

Anti – Bullying Policy

PURPOSE

The St Mary's Primary School Anti Bullying Policy is intended to:

- provide a safe, supportive and positive learning environment for the students and staff
- create a supportive climate for victims
- provide a basis for working with the bully to modify future behaviour.

“A school can make a positive contribution to reducing the incidence of bullying behaviours through developing programs and strategies to empower students to participate in a positive school culture, eg peer support systems”

(National Safe Schools Framework 2004)

“In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of threats to their safety or wellbeing.”

(National Safe Schools Framework 2011)

RATIONALE

St Mary's seeks to be a place of acceptance, affirmation and justice. We believe that bullying strikes at the very basis of these values and prevents students from reaching for excellence in every dimension of their lives. Students are entitled to receive their education free from humiliation, harassment, oppression and abuse.

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It also affects those other people who may witness violence, intimidation and the distress of the victim. The latter may especially affect family relationships. Bullying can also damage the atmosphere of a class and even the climate of a school.

In accordance with these beliefs, the staff at St Mary's Primary School do not tolerate bullying of any child by another child or a group of students. We insist that natural justice and due process be extended to both the victim and the bully.

DEFINITION

“Bullying behaviours are about an imbalance of power where there is deliberate intent to cause harm and distress. It is not considered to be bullying if people of equal power have a difference of opinion. Bullying behaviours impact on the person being bullied, those doing the bullying and those looking on. Bullying incidents can be isolated or repeated.”

(Peer Support Foundation 2006)

Bullying behaviours which harm others may be exhibited as.

- physical harm
- threat of physical harm
- name calling or teasing
- extortion - demands for money or favours
- exclusion - deliberately leaving someone out of an activity
- spreading rumours

- deliberate damage to property belonging to others
- persistent ‘put downs’
- cyber-bullying; deliberately creating, publishing or forwarding material that is offensive, threatening, demeaning or malicious via electronic media such as the internet or mobile phones.

We believe that for an incident to be classified as bullying, three factors normally need to be involved:

- an imbalance of power (a group of students against a single child; an older child against a younger child; a physically stronger child against a weaker one);
- the behaviour is intentional in a premeditated sense; and
- the behaviour is usually, but not always, repeated.

A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH

Research has shown that a reduction in school violence and bullying occurs when a whole school approach is adopted. A whole school approach provides a prepared and supportive foundation so the challenges can be more effectively met. It encompasses both prevention and response. With adequate prevention strategies in place the need for intervention is often reduced.

Prevention

Teachers, parents and students themselves can all take actions that assist in preventing or ‘heading off’ potential incidents of bullying.

At St Mary’s Primary School, staff encourage students to act with integrity and regard for others. Acting with integrity is about exercising personal judgement in accordance with moral principles to choose ethical over expedient actions. Having regard for others involves taking into account the feelings, motivations, cultures, backgrounds, languages, circumstances, desires, beliefs and opinions of other individuals and groups.

At St Mary’s, we emphasise the positive and encourage right relationships among students through participation in the following activities:

- PD/H/PE Curriculum based on the Personal Development and Health Education Resource from the Broken Bay Diocese.
- Participating in the Peer Support Program with the specific module; Speaking Up, a module which focuses on anti-bullying.
- Increased staff awareness of potential ‘trouble spots’
- Extra supervision if required
- Senior Leadership Program
- Contact with parents/carers
- Grade/class meetings
- Observing early warning signs of distress
- Behaviour modification plans eg Communication books
- Access to the Counsellor through Centacare
- Empowering all students (often the bystanders) to prevent bullying behaviours occurring
- Whole school focus
- Religious Education lessons

- Values Education
- Liturgies/Masses
- Citizenship Awards Assemblies
- Life Education lessons

Staff implement the following strategies to assist in preventing incidents of bullying:

- Provide thorough supervision to ensure safety for all
- Create a caring, co operative ethos which promotes respect for the individual
- Establish understandings regarding rules, rights and responsibilities
- Establish clear and effective classroom routines.
- Engage in frank, open discussion
- Recognise that the silent majority of students can become a positive force in countering bullying
- Address bullying issues through social education in the classroom via role play, games, drama, discussions, drawing and writing
- Cater for various preferences and styles of learning
- Give ‘bad press’ to bullying behaviour, eg ‘bullying is uncool’
- Reinforce the two themes:

‘We all have the right to be safe all of the time’

‘It’s important to tell someone if you are being bullied’

Negative peer interactions (usually not bullying)

In any school there are a multitude of student interactions each day. The vast majority of these interactions are positive and harmonious; inevitably some will be negative. Some negative interactions that can occur among students are minor and require little or no intervention by an adult. Beyond this, some of the students are apt on occasions to express their feelings about another child or their unhappiness with an action directed against them. Often this can involve a physical reaction. While incidents of these kinds involve inappropriate behaviour and directly break school/class rules regularly discussed with students, they do not usually amount to bullying if there is no imbalance of power; the incident is a response to a ‘one off’ set of circumstances, and no pre-meditated malice or intent is established.

Incidents involving careless through to inappropriate behaviour will attract some type of reconciliation which will vary according to the seriousness of the individual incident.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A Responses to Bullying

Appendix B Response Process

Appendix C Possible Signs of Bullying

Appendix D Some Anti-bullying strategies

Appendix E Restorative Justice

Appendix F The ‘No Blame’ Approach

**Appendix G The ‘Method of Shared Concern’
Approach**

**Appendix H Teachers’ Anti-Bullying Action
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**Appendix I Use of the Bullying Incident Report
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APPENDIX A

Responses to Bullying Behaviour

The following section sets out the principal elements of the normally expected response to incidents of bullying behaviour. The precise nature of the response needs to take account of the circumstances of the individual case. Again teachers, parents and students all have a role to play.

Teachers

Teachers and executive staff are expected to use their professional judgement in regard to the strategy that best suits the situation and the needs of students involved. However, the response strategy would normally be expected to include:

- investigating any possible instance of bullying about which they have been informed
- interviewing victims, bullies and witnesses
- deciding on appropriate action
- recording the incident and those involved in the, “Incident Folder” which involves recording incidents of bullying and allowing an effective tracking of bullying behaviour which can help to identify patterns.
- following up incidents of bullying which they have witnessed and seeking the involvement of the Principal if required
- informing all parents of students involved as soon as practicable
- keeping parents informed of progress
- organising that restitution and therefore healing occurs by ensuring that the bully (or group) is involved in some type of restorative justice to the victim (Refer Appendix E)
- recording their actions, meetings and phone calls

The use of the Incident Folder and the storing of records is to assist in identifying patterns of inappropriate behaviour by students and also the possibility of particular students being targeted by bullies.

Should an incident of bullying occur, staff will take the following actions:

- Act immediately
- Encourage *telling* by any student who is being bullied or who has witnessed bullying behaviour towards others
- Ensure that the victims are supported and the bullying students deterred
- Ensure a consistent response in dealing with incidents
- Focus on certainty, not severity, of consequences
- Make consequences clear to children, parents and teachers
- Record and report incidents of bullying in the Incident Folder and ensure an escalation of consequences for repeat offenders

Parents

At St Mary’s Primary School, we want all our students to develop, maintain and enjoy positive and respectful relationships at play, school and home. Bullying incidents can occur at all ages and in all situations. Therefore it is part of the role of parents as co-educators to try to prepare their children to deal with potential conflicts.

Parents should encourage their child/ren to:

- believe in themselves
- be assertive
- be resilient and bounce back from social difficulties which can occur in all group situations.

Students

Students are encouraged to manage themselves and their relationships. Therefore they require opportunities to practise and develop skills that enhance resilience, in particular negotiation, conflict resolution, problem solving, communication and help-seeking. They are actively encouraged to practise the following behaviours:

- Avoiding places where bullying might take place
- Seeking out friends
- Remembering the D.O.B strategy, Don't Obey Bullies.
- Being assertive
- Using a very strong, loud voice
- Being confident
- Putting on a brave front
- Discussing issues with a teacher
- Talking to friends
- Talking to parents or carers

If a bully does not have a supportive audience, often he/she either will not proceed with his/her plan or will be swayed by the actions of the bystanders. All students need to be trained to recognise a bullying act and to immediately get assistance for the victim. Their actions may involve:

- warning the potential victim of an impending bullying incident
- staying with the potential victim
- verbally supporting the potential victim
- leaving the incident to find an adult.

Working with the victim

- Reassure him/her that the bullying is not their fault
- Encourage him/her to try and minimise opportunities for bullying (stay with friends etc)
- Practise assertiveness techniques with students
- Provide opportunities for students to talk and express their feelings about issues
- Give him/her responsibility and praise them for their efforts
- Provide access to further counselling if necessary.
- Encourage participation in self-esteem building activities and programs.

Working with the bullying student

- Reassure the student that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable, not them personally
- If possible, discover what is particularly troubling the student

- With the student and his/her parents (if appropriate), work out ways for the student to make amends and to restore right relationships with the wronged student
- Remind the student of the difference between assertive and aggressive behaviour
- Praise the student when they are seen to be doing the right thing
- Teach a social skills program within the context of the classroom, if appropriate
- Encourage participation in activities and programs that teach pro-social behaviours

Working with the bystanders

- Praise bystanders if they tried to prevent the incident occurring
- Discuss alternative strategies with bystanders who let themselves become involved in an incident
- Discuss with the bystanders ways in which they can restore right relationships with the victim
- Make bystanders aware of their responsibilities in assisting victims and discouraging acts of bullying.

If bullying behaviours continue

- Parents will be informed
- Counselling will be offered
- Students will be separated temporarily or permanently
- Suspension/Expulsion may occur.

APPENDIX B

Response Process

Stage 1 Teacher Investigation

- Staff investigate any possible instance of bullying which they have been informed about.
- Staff record the incident and those involved in the, “Incident Folder” which involves recording incidents of bullying and allowing an effective tracking of bullying behaviour which can help to identify patterns.
- If the accusation is found to warrant action then the accused is advised of the following;
- Reassure the student that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable, not them personally
- If possible, discover what is particularly troubling the student
- With the student and his/her parents (if appropriate), work out ways for the student to make amends and to restore right relationships with the wronged student
- Follow up with accused and victim within a week of incident.
- A severe physical or vindictive action would result in immediate Stage 2 responses from the school.

Stage 2 If inappropriate behaviour continues

- Principal informed
- The student who has reported the incident will be given any assistance they need, if they are the victim of the bullying they will be counselled as outlined in Appendix A of Bullying Policy.
- The student who has been reported will be interviewed by the principal in the presence of his/her parents.
- Direct consequences could include;
 - Isolation from peers (internal suspension)
 - After school detention
 - Professional assistance (Centacare)

Stage 3 Should aggressor continue in the same pattern of behaviour.

- Aggressor will face consequences in line with Pastoral Care and Discipline Policy
- Principal will adhere to mandatory legal requirements if applicable.

APPENDIX C

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF BULLYING

A student who is being bullied may show signs of the following behaviours:

- Be unwilling to attend school
- Feel ill in the mornings
- Begin performing poorly at school
- Become withdrawn, lack confidence
- Become distressed and anxious, stop eating
- Have nightmares
- Have their possessions go missing
- Ask for money
- Refuse to say what's wrong
- Become more aggressive and unreasonable.

APPENDIX D

SOME ANTI BULLYING STRATEGIES

“I” statements – useful to show feelings towards bullies

Students who use “I” statements may feel empowered because they have attempted to take control of the situation rather than walk away or call a teacher. The bully may begin to empathise with the student’s feelings or at least cease the behaviour because of the level of hurt involved.

Examples of “I” statements include: “I don’t like it when you do that.” “I want you to stop.”

Raising Awareness

Awareness of bullying issues is raised at school assemblies on a regular basis. Classes are encouraged to create slogans or jingles to campaign against bullying. Students are regularly reminded to use strategies which include; enlisting the help of a friend, finding a teacher and using the above-mentioned specific strategies. Class Prayer Assemblies sometimes use an anti-bullying focus for their liturgies and include references to the Values Education Program incorporated in Religious Education lessons.

APPENDIX E

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The aim of restorative justice is to restore the dignity and / or self-respect that has been taken away from the victim. If the victim has lost something material, then this must also be returned. A further aim of restorative justice is for the bully to be able to see through the eyes of the victim and realise just how it feels to be bullied.

The focus of justice should be on the restoration of the victim's well being, which may involve restoring the relationship that has been damaged. The focus should be on solving problems, demonstrating empathy and repairing harm. The bully is encouraged to take responsibility for his/her actions and recognise the victim's rights and needs. One way this may be achieved is through conferencing with the victim and the bully together.

Restorative justice should not be simply disciplinary action i.e. Community service. A variety of methods should be drawn upon, according to the case, to achieve the best outcomes for all stakeholders i.e. Conflict resolution strategies and conferencing.

APPENDIX F

THE 'NO BLAME' APPROACH

This approach to dealing with bullying involves establishing a support group of students involved in or witnessing a bullying incident e.g. the bullies and/or bystanders but not the target of the bullying. Blame for the incident is not attributed to anyone in the group. Instead, the group has the responsibility, under the guidance of a mentoring teacher, to find solutions for the problem and work towards repairing relationships. This approach may be particularly useful when the bully is likely to change behaviour through the influence of peers.

The *No Blame Approach* involves seven steps:

1. Interview the target of the bullying:

The teacher interviews the bullied student to find out how they are feeling and gain permission to tell the bullies about these feelings. The focus is to find out who is involved and some of the details. The teacher re-assures the target not to be concerned about reprisals as the bullies will not be directly 'in trouble' and that the focus is on the bully changing their way of thinking and behaving.

2. Convene a meeting with the students involved:

The teacher meets with the students involved – separately from the target of the bullying. The meeting is held in a neutral location and participants sit in a circle. The group is re-assured that they are not in trouble but that their help is needed to solve a problem the teacher has become aware of.

3. Share the target's feelings with the group:

The teacher indirectly, and without apportioning blame, shares with the group how the target is feeling. The teacher listens to the students' responses without probing for details.

4. Hand over responsibility to the group:

The teacher explains to the group that everyone has the right to feel safe and happy at school and that the group can help the target to feel better.

5. Ask the group for their ideas and 5 solutions to the problem:

The teacher asks the groups to suggest ways they could make the bullied student feel happier and safer at school. Negative comments are ignored and positive comments are praised. All students in the group are encouraged to contribute.

6. Allow the students to implement their plan:

The teacher ends the meeting by expressing confidence in the group to take responsibility for implementing their ideas. A follow up meeting is arranged for about one week later.

7. Conduct follow up interviews with the students:

The teacher meets with the target before meeting with the group or individuals involved. If the bullying has stopped, the students are praised. Reviews and previous steps in the process can be repeated as necessary until the bullying has stopped.

(Taken from: Suckling, A. & Temple, C., Bullying; a Whole-School Approach, 2001; pp 38-40)

APPENDIX G

THE 'METHOD of SHARED CONCERN' APPROACH

The *Method of Shared Concern* is a counselling-based approach to resolving bullying situations.

The overall aim of the method is to establish ground rules that will enable the students involved to co-exist peacefully within the same school. It does not aim to create friendships or uncover the details of the bullying situation. The teacher uses a specific script to manoeuvre the bullying students into changing their behaviour.

The *Method of Shared Concern* starts from the premise that there is a problem – the fact that the bullied student is unhappy at school. The teacher deliberately avoids becoming entangled in fact-finding or laying blame. All that is needed is agreement that the student being bullied is 'having a bad time'.

The Method has three stages:

1. Individual 'chats' with each student involved (approx. 10 mins each)
2. Follow up interviews with each student (approx. 3 mins each)
3. A group meeting (approx. half an hour)

The time frame between each stage is typically one week.

The bullying students are interviewed before the target to avoid any accusations of 'tale telling'. All interviews should happen consecutively without occurring on both sides of a break when students may have time to confer. Interviews should be held in a neutral location where student and teacher can be seated at equal height.

Teachers' Script for bullying students:

1. I hear you have been unkind to X. Tell me about it. (Follow up denial with: Yes, but nasty things have been happening to X. Tell me about it).

Listen to what the student tells you. Allow think time and don't accuse or blame.

Avoid asking questions. Be accepting if the student feels justified in their behaviour towards the other student – they may feel quite angry or upset with the person. Work towards an understanding that X is having a bad time (whoever is to blame).

2. So it sounds like X is having a bad time at school. (Said with emphasis)

. By now, the student should assent to this – move quickly to the next stage.

3. I was wondering what you could do to help X in this situation.

See what solution the student can come up with. Be encouraging and when some practical and relevant step forward is offered, say:

4. Excellent. You try that out for a week and we will meet and see how you have got on. Goodbye.

This process is repeated for each student in turn.

Teachers need to ensure that students have time to think. Offer suggestions if the students cannot think of solutions. Don't encourage silent or unco-operative students to respond – simply wait in silence for them to speak. If they do not respond after a few minutes, state that it is obvious they don't wish to talk today and that it must be time to return to class (this usually prompts speech!). If negative or impractical solutions are offered, do not dismiss them but ask whether this will help to stop the bullying. If a solution is offered that depends on someone else's action, do not bargain but respond with: '*I was thinking more about something you could do yourself.*'

The interview with the target of the bullying is less structured. A counselling role is adopted which helps him/her to find ways in which they can be active in improving the situation. If the student is a 'provocative bullied student', the teacher tries to help the student realise that their own behaviour is contributing to the situation and that they also need to change.

Follow up meetings:

These are to establish how well each student has achieved the aim agreed in the first meeting. If the bullying has not stopped, continue to work with the students individually in finding a solution. If the bullying has stopped, the students are congratulated on their efforts. A time and place is then set for the group meeting.

Group meeting:

Remind students of how successful they have been in improving the situation. Ask for suggestions of how this change can be maintained over time. Encourage the students to identify what they will do if the bullying re-occurs. Discuss the idea of co-existing peacefully without necessarily being friends – respecting one another.

(Taken from: Sharp, S. & Smith, P.K., Tackling Bullying in Your School, 1994; pp 80-88)

APPENDIX H

TEACHERS' ANTI-BULLYING ACTION CHARTER

Safety Justice Values

BELIEFS:

WE DO

- Acknowledge that bullying exists at our school
- Believe that bullying is a serious problem that needs to be tackled by the whole school
- Have a clear understanding of what comprises bullying at our school
- Be aware of the effects of bullying on ALL those involved
- Have in place policy and procedures that clearly state bullying will not be tolerated
- Remember all children have the right not to be bullied
- Implement the school's policy and procedures **CONSISTENTLY**

WE DON'T

- Accept bullying as a natural part of growing up
- Underestimate the effects of bullying on the whole school community
- Think in stereotypes – bullies and victims do not come in standard shapes and sizes

PRACTICES:

WE DO

- Be accessible to ALL students
- LISTEN to students, giving them a chance to explain
- Treat each report or incident seriously
- Treat each incident in context
- Remain calm, positive and confident
- Congratulate students for informing
- Acknowledge feelings of hurt and anger
- Reassure students that something CAN and WILL be done
- Share the responsibility for problem solving with all those involved
- Allow students the opportunity to seek solutions for themselves
- Ask 'What?' type questions to get details of an incident e.g.
 - o "What were you doing/saying to others?"
 - o "How did this help you/others?"
- Enlist the support of peers
- Let bullies know that their *BEHAVIOUR* will not to be tolerated
- Attack the *PROBLEM* not the *PERSON*
- Encourage the bully to see the other student's point of view and acknowledge his/her feelings
- Be careful not to set aggressive/punitive sanctions for bullying
- Be supportive of ALL students at ALL times
- Respect the rights of students, parents and teachers
- Follow up all reported incidents
- Keep a record of incidents

- Be aware of high risk places, times and students
- Map risk areas in the school to assist in providing adequate supervision
- Be punctual to classes and assemblies
- Be mobile and visible when on duty
- Let students know that all staff are available to discuss any issues
- Be observant both in and out of the classroom
- Encourage those who witness incidents of bullying (whether students, staff or parents) to report incidents
- Catch students 'doing the right thing'
- Be aware of new students who may:
 - o be different in appearance, speech or background from the majority of students
 - o be suffering from low self esteem
 - o demonstrate 'entertaining' reactions when bullied
 - o be more nervous or anxious than what is normally expected
- Be PROACTIVE in preference to REACTIVE
- Remember 'Duty of Care'
- Have high expectations
- Be seen to be fair
- Be INSISTENT, PERSISTENT and CONSISTENT

WE DON'T

- Ignore students' complaints or problems or dismiss students as 'attention seekers' or 'whingers'
- Expect students to 'sort it out', 'get tough' or 'cope alone'
- Be overprotective and prohibit the student from helping himself/herself
- Overact to incidents but treat them in context
- Ask 'Why?' type questions or attempt to assign blame or guilt to the bully

APPENDIX I

The use of the Incidents Folder

Each classroom has an Incident Folder.

If a bullying incident is reported to you, you are required to do a number of things.

1. You need to deal with the situation
2. Record the incident in the folder.
3. Complete the Incident Reports.
4. Inform the teachers of all children involved in the bullying incident.
5. If the bullying is severe or has escalated the teacher is expected to inform the Principal and discuss consequences and support for children involved.
6. The Principal maintains and keeps their own Incident Folder for any bullying issue which is referred to them.

The Incident Folder will be regularly checked by a member of the executive so incidents can be monitored and procedures followed to ensure the children involved are being offered support and consequences as outlined in the policy.

APPENDIX J

Resources used in the compilation of this policy:

- Harassment - it's not cool!* Safety House Publication, Tasmania
- Bullying or Banter* by Renee Mills, Clinical Psychologist. Article in Canberra's Child May 2006
- Bullying: A whole school approach* – Suckling and Temple
- Protective Behaviours Program incorporated in the NSW K – 6 PD/H/PE Syllabus
- Every Chance to Learn. ACT Dept of Education
- Real Justice by Ted Wachtel 1997
- National Safe Schools Framework, MCEECDYA, 2011

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Anti-Bullying Policy Documents from:

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