



# COLLEGE POLICY

## Bullying Prevention

### Rationale

St Mary MacKillop College places a great deal of emphasis on the pastoral care of its students. As such it is every student's right to feel safe and free from violence, abuse or any form of intimidation.

### Principle

The College has a responsibility to its community to maintain a safe physical and emotional educational environment. This is achieved through:

- Educating the students on establishing positive relationships and reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of all members of the College community;
- Developing individual self-esteem and respect for others through the curriculum, Service Learning Program and the PCP (Pastoral Care Program);
- Combating bullying by processes of reconciliation, support and, where necessary, consequences;
- Encouraging the reporting of harmful or intimidating behaviours;
- Teaching bullying prevention strategies to empower students; and
- Tailoring bullying response strategies to the circumstance of each incident.

As the needs of each student will differ (including where a student has a disability and/or complex social or educational needs), the College reserves the right to amend this policy as it is applied to an individual student's circumstance to ensure the safety of staff, students and other members of the school community.

### Definition

Bullying is a pattern of behaviour by a person or persons to another or to a group which is designed to hurt, injure, embarrass, upset or cause distress. It usually involves an imbalance of power.

#### PHYSICAL BULLYING

Includes physical aggression or intimidation, taking or damaging another person's property, repetitive low level hitting, pushing, kicking, punching, tripping and unwanted physical or sexual touching.

#### VERBAL BULLYING

The repeated use of words to hurt or humiliate an individual or group. Verbal bullying includes: using hurtful or racist names or language, the use of 'put-down' comments or insults, teasing, demeaning or derogatory comments and verbal aggression.

#### RELATIONAL BULLYING

This includes deliberately excluding someone from activities or friendship groups or convincing others to exclude or reject another person from a group.

#### EMOTIONAL BULLYING

Includes repeated stalking, threats or implied threats, threatening gestures, manipulation and threats to an individual's reputation and sense of safety, sexual harassment, innuendos, soliciting inappropriate images and the setting up of humiliating experiences and spreading rumours.

#### CYBER BULLYING

Involves the intentional use of technology (email, mobile phone, text messaging, social media platforms, websites, etc) to create fear or distress in another person. This is where technology provides an alternative means for verbal, relational and emotional bullying.

## Definition

### WHAT IS NOT BULLYING

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- Mutual conflict situations which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power.
- One off acts (of aggression or meanness) including loss of temper, shouting or swearing, whilst unacceptable behaviour, do not normally constitute bullying.

### SIGNS OF BULLYING

Major behavior changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavior changes may include:

- Crying at night and having nightmares;
- Refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?"
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches;
- Unwillingness or refusal to go to school;
- Feeling 'ill' in the stomach, often in the mornings, without any illness present;
- A decline in quality of school work;
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- Beginning to bully siblings; and
- Acting unreasonably.

Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the College through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a Classroom/ Homeroom teacher, Head of Year or College Counsellor) if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

## Procedures

### BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The College recognises that the implementation of whole school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community. All members of the College community are responsible for reporting incidents where someone has been bullied and providing support.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no bullying' culture within the College:

- A structured curriculum and year group support system that provides age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year;
- Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies;
- Regular provision of information to parents and carers to raise awareness of bullying as a College community issue and equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying;
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/carers;
- Promotion of responsible bystander behavior amongst students;
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parent/carers and workers is encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified in Procedures);
- Regular risk assessments of bullying within the College undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff;
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims, and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate;
- Promotion of student awareness and a 'no bullying' environment within the College community.

## Procedures

### REPORTING BULLYING

Students and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of St Mary MacKillop College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/carers) that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the College;
- Their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- The College has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the College verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- Informing a trusted teacher;
- Informing the College Psychologist/Counsellors;
- Informing the Classroom or Homeroom teacher; or
- Informing a Head of Year

### STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

All staff at the College are responsible to:

- Model appropriate behavior at all times;
- Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy;
- Ensure that any incidents of bullying they observe, or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately;
- Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims; and
- Acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with the College authorities if they believe their child is being bullied.

### RESPONDING TO BULLYING

The College will endeavour to discern the best manner in which to resolve bullying situations. Once bullying has been reported or observed, the College will intervene immediately, taking steps to support the victim and remove sources of distress without placing the target at further risk.

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts. Simply punishing students engaging in bullying may help to deter some bullying, but in other instances it can make things worse. Initially, the College may work with those involved to find ways to improve the situation, particularly in group or relational bullying situations.

In all circumstances the College:

- Provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;
- Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders;
- Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- Maintains and reviews records of reported bullying incidents;
- Will discern action to be taken, including restorative practice or disciplinary action;
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

The College will advise a parent/carer if their child has been identified as a target of, or engaged in, bullying behavior, and may also refer students to the College Counsellor for support and/or social skill development.

If the bullying behaviour persists, or involves a serious incident, the student will be disciplined as per the College's Behavior Management Policy, which outlines consequences ranging from detention to suspension and possibly exclusion from the College.