Dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence (Students)

Originally Released: 2020
Due for review: 2023

RATIONALE:

Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to encourage the development of positive relationships between students to reduce all forms of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. The policies and practices that a school employs should enhance the dignity of the human person and reflect the Principles of Pastoral Care as espoused in the Pastoral Care Framework (2007).

Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. Students who are bullied, subject to aggression or harassed tend to have poorer health, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, depression, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety. They are also more likely to have a dislike of and want to avoid school, higher absenteeism and lower academic competence. The effects of bullying can begin early in life and, for some, last a lifetime.

The Australian Government’s National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF) adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing. It provides a comprehensive range of evidence-informed practices to guide schools in preventing and responding to incidents of harassment, aggression, violence and bullying and to implement their responsibilities in relation to child protection issues.

The National Safe Schools Framework is based on the following overarching vision: All Australian schools are safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning communities that promote student wellbeing.

In the NSSF, a safe and supportive school is described in the following way: 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 any threats to their safety or wellbeing.
The Guiding Principles of the National Safe Schools Framework

This Framework is underpinned by the following guiding principles that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a pre-requisite for effective learning in all school settings.

Australian schools:

- affirm the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school
- acknowledge that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning
- accept responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfill the school’s child protection responsibilities
- encourage the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively support young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commit to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

The nine key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

DEFINITIONS:

**Bullying** is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, an imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt).

Its nature may be:
- verbal – name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken, written, electronic or cyber which may also apply to the following points)
- physical – hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions

_Harassment_ is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of ‘difference’. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status. (Bullying. No Way! website cited in the National Safe Schools Framework, 2003).

Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, cited in the NSSF, 2003).

**SCOPE**

This policy applies to all Catholic schools and early learning and care centres in Western Australia.

**PRINCIPLES**

4.1 Catholic schools are safe and supportive environments where the 6 guiding principles and 9 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practiced.

4.2 Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students.

4.3 Catholic schools provide supportive environments which:

- act to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence
- encourage socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management and direct teaching of curriculum in areas such as interpersonal and self-management skills
- promote respect for self and other
- develop physical/emotional well-being and resiliency
- develop interpersonal skills and positive mental health

4.4 Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence requires quality leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained change, together with a whole-school community approach that is consistent with the Pastoral Care Framework, the school’s Pastoral Care practices and the school’s Evangelisation Plan and which partners with parents and other agencies.
4.5 Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student’s learning and behaviour in school, Catholic schools take action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.

4.6 All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. When bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders, (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.

4.7 While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, school policy and procedures shall contain clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration should be given to other circumstances which may have bearing such as family or mental health matters.

4.8 All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.

---

**PROCEDURES**

5.1 St Anthony’s will not tolerate bullying, harassment, aggression or violence.

5.1.1 All members of the St Anthony’s school community are to take a pro-active stance that promotes safety and wellbeing.

5.1.2 Examples of behaviours that are considered to be bullying, harassment, aggression and violence include, but are not limited to:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others
- Interfering with another person’s property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it
- Using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families
- Using put-downs, belittling another’s abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive statements about others (on paper, graffiti, emails, texts, mode of social media etc)
- Making degrading comments about another’s culture, religious or social background
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse (whether in person or via text)
- Ridiculing another person’s appearance
- Forcing others to act against their will
5.1.3 Students and staff have rights and responsibilities to ensure the safety of all members of the school community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Each student has the right to: | • feel a sense of belonging  
• be spoken to and treated respectfully  
• learn and play in a safe environment  
• feel safe when using social media platforms  
• be supported in their learning and play environments | Each staff member has the right to: | • work in a safe, supportive environment  
• be spoken to in a respectful, courteous manner by students, colleagues and parents  
• cooperation and support from parents in matters pertaining their children's education  
• be the first point of contact if there is an issue or concern with one of their students |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Each student has the responsibility to: | • acknowledge and include others in discussions and games.  
• behave and speak in a respectful, courteous manner; look and listen to the person speaking, speak kindly to one another, acknowledge differences of opinion, be prepared to compromise and respect others rights.  
• ensure the school environment is kept neat and tidy  
• use electronic devices in accordance with the school ICT policy. | Each staff member has the responsibility to: | • intentionally build respectful relationships with all students, colleagues and parents  
• demonstrate care and commitment to the education and wellbeing of all students  
• recognise and respond to social dynamics of students to foster positive interdependent relationships.  
• adapt teaching and learning experiences to accommodate the diverse needs of students  
• teach Cybersafety across all year levels; both cyberbullying and cyber harassment are to be addressed  
• use and interact with electronic devices in accordance with the school ICT policy |
5.1.4 Signs of bullying and action plans

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Signs that a student is being bullied are sometimes obvious and sometimes they remain hidden. This is characteristic of many forms of child abuse. Some possible indicators are:

Class/School Attendance

- Refusal or reluctance to attend school
- Lateness for school
- Reluctance to leave school at the end of the day
- Constant use of the library
- Regularly feeling unwell at school (e.g. stomach ache)

Academic

- Significant decrease in work output and standard of work diminishes
- Lacks concentration in class or on homework tasks
- Problems with retention and short-term memory

Physical

- Tiredness
- Bed wetting (especially younger children)
- Loss of appetite
- Unexplained bruises and injury
- Torn clothing
- Feeling unwell

Emotional

- Swings in mood (e.g. anger, teary)

Social (Cyberbullying – Social Media)

- Withdrawal from social activities with peers
- Withdrawal from extra-curricular activities

Other signs from home

- Requests to change transport arrangements to and from school
- Requests for extra money
- Taking and “losing” valuables from home
- Sudden reluctance to do things in the community, eg. go to the shops, swimming pool etc
STUDENTS’ ACTION PLAN

If you think you are being bullied, ask yourself:

Was it deliberate? If Yes, follow these steps:

• Ignore the behaviour and show that it doesn’t upset you.

  If the bullying behaviour continues:
  
  • Tell the individual/s engaging in bullying behaviour to stop and leave you alone.

  If the bullying behaviour continues:

• Move to a safe area

  If the bullying behaviour continues:

• Tell a staff member.

Bystanders’ Action Plan

Ask yourself: Does this look or sound like a bullying situation?

If yes, follow these steps:

• Tell the person who is bullying to “Stop It”
• Offer friendly help to make the individual/s feel safe.

  If the behaviour continues:

• Take the individual/s to a staff member and report what you saw and heard.

Schools’ Action Plan for Onsite Bullying, Harassment, Aggression or Violence

• A staff member on playground duty will assess the situation and speak with the students involved.
• If necessary the class teacher will be notified by the duty teacher regarding the bullying behaviour.
• The class teacher will investigate the matter further if required.
• Discussions at class level about bullying will be included in general teaching across relevant learning areas.
• If necessary refer to the Principal, determine appropriate course of action and contact parents if necessary.
• Enter a description of the behaviour, consequences / course of action AND parent input into SEQTA
POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES / COURSES OF ACTION FOR BULLYING BEHAVIOUR:

- Class teacher to employ Pikas Method of Shared Concern.
- Professional support from the Social Worker – parents to be informed
- Withdrawal of student from school-based activities
- Lunch time detention
- Parent / Teacher / Principal meeting to discuss severity of behaviour and consequences
- In school suspension

The Pikas Method of Shared Concern

A. Assure the student bullied that the incident will be dealt with.
B. When the time becomes available teachers or administrators talk individually to bullying students first (7 minutes max.) To enlist their support for the students being bullied.
C. Students who are bullied are talked to last (7 minutes max.)
D. Okay, I’ll see you next week to find out how you are getting on.
E. Follow up meeting with students who have been bullying to discuss consequences (see above).
F. Student who was bullied receives support and there may be a follow up with assertiveness training.

5.1.5 SCHOOLS’ ACTION PLAN FOR BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AGGRESSION OR VIOLENCE THAT OCCURS OFFSITE:

1. Parents are to inform the school Principal of any incidences that occur outside of school
2. Principal is to inform class teacher and relevant members of staff
3. Appropriate monitoring processes are to be put in place to ensure safety and wellbeing of child(ren) involved is maintained.