how their role when bullying occurs

    5.1.5.   The impacts of bullying for the victim, the person bullying, bystander and the community

    5.1.6.   The school procedures for responding to bullying and what happens when bullying is reported.

5.2.   Schools will use data collected about bullying to analyse and evaluate their responses to student safety and bullying prevention.

5.3.   Schools will ensure that positive behaviours and respectful relationships are promoted and profiled throughout the school community (e.g. school newsletter / website, assemblies).

5.4.   The school will create opportunities for parents/carers to partner with the school in preventing bullying behaviour. This may include parent associations, information forums and/or discussion groups.

6. Responses to Bullying

6.1.   Complaints concerning bullying must be responded to (see appendix 1) and investigated in a timely manner that respects the dignity and the privacy of those involved.

6.2.   Principals and school leaders must ensure there are clear and well known processes and procedures (Appendix 2) in place that outlines a response to an allegation of bullying. This process should include staff roles and responsibilities in relation to bullying, including who leads the investigation, response, monitoring and follow up in relation to bullying allegations.

6.3.   For the purpose of this procedure, the term nominated staff refers to any staff member who has been authorised by the principal to investigate or respond to bullying allegations. This may be the principal, assistant principal, learning leader or year leader dependent on the context. The nominated staff member should identify their role to the people involved in the bullying incident.

6.4.   If the incident involves alleged acts that are life-threatening or criminal, the school must contact police and be guided by their instructions and advice.

6.5.   When the school believes there may be a risk of significant harm, the school must complete the [Mandatory Reporters' Guide](#) and follow the outcome.

6.6.   The Police Youth Liaison Officer (for Primary school aged students) or the Youth Engagement Officer (for Secondary school aged students) may need to be advised if the bullying behaviour involves violence or serious threats of harm or alleged criminal conduct. [Local Police Stations](#).

6.7.   Although all incidents or reports of bullying will vary in nature and intensity, the school based process may include the following steps:

6.7.1.   receive an allegation of bullying from child, teacher, parent/carer or other person

6.7.2.   The nominated staff member ensures the allegation is documented

using the relevant Compass Chronicle.

6.7.3.   The nominated staff member assesses/investigates the allegation to determine if it meets the definition of bullying, and if so, assesses the severity and the frequency of the bullying. This assessment will determine the response.

6.7.4.   Serious and ongoing bullying behaviour will necessitate a suspension from school following the [Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Procedures](). Upon re-entry to the school, the student will engage in a restorative process.

6.7.5.   The nominated staff member, in consultation with the parents/carers of the student engaged in bullying, will develop and implement a behaviour management plan to support the student in more positive and safe behaviours.

6.7.6.   Nominated staff will communicate the behaviour management plan to relevant staff members, whilst protecting the privacy of the students involved.

6.7.7.   Consequences should ensure that the student(s) is taught more positive and appropriate social skills and behaviours. This should be part of an ongoing support or management plan for the student(s).

6.7.8.   The nominated staff member will provide appropriate and ongoing support to the students involved. This may include counselling or ongoing engagement with a particular teacher and parent/carer. The scope of this support will be dependent on the situation.

6.7.9.   Nominated staff member monitors the situation and follows up with all parties, including witnesses. This monitoring and follow up must be documented.

7. Off-School Premises and Out-Of-School Hours Incidents

7.1. The duty of care owed to students is not limited to incidents that occur on school property, during school hours or at school or CSPD events.

7.2. Whenever the school has knowledge of harm or potential harm suffered by a student due to the acts of another student, the school is obliged to act to protect the student. The test that is applied in these circumstances is "Could the school have been reasonably expected to have acted in the interests of the young person with the information they had that there was harm or the risk of harm?".

8. Relevant Legislation

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*
- *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)*
- *Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)*
- *Education Act 1990 (NSW)*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- *Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*

9. Related Documentation

- [Wellbeing Policy 2022](#)
- [Safeguarding Procedures](#)
- [Code of Conduct](#)
- [Student Use of Digital Devices and Online Service Policy (External - with Online Service Agreement)](#)

- [Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Procedures](#)

- [Weapons Procedures](#)

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10. Further Information

Further information on this policy can be directed to your school principal or the Community Liaison Team (02) 9840 5620 or via email cl@parra.catholic.edu.au.

Appendix 1

Supporting parents/carers when bullying is reported

PARENTS/CARERS MAY RESPOND IN A VARIETY OF WAYS TO THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR CHILD BEING BULLIED. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS, REMAIN OPEN AND CALM AND COMMIT TO REASONABLE ACTION.

STEP	EXAMPLE OF RESPONSE
1 Listen, agree where you can and check your understanding	'So you're saying that Peter has been called names and pushed around for several weeks, and he has not wanted to go to school. I'm very sorry to hear this. You must be so worried for him.'
2 Acknowledge the issue is important and offer assistance	'Andrea, thank you for telling me about this. I agree Peter should feel safe at school and I will do what I can to make sure he feels confident to come to school.'
3 Make a plan to keep the student safe while you find out what is happening	'We need to find out what is happening. In the meantime, we need to make sure Peter feels safe and happy in the playground. Are you okay for me to talk with Peter and his teachers to work out a plan?'
4 Identify any way the parent can help	'Please continue to get Peter to school each day, even if he is reluctant, and remind him to follow the plan he works out with me for break times.'
5 Explain further steps	'I will need to inform the principal of your concern. We will work out how best to find out what has been going on.'
6 Plan to meet again	'Let's meet next week to see how things are going. In the meantime, please let me know of any further incidents.'

Appendix 2