# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

## RESPONSES TO BULLYING/ HARASSMENT INCIDENTS

It's important to distinguish the difference between bullying and conflict. Conflict is a disagreement that happens when people want different things. It is a normal part of human interaction. The people involved in a conflict have equal power to solve the problem. They can work it out together. They are not purposely trying to hurt each other. Bullying is a pattern of repeated physical, verbal, psychological or social aggression that is directed towards a specific student by someone with more power and is intended to cause harm, distress and/or create fear.

Thus, it is important as a school, to ensure that when a situation occurs, we step back and look at the whole picture. This, initially, is based on the premise of procedural fairness.

The process that the school follows is known as being F.A.I.R.

**F**ind out the facts

**A**scertain and acknowledge the situation

**I**nitiate appropriate actions

**R**estore Respect and Responsibility

Everyone has a right to feel safe all the time, Nothing is that bad that you cannot tell someone about it

### STEP ONE:

### Find out the facts

In this phase of the process, the school looks to:

- Speak with and record the details from: o the student who has come to us o the student(s) who have been named as being involved o other students who may have witnessed the situation. o Teachers and Year Coordinators who may be aware of the situation
- Explore reasons for this situation to have occurred
- Check the student records for any similar incidents
- Focus on the behaviour – separate the behaviour from the person Once we have all the facts, we are ready to move onto the next phase of this process.

### STEP TWO

### Ascertain the situation

**Ascertain whether the situation is student conflict or student bullying. This will usually be carried out by the Year Coordinator or the Student Wellbeing Coordinator but may also involve the classroom teacher.**

There is a difference between conflict and bullying. Traditionally when students are in conflict, both involved in the disagreement are equally upset. In a bullying situation you have one student overpowering another. Conflict can be when one or both person's ego is hurt and it usually occurs one time. Bullying is going below the belt so to speak, to insult, tease or threaten.

### STEP THREE

### Initiate Appropriate Actions

Initially, in all but the most serious of situations, the school will use a no blame approach, utilising discussion, mediation, empathy training and some form of counselling may be adopted. In serioussituations or if the problem continues then the consequences may include a variety of strategies and will be based on the seriousness of the incident. This may well comprise: parent interviews, loss of playground privileges, afternoon detentions, withdrawal from school events, mandatory counselling, internal time-out from classes, suspension and communication with the Police School Liaison Officer.

**STEP FOUR**

**Restoring Respect and Responsibility**

Our aim is to bring all those involved together so as to rebuild their relationships by restoring respect for one another. The Key values in this approach create an ethos of respect, inclusion and accountability in taking responsibility for what has occurred. It also helps to prevent harm and conflict occurring again in the future so as to build a sense of belonging, safety and social responsibility. This process is inspired by the philosophy and teachings of our founders Venerable Catherine McAuley and St John Baptist de la Salle which puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and only dispensing punishment.

As a means of evaluating whether this has been successful, parents may be contacted for follow up. The basis for this approach of being FAIR to our students, are taken from the words of our Founders: For our teachers from St John Baptist de la Salle:

*"Consider Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd of the Gospel who seeks the lost sheep, places it upon his shoulders, and carries it back to restore it to the fold. Since you are taking his place, look upon yourself as obliged to do the same. Ask him for the grace needed to procure the conversion of their hearts".*

*For our students from Venerable Catherine McAuley: "It is not sufficient that Jesus Christ be formed in us; He must be recognised in our conduct. It is by being united to Jesus Christ that we will be united with each other. The spirit of union is the greatest blessing Almighty God can bestow on a community".*

**In Cases of Group Harassment**

Responding to an incident

- It may be possible for all parties to come together to seek a mutual resolution to the problem and decide on positive steps to improve the situation to benefit involved parties
- The method of shared concern can be implemented with all parties concerned. This method assumes that people who engage in bullying are largely under the influence of the group with which they identify. This approach aims to break through the 'enmeshment' of the group to encourage change in patterns of behaviour and to enable students to indicate their goodwill towards the victim.

The facilitator (Year Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Coordinator, School Counsellor) forms a relationship with each bully to illicit concern for the victim. The strategies they use will be determined on a case by case basis and may include:

- ▪ interview with each individual identified as a bully
- ▪ meeting the victim to explain the process
- ▪ joint meeting with the victim and group

**Policy Evaluation**

Our school will have ongoing monitoring procedures in place and will collect and analyse appropriate data on the nature and extent of bullying in this community. Data is easily collected on the school database Sentral when incidents are recorded. This includes:

- Noting if there has been a reduction in referred or observed incidents of bullying
- Noting if there has been a change in the culture of our school
- Survey students to ascertain their thoughts and experiences relating to bullying within the school community
- Use information to form groups to raise awareness of the problems they create.

*This Policy Draft was written in 2016 by MWH, KHO, BSH and NBO*
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