



St. Mary's Primary School Bullying Prevention Policy

Policy Statement

St Mary's implements a whole school approach to the prevention of bullying in all forms, through a focus on safety and wellbeing throughout all school practices. This policy provides clear procedures and strategies to prevent, reduce and respond to bullying of any kind for all members of the community.

Rationale

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic Social Teaching and inherent to our education ministry. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and the Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) recognises the right of 'all students' to feel safe and be free from bullying and the dichotomised view of students as bullies or victims.

At St Mary's School, we do not tolerate bullying, harassment or violence in any form and we believe bullying can have a serious long term impact on a victim's sense of self-worth, personal growth and self-esteem. Every person has the right to feel safe from verbal, physical and emotional abuse that takes the form of bullying. As a result, bullying in any form or of any kind is not tolerated at our school.

At St Mary's we believe that:

- everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity
- every person's emotional wellbeing needs to be nurtured
- each member of our school community requires a strong sense of wellbeing, respect, belonging, security and communication opportunities to enhance their health and wellbeing
- all members of the community need to have the opportunity to acknowledge and then restore any harm that occurs through the Restorative Practices approach
- all staff, parents and students have the right to be listened to and be valued and will reciprocate these values to others
- all members of the community take responsibility for their own behaviour and understand that their behaviour, both positive and negative, has an impact on themselves and those around them
- all staff, parents and students operate restoratively whenever possible
- all members of the community have a right, and are encouraged to, report bullying when it happens to themselves or someone else
- students learn more effectively if they feel safe and have clearly stated and consistent expectations
- expectations of all community members need to be clear and explicit and everyone needs to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Responsibilities

All members of the community are responsible for ensuring that acceptable standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

Responsibility of School

- St Mary's is required to formally adopt and implement a bullying prevention policy.
- This policy must be made available to school personnel and published on the school website.

Responsibility of Staff

- Model appropriate behaviours at all times.
- Address all reported and observed incidents relating to students immediately in accordance with the steps set out in this policy.
- Assist a colleague if they are being bullied, by not being a bystander and reporting it to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Student Wellbeing Leader.
- Implement a duty of care for all in the community
- Report incidents of alleged student bullying to parents, Principal, Deputy Principal and Student Wellbeing Leader.

Responsibilities of Students

- Behave appropriately at all times.
- Report observed incidents to an adult.
- Assist a peer if they are being bullied, by not being a bystander and reporting it to a teacher.
- Inform their class teacher if approached by the parent/carer of another child in regards to an alleged bullying incident.

Responsibilities of Parents

- Model appropriate behaviours at all times.
- Be aware of the signs of bullying in students eg.
 - unwillingness to attend school
 - damaged clothes
 - pattern of feeling unwell
 - missing equipment
- Inform the classroom teacher/Principal/Deputy Principal/member of school leadership team, as soon as possible if they become aware of alleged bullying behaviour towards anyone in the community.
- Support their child to inform a teacher if he/she is being bullied or has observed bullying
- Inform their child's class teacher if their child is approached by another parent/adult in regards to an alleged bullying incident.

Parents are not to approach another student or parent in relation to an alleged bullying incident.

Parents and carers should address their concerns to their child's classroom teacher, a member of the school leadership team or the Principal.

Implementation

Reporting such incidences includes the following procedures:

- The parents of any students involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy); and
- The relevant party must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts and clearly detail what occurred and what measures were taken to manage the situation
- The school will endeavour to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

If an alleged bullying situation is reported to the school, or a staff member believes bullying has occurred, the following steps will be followed.

1. The complaint will be investigated and documented by the relevant classroom teacher, or other appropriate adult, and a member of the school leadership team.
2. If the complaint is shown to have substance then the following actions will follow

- a. The complaint will be managed with a sense of urgency which may initially include restricting the movement of the accused around the school and/or limiting interactions with others.
- b. Further investigations will take place involving the classroom teacher, or other appropriate adult, a member of the Leadership team, any students involved and any other relevant persons (i.e. bystanders, witnesses)
- c. Restorative conversations for those involved in the presence of the classroom teacher, or other appropriate adult, and member of the Leadership team if appropriate
- d. Appropriate support for those involved will be organised eg, counselling, peer support
- e. Notifications to all parents and carers of any students will occur. Any formal meetings held with parents will be minuted and signed by those attending
- f. If appropriate, a Behaviour Plan will be formulated
- g. Staff will be informed about any student involvement so that the situation can be monitored. A relevant staff member and a member of the Leadership team will regularly confer with the those involved in the first few months following the bullying incident.

Preventative Measures

St Mary's will:

- promote positive behaviour throughout the community
- implement a social and emotional learning program for students
- provide staff with ongoing professional learning, to enable them to explicitly teach material on bullying, cyberbullying and safety, resilience, social skills and social and emotional learning
- provide materials and resources to support parents with social and emotional education eg Parenting Ideas
- the community will regularly examine and review this policy and raise staff awareness regarding duty of care and their obligations in relation to this policy.

Definition

The Australian Government website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/teachers/index.html states that, "Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders".

Bullying may occur in relation, but is not restricted, to:

- culture
- gender
- race
- ability or disability
- physical appearance
- beliefs
- age
- religion
- economic status
- sexual harassment
- homophobia

Types of bullying include direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, indirect bullying and cyberbullying.

Direct Physical Bullying includes such things as punching, kicking, pushing and interfering with or damaging property, offensive gestures, notes or material.

Indirect Bullying includes:

- spreading rumours or lies
- deliberately excluding someone from activities or events
- victimising someone because that person has made a complaint, is proposing to make a complaint, has helped someone else make a complaint and/or is acting as a witness to a complaint
- mimicking
- bullying which isn't easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight.

Cyberbullying includes behaviour that constitutes direct and indirect bullying using digital technologies. (Refer to Cyber-Safety Policy.)

Bullying is not

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

However, these actions can cause great distress and should be addressed, but they are not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them.

Approved by the Board: December 3, 2018

Review Date: To be reviewed as part of the school's cycle

Appendix 1

Resources

Australian Communication Media Association (ACMA)

Bullying No Way www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

Bully Stoppers: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx>

eXcel - Wellbeing for Learning in Catholic School Communities (CEM)

Horizons of Hope - Wellbeing Foundation Statement

Kids Helpline

Lifeline

National Centre Against Bullying - Alannah and Madeline Foundation

National Safe Schools Framework

Parenting Ideas - Michael Grose

Student Wellbeing Hub <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>