



ST MARY'S SCHOOL MANSFIELD Anti-bullying 'Bullying, No Way!' Policy

St. Mary's Primary School Mansfield

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Policy Statement

St Mary's Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

Policy Scope

This policy addresses how St Mary's Primary School aims to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. St Mary's Primary School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our Student Code of Conduct and Student Mental Health and Wellbeing as well as Student Engagement Policy. This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to bullying. This policy has been written based on recommendations from 'Bullying, No Way!' and should be read in consultation with our Child Safety Policy, Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct, Mandatory Reporting Policy, Anti-Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace Policy, Critical Incident Policy, Learning Diversity and Special Needs Policy, Anti-Discrimination Policy, Health and Safety Management System and Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, Attendance and Unexplained Absences Policy, ICT Policy, Responsible Use of Social Media Policy, and Internet Code of Conduct.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at St Mary's Primary School will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at St Mary's Primary School.

Policy Aims

When responding to bullying behaviour, St Mary's Primary School aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

St Mary's Primary School acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

Policy Definitions

St Mary's recognised the national definition of bullying for Australian schools which states:

'Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.'

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Other distressing behaviours

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the St Mary's Behaviour Modification Policy.

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation. Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others. Single-episode acts of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Bullying Prevention

St Mary's Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect. Bullying prevention at St Mary's Primary School is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying.

At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students. Refer St Mary's Child Safety Policy, Child Safety Code of Conduct and Mental Health and Wellbeing policies.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom and yard Behaviour Modification strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour (Refer 2x Flowcharts)

- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum, Respectful Relationships, teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- Significant wellbeing event days and kindness projects are held at least termly which promote harmonious relationships including 'Bullying, No Way!' Day, Harmony Day, White Ribbon Day, as well as Caritis and Vinnies Christmas
- For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy.

Procedures

Responding to allegations of Bullying

INCIDENT RESPONSE - Reporting concerns to St Mary's Primary School

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school. Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible. In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers other than their own, school counsellor, Principal or Assistant Principal. Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at St Mary's Primary School should contact one of the Child Safe Committee members;

Trish Ecell, Principal – principal@stmarysmansfield.catholic.edu.au

Mary Dunstan, Assistant Principal – mdunstan@smmansfield.catholic.edu.au

Jane Pimlott, Learning Diversity Leader – jpimlott@smmansfield.catholic.edu.au

Sharna Byrne, Child Safety Officer, sbyrne@smmansfield.catholic.edu.au

Sandra O'Brien, Wellbeing Leader sobrien@smmansfield.catholic.edu.au

Or on 57752670

Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by St Mary's Primary School are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

INVESTIGATIONS

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations in our Behaviour Incident Log.
2. Inform classroom teacher and members of the Child Safe Committee (refer to name listed above).

A Principal or Child Safety Team member will be responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner.

To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, a Principal or Child Safety committee member will follow procedures as outlined in 'Bullying, No Way!' Flowchart (Appendix A).

These steps involve but are not limited to;

- speaking to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speaking to the parents of the students involved

- speaking to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference (Refer Appendix B)
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner. The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour. Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. Responses to bullying behaviours When the sufficient information has been gathered to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with teachers, our school counsellor, student services staff (for example, Speech Pathologist, Occupational Therapist) or CEM Wellbeing Leaders.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, St Mary's Primary School will consider:

- The age and maturity of the students involved
- The severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student
- Whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- Whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- Whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- The alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation

The Principal or an Assistant Principal may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to our School Counsellor, Learning Diversity Leader, or other external provider for example CAMHS, psychologist.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to our School Counsellor, Learning Diversity Leader, or other external provider for example CAMHS, psychologist.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to our School Counsellor, Learning Diversity Leader, or other external provider for example CAMHS, psychologist.
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Catholic Education Melbourne policy.

- Facilitate a Student Safety meeting for affected students.
- Facilitate a Student Safety meeting for perpetrator and develop a Safety Plan or Behaviour Management Plan with regular reviews.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Behaviour Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.

St Mary's Primary School understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- Australian Childhood Foundation
- Bully Stoppers
- Kids Helpline
- Be You - Beyond Blue
- Lifeline
- Bullying. No way!

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every year or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective. Data will be collected through:

- Discussions with students
- Student surveys
- Staff surveys
- Family surveys
- School based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented

We will regularly review this policy in accordance with local and national policy changes and Catholic Education Office circulars.