



St. Bernadette's Catholic Primary School

Dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence (Students) Policy

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Revised 2003

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The community of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School recognise Christ as our guide and companion. We are committed to building a supportive learning environment that inspires all individuals to strive continually to achieve their personal best. We seek to instil a love of learning and we believe that modelling the qualities of kindness, honesty and respect will assist in the achievement of this vision.

*The National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) is based on the following overarching vision:
All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing. [CEO POLICY STATEMENT]*

Rationale

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School Community has a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to encourage the development of positive relationships between students to address all forms of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. We believe that students should be provided with a school environment that is safe, supportive and proactive in dealing with anti-social behaviour such as bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. This requires that all members of the school community are alert and responsive to situations of anti-social behaviour and take responsibility for modelling appropriate behaviour.

Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. Students who are bullied or harassed tend to have poorer health, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, depression, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety. They are also more likely to have a dislike of and want to avoid school, higher absenteeism and lower academic competence. The effects of bullying can begin early in life and, for some, last a lifetime. [CEO POLICY STATEMENT]

It is recognised that in situations where bullying and harassment take place, all parties including 'victim', 'bully' and 'bystanders' are owed a duty of care so that they are empowered to interact in socially acceptable ways that demonstrate respect and care for self and others in fitting with how we are called to live as Christians.

The Australian Government's National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues.

In the National Safe Schools Framework, a safe and supportive school is described in the following way:

In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.

The Guiding Principles of the National Safe Schools Framework:

This Framework is underpinned by the following guiding principles that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a pre-requisite for effective learning in all school settings.

Australian schools:

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning
- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfil the school's child protection responsibilities
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

The nine key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships

St Bernadette's Catholic School Community is guided by the principles and key elements of the NSSF in the development of its Dealing with Bullying, Harassment and Violence (students) Policy and Practices.

Definitions

Bullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, an imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt). It is often experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable.

Its nature may be:

Kindness **Honesty** **Respect**

- verbal - name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken, written, electronic or cyber which may also apply to the following points)
- physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social/emotional – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing, embarrassing, excluding
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours/lies, damaging possessions

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, or economic status. (from Bullying. No Way! website cited in the NSSF, 2003).

Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, cited in the NSSF, 2003).

Sometimes children act in bullying ways towards others without a wilful desire to hurt but as a result of learning inappropriate ways of interacting with others and dealing with conflict effectively. These children often respond well to being made aware of their 'bullying' behaviour and being given the opportunity to work towards restoring damaged relationships and changing the way they interact with others. This can be achieved with appropriate counselling, support and clear expectations of appropriate behaviour and interactions.

Sometimes children feel 'bullied' when they have a falling out with a friend, when they are in conflict with another, or when they are having difficulty socialising effectively with their peers. Although this is not by definition 'bullying', it can cause children and their family distress. The school seeks to support children in responding to conflict in an appropriate way in keeping with the values of the Catholic School Community.

Principles

St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School strives to be a safe and supportive environment where the guiding principles and key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practiced. A duty of care is owed to all students within the school, providing a safe environment by;

- acting to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence through the curriculum, policies and practices of the school.
- encouraging socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management and direct teaching of curriculum in areas such as interpersonal and self-management skills
- promoting respect for self and others and developing tolerance of differences
- developing physical/emotional well-being and resiliency
- developing interpersonal skills and positive mental health

Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence is a shared responsibility of all members of the school community including staff, students and parents (see responsibilities of major parties) and is in keeping with the principles and values within the Pastoral Care Framework and Practices and

the school Evangelisation Plan. This involves leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained change.

Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student's learning and behaviour in school, Catholic schools take action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.

All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. When bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing. Bystanders need to be given the skills and confidence to respond appropriately to incidents of bullying.

While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, school policy and procedures shall contain clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour [please refer to the Student Behaviour Management Policy]. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration should be given to other circumstances which may have an impact, such as family or mental health matters.

All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support and counselling.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAJOR PARTIES:

It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to seek to create an environment free from bullying, harassment, aggression and violence and to take a pro-active stance that promotes safety and wellbeing. The following members of the school community have special responsibility as outlined below;

STAFF:

- ◆ All staff have a responsibility to be alert to situations of and/or allegations of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence, and respond accordingly.
- ◆ All allegations and reported incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence need to be investigated and reported to a member of the leadership team (see Bullying Investigation Proforma).
- ◆ Staff should always seek to model appropriate behaviour.

The Principal and Assistant Principals shall be responsible for:

- ◆ Implementing this policy within the school.
- ◆ Placing relevant information on the school website and in newsletters.
- ◆ Being aware of legislative requirements relating to bullying and harassment (refer CECWA policy "Harassment in Schools").
- ◆ Ensuring that students, staff and school community members are familiar with the school's policy, and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to it.
- ◆ Promoting and reviewing this policy within the school with particular regard to the professional expectations of teachers and staff.
- ◆ Supporting staff in the investigation and resolution of all incidents and allegations of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence.

- ◆ Ensuring that the school's plans to counter bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are monitored including documenting reported instances, interventions and follow-up, and initiating reviews of the approaches at regular intervals
- ◆ Ensuring sensitivity, confidentiality and the protection of the rights of all individuals
- ◆ Providing professional development as required

The School Counsellor shall be responsible for:

- ◆ Supporting teachers in the implementation of the;
 - Friendly Schools and Families Programme
 - You Can Do It – Social Emotional Learning Programme
- ◆ Conducting whole class bullying questionnaires when required. Conducting follow-up intervention sessions with whole class or individuals.
- ◆ Working with small groups of students in the Social Skills Programme (Yr 1-4)
- ◆ Working with families and individual students at the request of the Principal and/or by referral by parents and staff.
- ◆ Supporting students through any situation involving bullying, harassment, aggression and violence.
- ◆ Ensuring that school-based policy is informed by the latest research findings and includes best practice procedures.
- ◆ Coordinating the 'KidsMatter' Action team, assisting in conducting Professional Development for all staff and disseminating information to parents via the school newsletter or e-mail.
- ◆ Being aware of any legislative requirements relating to bullying and harassment [*CEO POLICY STATEMENT: DEALING WITH BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE (STUDENTS) 2-D6*].
- ◆ Completing referrals to outside agencies/professionals when required.
- ◆ Providing knowledge and expertise in communication and mediation skills to staff as required

The Teachers shall be responsible for:

- ◆ Being aware of and alert to signs of bullying and working formally (eg. social skills activities) and informally to encourage children to build healthy relationships involving respectful interactions.
- ◆ Using the Health Curriculum implementation schedule of;
 - Friendly Schools and Families Programme – Term 1
 - You Can Do It – Social Emotional Learning Programme
- ◆ Implementing lessons to develop resilience to bullying and make students aware of their responsibilities with regard to bullying behaviour.
- ◆ Discussing the non-acceptance of bullying with students in the first weeks of each school year and regularly throughout the year.
- ◆ Helping students to develop competencies to challenge bullying attitudes and behaviours in themselves and others
- ◆ Listening to and investigating all reports of bullying behaviour and acting to stop the behaviour recurring (see Bullying Investigation Proforma).
- ◆ Protecting the person being bullied from further harm
- ◆ Ensuring that claims of bullying and harassment are speedily and constructively addressed according to school-based strategies.
- ◆ Informing the Principal or Assistant Principal of all incidents of bullying.
- ◆ Recording details of incidents and meetings related to issues of bullying.
- ◆ Treating information regarding bullying confidentially.
- ◆ Being aware of the legislative requirements relating to bullying and harassment [*CEO POLICY STATEMENT: DEALING WITH BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE (STUDENTS) 2-D6*].

STUDENTS:

- ◆ Students are required to watch out for one another and be alert to situations of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence.
- ◆ Students need to take action at times to protect vulnerable children and intervene respectfully, safely and appropriately.
- ◆ Students are called upon to report incidences of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence they have witnessed or experienced to their class teacher, any other staff member, a student leader or the assistant principals or principal.
- ◆ Students are also urged to discuss with their parents any incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence they have witnessed or experienced.
- ◆ Student Leaders are required to be alert to incidences of bullying and harassment and to report them. They are also required to model appropriate behaviour and conflict resolution strategies.

PARENTS:

- ◆ Parents are needed to be alert to signs of bullying and are asked to share their concerns with an appropriate member of staff (ie. class teacher, assistant principals, principal) so that the situation can be investigated and appropriately addressed in a timely manner.
- ◆ Parents are asked not to become personally involved other than in supporting their child and encouraging the building of positive relations. Specifically, parents are not to address the student or their family.
- ◆ Parents are needed to work collaboratively with the school.
- ◆ Parents are also called upon to model appropriate behaviour.

PLEASE REFER TO THE STUDENT BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR SITUATIONS INVOLVING AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE.

STRATEGIES AND RESPONSES:**Prevention:**

- As a Catholic school with an ethos based on the teachings of Jesus, we seek to provide a supportive environment and positive relationships which promote tolerance, the acceptance of differences, respect and care of self and for others.
- This is achieved through the quality of relations between individual members of the school community, including staff, students and parents; the curriculum including the Religious Education Programme; special school celebrations which promote the promotion of tolerance and understanding and the encouragement of inclusion as well as the celebration of difference; and the implementation of school policies such as the Student Behaviour Management Policy.
- Teachers are required to teach positive ways of resolving conflict, anger management, being assertive but not aggressive, demonstrating friendship and compassion and showing respect for others through the social skills programmes implemented as part of the school curriculum.
- Teachers are required to include lessons on bullying in their curriculum to define bullying, identify the harmful consequences of bullying and reinforce the school policy on bullying. Such lessons will also include social skills that support a bullying free environment and appropriate responses to bullying. An emphasis is on the building of skills such as being assertive and not acting aggressively, resolving differences constructively using conflict resolution techniques, helping others who are being bullied and reacting effectively if bullied. Most importantly, a culture of kindness and respect must prevail.
- At opportune times, students will be given the opportunity to discuss bullying and any bullying situations they may have experienced to encourage resolution strategies.
- At opportune times, students will be surveyed regarding the issue of bullying in the school.

- Some classes participate in Buddy Class activities, developing positive relationships across classes and year levels.
- Bystanders are a very important and powerful group in bullying situations and need to be empowered to take action to protect the vulnerable and intervene respectfully if appropriate and be responsible of reporting incidences of bullying.
- Student Leaders are required to be alert to incidences of bullying and harassment and to report them. They are also required to model appropriate behaviour and conflict resolution strategies.
- St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School is a Kidsmatter school.
- Students identified with social skills issues can be referred to the school counsellor for extra support and skill building.

School Structure

We will strive to adopt organisational, management and leadership practices in our school that help to build a safe-school ethos. This shall be done through;

- Classroom Meetings, which act as a forum for students to raise issues and be involved in the process of problem-solving and decision-making.
- School Counsellor who is accessible to all students to discuss any concern in a safe setting (first session does not require parent consent).
- School Assemblies which inform and promote the school ethos and serve as a medium for reinforcing anti-bullying.
- The St. Bernadette's Student Behaviour Management Policy which clearly states the rights, responsibilities of all and consequences for misbehaviour.
- Home-school liaison which is fostered through parent-teacher interviews, student diaries and communication books, the school newsletter, the school counsellor and encouraging parental involvement in school life.

Playground Management

At St. Bernadette's we will endeavour to engage and support our students through a range of measures including:

- Layout of school grounds
- Duty teachers
- Availability of sports equipment
- Spot checks on trouble spots
- Staff briefings aimed at supporting vulnerable and victimised students

Teaching the Anti-Bullying Message in the Classroom

- Every classroom teacher will include in the Health Program education on bullying and resiliency as outlined in the Australian Curriculum and incorporating the 'Friendly Schools, Friendly Families' and 'You Can do It' Programmes.
- The anti-bullying and resiliency message should be maintained throughout the year through the values which are taught and practiced at St. Bernadette's and reinforcement of the school motto of Kindness, Honesty and Respect.
- Teachers will make every effort to help the children to make the link between Religious Education and how we treat others.
- The School Counsellor will be available to work with classes, small groups, or individuals who have been referred by a teacher or parent and/or by request of the principal.

INVESTIGATION PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES:

REPORTING AND RECORDING PROCEDURES:

All members of the school community are required to report incidences of bullying.

- Allegations of bullying need to be recorded and investigated thoroughly (“Bullying Investigation and Action Plan” see proforma).
- Initially, the class teacher should be informed so they can investigate the situation and will then report to the leadership team for any necessary follow-up intervention. The preliminary investigation by the class teacher needs to be recorded electronically [Student Electronic Records: Behaviour Management].
- When a bullying situation is reported to the leadership team, a record of the incident(s) will be kept and electronically recorded [Student Electronic Records: Behaviour Management].
- The reporting, recording and data collection procedures used when investigating incidents form the basis to facilitate evaluation and to justify any modifications to the approach as well as to inform prevention and management activities.

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES:

- When a bullying situation has been identified a process of intervention will be initiated in which all children involved will be interviewed and appropriate strategies will be implemented to deal effectively with ending the bullying and building healthy relationships.
- This involves;
 - looking at the perception of the person bullied and determining their needs
 - considering the intention of the bully (actions intended or thoughtlessness?)
- The intervention process will treat each bullying situation individually with an aim of resolution and restoration to meet individual needs.
- If necessary, consequences will be imposed on the child with bullying behaviour to modify inappropriate behaviour and protect the child being bullied (ie. In-school detention at play times or limited play areas)
- Parents will be informed if their child is involved in a bullying situation or has been bullied.

RESOLUTION PRACTICES:

- The aim of the intervention is to bring resolution to all parties concerned so that they may be respectful of one another and enjoy a positive relationship built on mutual respect.
- This will necessarily involve a process whereby issues are addressed so that the bullying does not continue in more covert and subtle ways.

RESTORATION PRACTICES:

- A child who has been bullied will be given ongoing support to ensure they are feeling happy and safe at school and do not suffer bullying in the future.
- If possible, children with bullying tendencies, or children who have been bullied will be offered ongoing support through counselling (if available) to build their social skills of tolerance, empathy, resilience and problem solving.
- The school community needs to see that bullying situations are addressed (respecting issues of confidentiality) and that restoration of peace and goodwill takes place.

PERSISTENT BULLYING SITUATIONS:

A case management model is to be used when bullying, harassment, aggression or violent behaviours persist. In the situation of persistent bullying situations, support, advice and/or intervention will be

sought from professional agencies such as the Independent Schools Psych Service, Health Department or other appropriate support service. Parents and students will be clearly informed that bullying situations will not be tolerated and necessary actions will be taken to protect student(s) who are being bullied. This may involve implementing actions such as the suspension and exclusion of students [CEO Policy 2 C-7] which is based on principles including;

“Exclusion is an extreme disciplinary step reserved for cases of gross misconduct, serious breaches of school rules, or behaviour that is persistently disruptive or contrary to the mission statement of the school”

STATEMENT ON APPROPRIATE CONFIDENTIALITY:

As bullying affects the entire school community, it is important that a degree of openness prevails so that the school community is aware that bullying situations are taking place and that action is being taken to address the situation. However, an effective process to address bullying requires that children speak openly and their confidentiality must be respected.

It is hoped that through this thorough and multi-faceted approach using prevention, investigation, intervention and restoration practices and principles, the following outcomes will be achieved;

Students will be able to:

- Engage in responsible reporting when witnessing or experiencing injustice
- Identify bullying behaviour
- Demonstrate a repertoire of self-management strategies
- Build resilience so as to free oneself of thinking like a victim
- Feel empathy for targeted members of the school community and, as a result, take safe and sensible action as a bystander.
- Change inappropriate attitudes and behaviours that are perceived as bullying

Teachers will be able to:

- Acknowledge that reducing bullying is a shared responsibility within the school
- Implement prevention and intervention strategies effectively
- Empower students to deal with conflict in constructive ways
- Create opportunities for students to develop a social conscience and to be able to act on this as the occasion arises.

Parents will be able to:

- Trust that the school will respond to allegations of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence in an effective and appropriate way
- Know that the school environment is one that demonstrate care and concern for all individuals, provides a learning environment and is built on a culture of kindness, honesty and respect promoting positive relationships and student connectedness
- Be aware that all members of the school community have rights and responsibilities in relation to safety issues