



## **BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AGGRESSION AND VIOLENCE (STUDENTS)**

### **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<sup>2</sup>

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). 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 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 Catholic Education Office of Western Australia's 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 All schools shall develop a school-based policy on bullying, harassment, aggression and violence, based on a comprehensive risk and needs assessment, which includes:

5.1.1 an expanded definition statement which states that the school shall not tolerate bullying, harassment, aggression and violence and which encourages all members of the school community 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



5.1. \_\_\_\_\_ments relating to cybersafety including cyberbullying, cyberharassment and sexting

5.1.4 statements of school and student rights and responsibilities in relation to safety issues (including cybersafety, bullying, harassment, aggression and violence) that occur outside of school hours and off school grounds that involve or affect students and staff

5.1.5 statements, and where possible, flowcharts defining and advising the responsibilities of each of the major parties to the policy, the Principal, staff, students, parents and families, and, encouraging help-seeking through designated staff members when bullying, harassment, aggression or violence is experienced or witnessed

5.1.6 strategies and responses (including curricula, programs and pedagogy and, where school resources are limited, forming partnerships with parents, families and the wider community) to address:

- the development of supportive environments, positive relationships and student connectedness to the school
- social decision making and empowerment of students
- skills in conflict resolution
- promotion of tolerance and understanding, the encouragement of inclusion and the celebration of difference
- acceptance of difference, and, a culture of cooperation, empathy and respect
- the resolution of bullying incidents involving those who bully or aggress and those who are bullied or subject to aggression and which includes the early and appropriate involvement of parents
- the support and restoration to wellbeing of students who have been harmed by hurtful behaviour. This includes working with parents and families to assist in retaining a connectedness to school and facilitating reintegration in those whose attendance may have lapsed as a consequence of bullying, harassment, aggression or violence
- the amelioration of the behaviour and attitudes of students who bully
- the pro-active engagement of bystanders to discourage bullying behaviour
- the broader needs of the school community
- the prevailing attitudes within the school including the 'culture' of the school to promote safety and wellbeing
- teaching and learning programs to support the strategies and promote good citizenship skills in students, staff and parents

5.1.7 school support systems that promote positive social health, mental health, safety and

5.1.8 reporting, recording and data collection procedures to be used when investigating incidents, as a basis to facilitate evaluation and justify any modification to approach, and to inform prevention and management activities

5.1.9 a case management model to be used when bullying, harassment, aggression or violent behaviours persist

5.1.10 a statement on appropriate confidentiality

5.2 The school-based policy shall be developed using a broad consultative and educative process involving students, staff, parents and families. The completed policy should refer to any other relevant policies or procedures and should be disseminated and promoted to the school community.

5.3 Schools shall provide professional development and appropriate resourcing to meet the needs of their staff in implementing the school policy.



5.4 The policy developed by schools shall be monitored and regularly reviewed. A recommended period is every 3 years or immediately following any incident that raises issues in respect to policy and practice.

## **REFERENCES**

Rigby, K (2001). Stop the Bullying. A Handbook for Schools. ACER, Australia

Curriculum Corporation (2000), Mind Matters, Commonwealth of Australia

National Safe Schools Framework (2003, revised 2011. Education Services Australia as the legal entity for the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs [MCEECDYA]).

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy 2-C4 Harassment, Discrimination and Bullying

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy 2-D3 Child Abuse

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy 2-D8 Management of Confidential Information in Schools

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy 2-D7 Exclusion of Students for Disciplinary Reasons

Catholic Education Office of Western Australia, Framework for the Development of Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools (2007)

Framework for Schools Dealing with Bullying Available on request:

- Friendly Schools and Families (Acerpress)
- The National Safe Schools Framework

Reviewed: 2013

Reviewed: 2017

Due for Review 2021 (Pending 2017 CEWA Review)