



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

POLICY STATEMENT

"I have come that you may have life and have it to the full". John 10:10

Christ's mission becomes a reality for us only when each individual respects their own worth and dignity and accepts responsibility to respect the rights and dignity of others. This has been summarised for us very simply:

"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you". Matthew 7:12

James Sheahan Catholic High School is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which fosters respect for others and does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. Students have a fundamental right to expect to attend school feeling safe, without the fear of bullying, harassment or intimidation. This school will not tolerate any action that undermines people's rights.

Bullying is not acceptable because it violates the dignity of an individual and infringes upon the personal rights of a person. Bullying behaviour interferes with the personal well-being of students and with a student's learning.

This policy will ensure that our school ethos is not conducive to bullying and is therefore directed towards the development of positive attitudes and values that oppose anti-social forces.

Statement of Purpose:

To take a stance against bullying/ harassment behaviour within the school, and thereby provide protection for all students. The community (parents, students and staff) of James Sheahan Catholic High School must take a shared responsibility and response.

Our Definition Of Bullying Behaviour

Our definition of Bullying was adopted by the Catholic Education Commission and is from the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF):

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.

Bullying may be carried out overtly (e.g. face-to-face) or covertly (e.g. through repeated social exclusion or via technology). It is a sub-category of aggression and is different to, but also related to, harassment and violence. It is not the same as conflict or social dislike even though, in some cases, the outcome of both can be bullying.

The different types of bullying identified by the NSSF include:

- *Face-to-face bullying (sometimes referred to as direct bullying) involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or overt verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.*
- *Covert bullying (sometimes referred to as indirect bullying) is a subtle type of non-physical bullying which isn't easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight, and often unacknowledged by adults.*
- *Cyberbullying occurs through the use of information or communication technologies such as Instant Messaging, text messages, email and social networking sites. It has many similarities with offline bullying but it differs in that the student(s) who is/are bullying can be anonymous, it can reach a wide audience and the sent or uploaded material can be difficult to remove. Most students who cyberbully also bully off-line. It is now recognised that many forms of covert bullying appear to have significant potential for serious harm.*

- **Cyber-bullying**

- Forms of cyberbullying:

- Flaming – heated exchange
- Harassing and threatening messages eg 'text wars', 'griefers'
- Denigration – sending nasty SMS, pictures or prank phone calls 'Slam books' (websites or negative lists)
- Impersonation Using person's screen name or password eg message to hate group with personal details
- Outing or trickery – sharing private personal information, messages, pictures with others
- Posting 'set up' images/video eg 'happy slapping'
- Ostracism – Intentionally excluding others from an online group eg knocked off buddy lists
- Sexting – sharing explicit material by mobile phone.

- **Responses**

- Where incidents of cyberbullying are impacting on the learning of any student, the school may have an obligation to respond to these incidents, even if they occur out of school hours or on private equipment. The appropriate response will be determined by the process stated in the anti-bullying policy.
- However, the school will contact the Police where incidents of cyberbullying include possible criminal behaviour.
- If all school strategies and methods to resolve the issue are exhausted, it will be referred to the Catholic Education Office, Bathurst for further action.

Strategies to Prevent Bullying and Harassment

For any effort to counteract bullying and harassment, each member of the school community has a responsibility to work together to ensure that this occurs.

There are a number of responsibilities which lie with each school member.

STAFF

- To encourage students to “break the silence” of bullying and report incidences.
- To model appropriate behaviour at all times
- To follow this policy in dealing with all reports of bullying
- To ensure that all students are actively supervised during designated periods – arriving to class or playground duties on time
- To respond in an appropriate and timely manner to every incident of bullying
- To be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- To report cases of bullying to Year Coordinator / Student Wellbeing Coordinator or School Counsellor
- To follow up on reported cases
- To actively discourage subtle forms of harassment within the class, emphasizing no put-down behaviours/communications
- To protect a victim from further harm / or risk
- To actively promote and encourage a culture of zero tolerance
- Document any reports of bullying and any action / steps taken. Enter incident into Sentral.

YEAR COORDINATOR AND STUDENT WELLBEING COORDINATOR

- To inform students, staff, parents of the Anti- Bullying and Harassment Policy
- To reinforce the universals of the school's Positive Behaviour for Learning approach – “Be Safe, Be Respectful Be a Learner” which will assist in preventing bullying behavior.
- To keep adequate records of bullying incidents and the school / teacher response
- To follow up complaints of bullying, harassment and intimidation
- To provide ongoing support to the victim of bullying and strategies to assist them in the future
- To assist the bully to change his/her behaviour
- To provide our students with strategies to build self-esteem and empowerment whilst ensuring they respect the safety of others, and so enhancing an antibullying culture
- To assist the bully to reflect on and improve his / her behavior in the future.

STUDENTS

- To report if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied – both at school or in transit to and from school
- To report incidents of cyberbullying
- To behave respectfully towards fellow students and not be involved in any form of harassment
- To help someone who is being bullied
- To be a proactive community member, breaking the silence, making comment and discouraging the bully(ies).

PARENTS

- To watch for signs that their children may be being bullied eg. signs of distress;

headaches; damaged clothes; bruising; and an unwillingness to attend school

- To speak to relevant school personnel if their child is being bullied, or if they suspect that this is happening
- To assist their children in understanding bullying behaviour
- To instruct their children to report if they are being bullied
- To support their children in developing positive responses to incidents of harassment
- To attend interviews if their child is involved in a bullying/ harassment incident
- To inform the school of any suspected cases that are not related to their child
- Be aware of their child's use of social media and discuss Cybersafety with them.

SCHOOL COUNSELLOR'S ROLE:

- To provide support, understanding and skills to both vulnerable or victimized students and to those who are bullying. This includes :-
- Strategies to assist victims focus on encouraging assertive response; taking responsibility for making changes and finding positive solutions, and encourage the empowerment of the victim
- Strategies to assist the bully
- This assistance is delivered individually or in specialized small groups as deemed appropriate in consultation with Welfare / Year Coordinators. Group work encompasses necessary skills and strategies to enhance the participants' sense of wellbeing.

Specific Programs

Programs in place to help build resilience and protection skills include:

- i) Bullying unit as part of Pastoral Care program in Year 7
- ii) Peer Support for Year 7 which includes discussion on bullying, assertiveness and conflict resolution
- iii) Bullying and assertiveness content in PDH curriculum (using Mind Matters resources)
- iv) "The Sensibility Program" for Year 8 students
- v) Annual anti bullying presentations by Brainstorm Productions such as "Sticks and Stones"
- vi) Annual presentations by the local Police School Liaison Officer on relevant safety issues

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.

Find out the facts

Ascertain and acknowledge the situation

Initiate appropriate actions

Restore 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:
 - the student who has come to us
 - the student(s) who have been named as being involved
 - other students who may have witnessed the situation.
 - 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 serious situations 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

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. 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.

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.