

Anti-Bullying Policy

RATIONALE

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College Burraneer does not tolerate bullying. Within the College we seek to build a safe and caring Christian environment in which everyone has the right to feel safe and valued, where individual differences are accepted as everyone's right. We all share in the responsibility of caring for others within and beyond the college community.

DEFINITION

Bullying occurs when any member of the College is subjected to behaviour that is hurtful, threatening or frightening. Bullying usually involves an imbalance of power and by its nature can include verbal, physical, social and/or psychological cyber harassment.

Bullying can be carried out by an individual or a group.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- ◆ **Physical** – hitting, pushing, kicking, spitting, tripping
- ◆ **Verbal** – teasing, name calling, insulting, spreading rumours, making fun of someone because of their appearance, physical characteristics, intellectual capacity or cultural background
- ◆ **Non-Verbal** – writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, making rude gestures, rolling eyes at someone, using email, instant messaging, chat rooms, social websites or text messaging to hurt others
- ◆ **Emotional** – deliberately excluding others from a game or group, using put-downs, threatening to take others' possessions, food or money, belittling others' abilities and achievements, stealing, hiding or damaging another's property

Anti-Bullying Policy

PRINCIPLES

At Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College Burraneer we aim to provide a supportive environment that encourages positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community by:

- ◆ Informing students, parents and staff of the College's Anti-bullying Policy
- ◆ Encouraging young people to learn the values of tolerance, honesty, self-discipline and co-operation within the community
- ◆ Creating a safe and happy environment for both students and staff
- ◆ Incorporating anti-bullying educational activities into pastoral programs
- ◆ Including anti-bullying activities across all KLA's ensuring a whole school approach
- ◆ Acting immediately upon any reported cases of bullying
- ◆ Encouraging staff and particularly students in leadership positions such as School Leaders and members of the SRC to be role models.

GUIDELINES

HOW TO PREVENT BULLYING

At Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College we aim to prevent bullying by encouraging students to:

- ◆ Be accepting of individual differences
- ◆ Be tolerant of individuals' strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Deal with conflicts in a calm and respectful manner
- ◆ Use Restorative Practices to resolve conflict

HOW TO RESPOND TO BULLYING

Bullying is viewed as a serious breach of the College code of discipline. Any reports of bullying will be investigated thoroughly and appropriate actions will be taken.

All members of the community – staff, students and parents – have the right to experience positive and respectful relationships.

WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO?

- ◆ Build positive relationships with others so that bullying does not occur
- ◆ Tell the person who is bullying you (or bullying someone else) that their actions are unwanted and must stop
- ◆ If you feel uncomfortable approaching the person responsible or the bullying does not stop, report the bullying to a teacher, School Counsellor, Year Coordinator, Leader of Wellbeing, Assistant Principal or Principal, whether it is happening to you or to someone else
- ◆ Refuse to be involved in any bullying
- ◆ If bullying continues report the problem again
- ◆ Develop strategies to better cope and prevent being bullied

WHAT STAFF CAN DO?

- ◆ Be positive role models in relationships with others
- ◆ Treat all instances of bullying seriously and, if necessary, report it to the Homeroom Teacher, Year Coordinator, Leader of Wellbeing, Assistant Principal or Principal
- ◆ Educate students in ways to prevent bullying
- ◆ Understand that through punctuality to class, active supervision and challenging unacceptable behaviour staff can play an active role in preventing bullying in class and on the playground
- ◆ Be aware that the nature of bullying may change with maturity
- ◆ Respect the privacy of the individuals involved in bullying

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO?

- ◆ Take an active interest in your daughter's social life and acquaintances
- ◆ Advise your daughter to speak to a trusted member of staff. If possible allow your daughter to report and deal with the problem herself as this often leads to the development of necessary social and communication skills in such situations
- ◆ If necessary, inform your child's Homeroom Teacher or Year Coordinator or the Leader of Wellbeing
- ◆ It can be counter-productive for parents/guardians to contact parents/guardians of the student/s involved – under no circumstance should parents/guardians contact the student/s involved
- ◆ Understand that the resolution of the situation may take time.

Anti-Bullying Policy

- ◆ Encourage your daughter to speak openly with you and to look to positive strategies to deal with her feelings
- ◆ Monitor your daughter's progress and if concerned contact the College

BULLYING AND THE COLLEGE'S DISCIPLINE POLICY

Our Lady of Mercy Catholic College does not tolerate bullying. Disciplinary action may include:

- ◆ Asking the student to examine her behaviour and make immediate changes
- ◆ Notifying parents
- ◆ Referring the student to a counsellor
- ◆ Initiating a Mediation Conference
- ◆ The Year Coordinator assessing the situation and deciding upon further disciplinary action (depending upon the seriousness of the situation)
- ◆ The teachers and the Year Coordinator continuing to monitor the student's behaviour

THE COLLEGE WILL DEAL SERIOUSLY WITH STUDENTS WHO RETALIATE AGAINST A PERSON FOR REPORTING BULLYING.

PROCESS FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Any parent, teacher, student(s) or any member of staff can report suspected bullying.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the following steps may be involved in dealing with an allegation of bullying:

STEP 1

- ◆ Year Coordinator or Homeroom Teacher of both the student who is reporting being bullied and the student accused of bullying are informed
- ◆ The student making the report is interviewed by her Homeroom Teacher or Year Coordinator and given reassurance that the matter will be investigated – this student may ask another teacher or student to be present to support her
- ◆ Background information is collected from various sources and documented
- ◆ It is made clear that any suggestion of retaliation by any party will be treated as harassment
- ◆ Students involved may be referred to the School Counsellor

- ◆ If the incident is found to warrant action then the student accused of bullying is advised of the following Restorative Practices:

- Her actions must stop and the student should reflect on what she can do to make the situation better
- Those who have been bullied do not want similar incidents to continue
- The person accused of bullying is to attend a follow-up meeting with the Year Coordinator for ongoing monitoring of the situation
- Parents/guardians are informed of the nature of the incident and the actions taken

STEP 2

If the bullying continues or is repeated then some of these more formal actions will take place:

- ◆ The Leader of Wellbeing / Assistant Principal will convene a meeting of students affected and a support person (if requested) – Parents/guardians are contacted to inform them of the process
- ◆ A formal meeting will be held where all involved are represented to discuss the allegations and the College's anti-bullying policy
- ◆ An Individual Positive Behaviour Plan will be formulated and copies will be given to all parties
- ◆ In an agreed period of time the group is brought together to review the incident
- ◆ Both the alleged victim and the alleged bully may be referred to counselling or a conflict resolution process

STEP 3

- ◆ If bullying still continues, the student will be placed on in-school suspension by the Assistant Principal
- ◆ The Assistant Principal and Leader of Wellbeing will meet the student's parents
- ◆ Further counselling will be required

STEP 4

- ◆ If bullying continues, the student will be suspended by the Principal
- ◆ An interview between the Principal and parents will take place
- ◆ Followed by a return to school interview

STEP 5

- ◆ If bullying persists or is of an extremely serious nature, the Principal will discuss the student's enrolment at the College with the parents
- ◆ Serious incidences will be reported to the police

Anti-Bullying Policy

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technology to deliberately hurt, harass, threaten, or intimidate someone. Just like other forms of bullying, it is about human relationships, power and control. Those who bully others are trying to establish power and control over those they perceive as weaker than them. Cyberbullying can occur in different forms, such as text, video or image and can be conveyed using a range of modes, such as e-mail, text messaging, mobile phones, social websites, blogs and on-line personal polling sites.

SUGGESTIONS ON HANDLING CYBERBULLYING FOR STUDENTS

- ◆ Do not respond to the abuse
- ◆ Do not engage with the abuse, rather leave the area, stop the activity or block the sender
- ◆ Talk to someone about it, ignoring bullying may lead to it becoming worse – tell an adult you trust – your parents, a teacher, Year Coordinator, Leader of Wellbeing, Assistant Principal or Principal
- ◆ Keep records or print outs of messages or a screenshot to help identify the bully and show these to whomever you have reported the incident
- ◆ Get a new phone number or account name if necessary and only give it to one person at a time
- ◆ Never give anyone access to your accounts or give your usernames and passwords

SUGGESTIONS ON HANDLING CYBERBULLYING FOR PARENTS

- ◆ Place and keep home computers in an open, common area
- ◆ Inform Internet Service Provider (ISP) or mobile phone service provider of any abuse
- ◆ Keep records for evidence by saving or printing out messages or keeping a screenshot and note the time and date
- ◆ Install parental control programs on home computers that provide filters for both instant messaging and chat rooms
- ◆ Report serious incidences to the police.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

KIDS HELPLINE

- ◆ 1800 55 1800 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- ◆ Web counselling www.kidshelp.com.au
Mon – Fri 12pm – 10pm
Sat – Sun 10am – 10pm

LIFELINE

- ◆ 13 11 14
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week – free from mobile)
- ◆ Online crisis support chat www.lifeline.org.au
(7pm – 4am 7 days a week)

HEADSPACE

- ◆ 1800 650 890
- ◆ Can chat online at www.eheadspace.org.au

SUICIDE CALL BACK SERVICE

- ◆ 1300 659 467 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- ◆ Online counselling
www.suicidcallbackservice.org.au

Other websites:

www.beyondblue.org.au
www.reachout.com.au
www.bullyingnoway.com.au
www.esafety.gov.au