Anti-Bullying Policy (including Cyberbullying)

Introduction

At Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School the dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and is intrinsic to our education ministry. Consequently, the principle that the person is made in the image and likeness of God is central to the mission of our parish school.

This policy identifies the interconnectedness of the characteristics of quality Catholic learning and teaching. It is intended to value, respect and promote the self-esteem and dignity of each student. The school will actively promote anti-bullying messages, alerting students and staff of the need to be vigilant.

It is essential that we create and maintain a respectful, safe and supportive learning environment that promotes student wellbeing, personal growth and positive self-esteem amongst our diverse range of learners (eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities).

The prevention of and responses to incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour are more readily achieved in a caring and supportive school culture that promotes positive relationships and reflects Gospel values. Bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, aggression and violence disregard core values of our faith, including dignity, respect, justice, equity, compassion, trust and courage. Importantly, such actions can adversely affect the wellbeing of our students and are therefore unacceptable.

Purpose

This policy:

- encourages a culture that is firm about unacceptable behaviour
- articulates how bullying is defined and addressed; including the means taken to prevent incidents and the response taken when an incident occurs
- supports the school's Mission and Vision Statement and guidelines of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)
- actively promotes anti-bullying messages, alerting students and staff of the need to be vigilant.

Principles

This policy is grounded in the beliefs that:

- every person has the right to be treated respectfully and feel safe from any form of verbal, physical and emotional abuse
- the school is committed to building and nurturing a community that values diversity
- parents are the prime educators of their children
- the school community is involved in the development of school policies
- reporting of unacceptable behaviour is essential to the effective implementation of this policy
- complainant(s) will be protected from victimisation
- learning technologies are used ethically and responsibly in the school environment
- communication is respectful and human dignity is valued
- regular monitoring of school policies is necessary.

Definitions

Bullying: is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person that creates a risk to health and safety. It occurs when an individual or a group deliberately upsets or hurts another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. Forms of bullying include:

Physical bullying: pushing, shoving, fighting, pinching and any other unwelcome physical contact used intentionally to intimidate or hurt someone.

Verbal bullying: put downs, particularly those referring to physical characteristics, can result in loss of self-esteem. Racial discrimination of any kind is a form of bullying.

Gesture bullying: non-verbal signals used to silence and intimidate a victim.

Extortion bullying: physically stronger and more powerful students may bully other students into giving up their possessions, buying food and drink, or taking part in rule breaking activities.

Exclusion bullying: deliberately being left out of activities is a most hurtful form of bullying.

Visual bullying: offensive notes or material, graffiti, or damaging other people's possessions.

Sexual bullying: touching, sexually orientated jokes, drawings of, or writing about someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking questions about someone's private life.

Cyber-bullying: the use of various forms of electronic media to spread text and visual messages to cause hurt, embarrassment, intimidation.

Categories of Bullying: There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying:** This form includes hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.

2. **Direct verbal bullying:** This form includes name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

3. **Indirect bullying:** This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:

   - lying and spreading rumours
   - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
   - mimicking
   - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
   - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
   - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress someone.

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying including:

- **Mutual conflict:** In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation, with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

- **Social rejection or dislike:** Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specifically and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

- **Single-episode acts:** Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Procedures

All members of our school community must be aware of the possibility of bullying and take action to prevent bullying if it is reasonably foreseeable.

Responsibilities: The school

Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School will respond to all reported incidents of bullying, perceived or actual, sensitively, fairly and promptly by:

- using an Anti-Bullying Response Pathway when we become aware of incidents. The Pathway assists with a regulated and thorough response **(refer to Appendix 1)**

- implementing an Anti-Bullying Action Plan as part of the Response Pathway **(refer to Appendix 2)**

- keeping a written record of any bullying investigation **(refer to Appendix 3)**

- encouraging students, staff and parent and carers to report bullying and cyber-bullying to the class teacher or directly to the principal

- investigating complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved **(refer to Appendix 5)**

- nominating a person or staff to co-ordinate strategies for the resolution of specific bullying incidents reported in this school

- notifying parents/guardians of bullying incidents involving their children

- notifying the relevant Regional Learning Consultant of any serious incident

- contacting the Police/Police Youth Liaison Officer if the bullying situation has involved violence, threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct

- maintaining records of bullying incidents and related interventions

- conducting Student Safety Audits at least once a year to promote safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments

- promoting student voice and empowerment in classrooms and through the use of Student Representative Council to discuss matters associated with bullying, cyber bullying, safety and wellbeing

- reviewing and evaluating the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively **(refer to Appendix 4)**

- engaging with parents/guardians to review and evaluate the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively **(refer to Appendix 4)**.

Responsibilities: Staff

Staff at Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each student by:

- implementing the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures by responding promptly and appropriately to reported incidents of bullying

- supporting the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour

- engaging in professional learning to support appropriate anti-bullying responses which could include cyber safety, restorative justice practices, mediation and developing social skills in students. Such opportunities are made available to staff on the same basis as other professional learning.

- supporting all aspects of related school policies

- remaining vigilant in how students are using technology through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour

- embedding critical thinking, values clarification, respectful relationships and developing empathy into our teaching practice

- responding to bullying and cyber-bullying concerns by providing age appropriate guidance and boundaries so that students can learn to self-regulate.

Responsibilities: Students

Students at Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. The staff at Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School will encourage and support students to:

- follow the anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures

- immediately seek help from a trusted adult if they are aware of or involved in a bullying or cyber-bullying incident

- seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident

- understand that any social networking site that identifies the school by name or image or implication is part of the school environment

- in age-appropriate circumstances the student should keep evidence of alleged bullying and produce it on request (for example phone text messages).

Responsibilities: Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians at Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School will work in partnership with parents/guardians in responding to incidents of bullying. Staff at Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School will:

- remind parents/guardians about the need to reinforce the school messages in the proper use of technology to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens

- encourage parents/guardians to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider) and, as relevant, to the school

- ask parents/guardians to contact the school immediately through the class teacher or directly through the principal if they know of any bullying incident

- expect that parents/guardians will model behaviour that is indicative of Gospel values and that reflect the school's Vision and Mission statement. Thus parents/guardians are required to act respectively to all members of the school community at all times.

- encourage parents/guardians to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider). When such bullying concerns the wellbeing of their own child, parents are to contact the principal.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Anti-bullying response pathway
- Appendix 2: School anti-bullying action plan
- Appendix 3: Bullying record keeping and investigation tool
- Appendix 4: Anti-bullying policy checklist for schools
- Appendix 5: Step-by-Step Guide: Online incidents of inappropriate behaviour affecting students.

References

- Privacy Compliance Manual (2020). Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) (CEVN website)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. Bullying Prevention and Response Policy
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2020. Mobile Phones - Student Use.

Resources

Bully Stoppers – a resource containing information and advice for the school community, including students, parents and school staff.

Bullying. No Way! – a website for Australian schools, managed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group (SSSC) which has representatives from all states and territories, including the Catholic and independent schooling sectors.

eSmart – assists schools to develop a culture that promotes the safe, smart and responsible use of technology.

eSafety Commissioner – provides a range of up-to-date information and resources, coupled with a complaints system to assist children who experience serious cyberbullying and image-based abuse.

Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (2018)

Student Wellbeing Hub

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV). (2018). Introduction to the Principle of Inclusion: Child Safety in Catholic Schools in Victoria

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV). (2018). Positive Behaviour Guidelines

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV). (2014). Whole School Approaches to Supporting Positive Behaviour

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV). (2016). Child Safety Commitment Statement

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2018). [eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Learning Diversity](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2018). [Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools](#)

Related MACS Policies

Enrolment Policy

Student Behaviour Policy and related CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines

Pastoral Care of Students Policy

Duty of Care Policy

Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying Response Pathway

1. Policy Access and Awareness

- Policy on the school's website; articles and resources on bullying made available through newsletter and other means.

2. Initial disclosure made, first response

- School becomes aware of an incident involving possible bullying. Physical contact stopped (if this involves physical action). Safe environment established for the victim.

3. Life threatening incident or Risk of Significant Harm involved?

- Yes – go to Point 6 below

- No – go to Point 4 below.

4. Information gathered on Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation form

- Completed by staff member – copy to principal. Pay attention to repeated offences, intent to harm, imbalance of power.

5. Is this bullying?

- Yes – go to Point 6 below

- No – go to behaviour management as per school policy.

6. Informing appropriate personnel

- Principal informs relevant staff (teacher, leadership team etc.).

7. Formal information gathering

- Principal collects statements from interviews. Investigation Form contains advice.

8. Case Management instituted by principal ('nominated person')

- Anti-bullying plan adopted (refer to **Appendix 2**). Principal and senior staff agree on a written anti-bullying action plan to stop the bullying. Includes support for the victim. Parents/Guardians of victim involved.

9. Situation monitored

- 'Nominated person' reports as required in the anti-bullying action plan to principal.

10. Review of plan's effectiveness - Has the plan and the actions stopped the bullying?

- **Yes** – all records retained, monitoring continues at a lower level

- **No** – matter referred to Regional Principal Consultant. Plan may be modified, additional support may be offered, suspension and or expulsion may be considered or police may be involved.

Appendix 2: School Anti-Bullying Action Plan

An action plan to support an anti-bullying response to a bullying incident should consider the following elements for inclusion:

- details specific to each situation or person

- addressing issues identified in the Investigation Form

- parent/guardian involvement and agreement, signatures required

- outlining the role of key staff in monitoring, assisting and addressing the bullying clearly listed in the plan

- roles of supporting staff clearly outlined

- various support measures for victim listed (counselling, peer support, teacher contact, safe zones, etc.)

- monitoring mechanisms outlined

- sanctions and restrictions for the perpetrator(s) listed

- strategies for the instigator of the bullying incident listed (behaviour plan, assistance with empathy, counselling, family support, lunch restrictions, etc.)

- outlining the class teacher's supporting role

- first and second review points (actual date) indicated

- ongoing communication with parents/guardians.

Appendix 3: Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool

Bullying is a serious offence and is not acceptable in our school. All school employees are required to report alleged violations and every act of bullying will be duly investigated, and parents/guardians informed.

Directions:

The *Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool* is to be used when an alleged bullying incident is reported.

This document is to be confidentially maintained in accordance with the *National Catholic Education Commission's Privacy Compliance Manual* on the CEVN website:
https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Document-File/Polices-Compliance-and-Legal/Privacy/Privacy-Compliance-Manual.aspx

Upon completion, the *Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool* is to be filed in the appropriate student records and the incident entered into the school's database.

Investigating Teacher/s:

Name of student/s involved:

Date / Time / Location of incident:

Was the incident life threatening or was the target a high-risk concern? YES / NO

If YES, immediately inform the principal and as appropriate:

Seek medical assistance	Inform parent/carers	Contact the police	Inform DHS (if appropriate)	Inform the Educational Consultant	Inform the Parish Priest

If the incident is not life threatening or the child is not a high-risk concern, continue completing this document.

Where did the incident occur? Please circle:

Online	Bus/transport	In playground	In classroom	Outside school	Other

Who reported the alleged incident? Please circle:

The alleged victim(s)	Other student(s)	Parent/carer	Staff member	Member of wider school community	Other

Describe the incident:

Is there concern the alleged incident may have been influenced by any of the following? Please circle:

Race/culture	Beliefs	Disability	Gender	Socio-economic	Other

Is there any relevant background/history to this alleged incident?

What effect is the situation having on the alleged target's wellbeing including self-esteem, physical health, relationships with peers, ability to learn, absenteeism etc?

Were there any witnesses to this incident: (Identify student names and/or class groups)

Description of the incident, according to the witness:

Did this student play an active role in the incident?

Indicate other investigative procedures carried out. Please circle:		
Interviewed parents of alleged target(s) Date/Time:	Interviewed parents of alleged perpetrators(s) Date/time:	Interviewed parents of witnesses/bystanders/accessories Date/time:

Annotations on interview with parents:

After investigation, was the allegation of bullying confirmed? Please circle:

Yes   No

If 'No', please sign below and place a copy of this document into student(s) file and refer to schools' Behaviour Management Policy as required.

If 'Yes', please sign below, place copy of this document into student(s) file and **refer incident to the Principal or Principal's delegate.**

Signed:

Date:
Where will this incident report be filed for future reference? (Include file server reference)

Appendix 4: Anti-bullying policy checklist for schools

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS YOUR BULLYING POLICY MUST:	
Make a clear statement on the school's stance on bullying, harassment and violence	☐
Define what constitutes bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, cyber-bullying and sexual harassment and use language consistent with the Equal Opportunity legislation.	☐
Provide information about the effects bullying has on individuals	☐
Be reviewed annually and involve parents and students in the process	☐
IN ACTIONS RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, YOUR BULLYING POLICY SHOULD:	
Allow for flexibility depending on the nature, severity and extent of bullying in light of natural justice principles	☐
Inform parents about serious incidents involving their child	☐
Follow up victims and perpetrators	☐
COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESSES AND REPORTING MUST CONSIDER:	
How is bullying reported?	☐
Who is it reported to and when must it be reported?	☐
Responsibilities of the principal, staff, students and parents	☐
YOUR BULLYING POLICY SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BY:	
Ensuring students/parents/teachers/community receives a copy of the policy (and consider how, and when a copy is provided?)	☐
Making sure the policy is placed on the school's website and is communicated regularly (for instance in assembly)	☐
RECORD POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BY:	
Documenting processes and forms used such as action plans, reporting forms, bullying register, follow-up documentation forms, advice to parents/students/staff	☐
PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION:	

Ensure all prevention, intervention and post-intervention strategies that are used are well documented	☐
Document how bullying is addressed through the curriculum	☐

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" style="background:#0099cc;color:white">TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Provide training and development to teachers, parents and students (and decide who will provide this training and development, as well as how and when)</td><td>☐</td></tr>
<tr><td>When/how will training and development be updated?</td><td>☐</td></tr>
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Appendix 5: Step-by-Step Guide: Online incidents of inappropriate behaviour affecting students

Step-by-Step Guide: Online Incidents of Inappropriate Behaviour Affecting Students

Step 1
Identify Concerns

Is the student distressed?

A student may feel distressed by events including cyberbullying, sexting, exposure to pornographic images or a breach of the school's **Bully Prevention Policy** or **Student Engagement Policy**.

Has a student been exposed to inappropriate behaviour?

A student may have been exposed to and affected by inappropriate behaviour online. This may put them at risk of suffering significant physical, psychological or emotional harm. They may be in need of immediate protection.

Has a student engaged in inappropriate behaviour affecting ANOTHER student?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that may cause psychological or emotion harm to ANOTHER student(s). All students may be in need of immediate protection.

Has a student engaged in inappropriate behaviour affecting THEMSELVES?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that could be psychologically and/or emotionally damaging to THEMSELVES (e.g. sexting). They may be in need of immediate protection.

Has the student engaged in CRIMINAL behaviour?

A student may have engaged in inappropriate behaviour online that could be deemed as CRIMINAL activity.

*Please note: an incident of concern may include one or more of the above.

Step 2
Take Action

Ensure the student is safe

If you suspect or have identified an incident of concern, it is important to first make sure the student/s are in a safe environment.

Further inquire into the incident

Inquire into the inappropriate incident. This may include discussions with all staff and students who have been directly or indirectly involved the incident and/or its effects.

Step 3
Contact the Appropriate Supports

Leadership team

If your inquiry leads you to believe that a concern is real, but it is NOT CRIMINAL then immediately advise and/or consult a member of the school's leadership team to report the incident and plan the appropriate response and support.

The Victoria Police

If your inquiry leads you to believe that a CRIMINAL offence may have occurred, contact the Police.

In such cases seek advice about contacting the parents of all students involved in the incident.

If a school is unsure whether an incident should be reported, the Police will advise the school as to whether they will investigate or whether the school should handle the situation.

Security Services Unit

All reportable incidents should be reported to Security Services Unit. If a school is unsure whether an incident is criminal or not they can also contact the Security Services Unit. This will alert regional staff.

Phone: **(03) 9589 6266**

Step 4
Respond and Provide Support

Support all involved people

Provide reasonable and ongoing wellbeing support to all students and staff who were involved in or witness to the incident.

Refer to the School's Policy

In responding to online incidents of inappropriate behaviour, Principals and teachers should refer to their **Bullying Prevention and/or Student Engagement Policy** and follow the appropriate processes and procedures.

Each Victorian government school has developed a **Bullying Prevention and/or Student Engagement Policy** that sets out the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of everyone in the school community, including students, parents, teachers and school staff. The policy clearly defines the consequences for students who behave inappropriately. (online and offline)

Work with Leadership Team

Work closely with your school's **Leadership and/or Student Wellbeing Team** to discuss strategies that can be used to respond to and support ALL students at risk from the inappropriate behaviour. This may include counselling and support or the development of a **Behaviour Support Plan** to implement targeted strategies.

Keep a record of the **Behaviour Support Plan**, make notes on any relevant observations, and review it as necessary.

For more information, visit Behaviour Support Plans:
www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachplans.aspx

Contact Parents

Where appropriate, contact the parents of all students involved. If a school is unsure whether parents should be contacted, the **Department's Legal Division or Security Services Unit** can assist to make a decision.

Consult Regional Staff

Contact your student wellbeing or Community Liason Officers in your Regional Office for support.

North Eastern Victoria Region

Benalla: **(03) 8392 9500**
Glen Waverly: **(03) 8392 9300**

North Western Victoria Region

Bendigo: **(03) 5440 3111**
Coburg: **(03) 9488 9488**

South Eastern Victoria Region

Dandenong: **(03) 8765 5600**
Moe: **(03) 5127 0400**

South Western Victoria Region

Ballarat: **(03) 5337 8444**
West Footscray: **(03) 8397 0300**
Geelong: **(03) 5225 1000**

Further Information

Remember to Record

At all times remember to:

- Record the incident. (e.g. screen shots of the incident, notes from the interviews)
- Record the process taken to resolve the incident (e.g. steps taken to remove content, mediation attempts).

Bully Stoppers

For more information visit DET's Bully Stoppers website:
www.education.vic.gov.au/bullystoppers

Security Services Unit

A 24 hour/7 day a week single reference point to report emergency matters and critical incidents including criminal and unwanted activities.

Phone: **(03) 9589 6266**