



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Introduction

The community of Mother Teresa Primary School does not tolerate bullying in any form. It is committed to developing a climate of mutual trust, respect and empathy that will contribute to a safe, caring and Christian environment which promotes personal growth, positive self-esteem and values the dignity of each person. Any type of bullying in a Catholic school, by any member of the community, is contrary to Gospel values and the vision of Mother Teresa Primary School and the Parramatta Catholic Education Office.

Definition

Bullying is **repeated** psychological or physical oppression of a less powerful person or group of persons by a more powerful person or group of persons (Rigby, 1996) that creates a risk to mental and physical health and safety. Bullying is ongoing in nature and the bully is encouraged by another's pain, distress, fear and humiliation. Bullying may manifest itself in the form of emotional, social, verbal and/or physical incidents, all of which will cause distress. Examples of bullying include:

- **Physical:** hitting; pushing; tripping; kicking; spitting on others
- **Verbal:** teasing; using offensive names; yelling or screaming abuse; constant criticism of a person; inappropriate comments about a person's appearance
- **Non-verbal:** writing offensive notes, in any medium; graffiti about others; rude gestures
- **Psychological:** spreading rumours; hiding or damaging possessions; inappropriate use of information technologies, such as using email, websites or text messaging to hurt others; using the internet or mobile phones to spread rumours or misinformation; unauthorised use of camera phones to cause harm to others
- **Social/Emotional:** deliberately excluding others from a group; refusing to sit next to someone; overtly encouraging other people to actively ignore or avoid a person
- **Extortion:** threatening to take someone's possession, food or money
- **Property:** stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property whole.

Bullying behaviour stops an individual from feeling comfortable in a school's shared environment. Bullying behaviour can also adversely affect the long-term emotional and social development of the bully. Bullying impacts on the school community as a whole.

The school

- Will display rules and expectations
- Record and monitor incidents of bullying behaviour
- Will provide parents with access to the anti-bullying policy on the school's website
- Will work with parents to assist their child in dealing appropriately with bullying, be they the bully, the bystander or the student being bullied
- Will continue to raise awareness of bullying
- Will ensure that there is a developmental PD/H/PE program and a social skills program that deals with relationships in a Catholic context

Procedural Fairness

Mother Teresa Primary School will ensure that procedural fairness applies in dealing with any incidents of bullying. Appropriate and timely support, management and resolution of reported incidents of bullying will be offered to all persons involved in these incidents.

Responses to Bullying

The appropriate treatment of bully/victim problems will be linked to the degree of severity. However, different types of cases may require different approaches and therefore each case will be treated individually to ensure a more successful outcome to the problem. The examples below offer guidelines for action against bullying at Mother Teresa Primary School.

Low severity

- These cases should never be ignored.
- Talk with the bully or bullies, pointing out the evident distress felt by the victim; explain the unacceptability to the school of the teasing or name-calling; and encourage and reinforce pro-social ways of responding on the part of the bully.
- Talk with the victim to discover whether he or she has in any way provoked the bullying behaviour. Suggest ways in which the victim may be able to deal with the situation and access resources, for example friends who might help.
- Undertake to monitor carefully what happens next and be prepared to intervene (see Intermediate level) if the situation deteriorates.

Intermediate level

These approaches have been shown to be highly successful. A single approach may be used or a combination of approaches depending upon the situation.

- ***The No Blame Approach***

This can apply when a group of students is involved. Once identified, the victim is interviewed and asked to describe what has been happening and how he or she has been feeling about it. A group of students is convened, including the bullies, as well as other children expected to propose constructive solutions. The problem and the victim's reactions to the ill-treatment are described to them. They are left to come up with and implement an agreed solution.

- ***The Method of Shared Concern***

With this method the bullies are seen individually. The interviewer shares his or her concern for what has been happening to the victim, and invites the bully to take responsible action to remedy the situation. Group work with the victim and the bullies follows so as to effect a true reconciliation. Importantly, developments are carefully monitored. In a large majority of cases the method is effective.

- ***Restorative Justice***

This method works to restore the relationship between the two parties. Restorative practices help students learn from their mistakes, reconcile and resolve problems with others.

- ***The application of appropriate consequences/sanctions:***

This is a more traditional approach which seeks to ascertain the degree of blame attributable to the bullies and then to provide 'consequences'; that is, non-physical sanctions to deter further bullying. The consequences will relate to the situation and the offender. Not all consequences are appropriate for all students.

High severity

Persistent incidents of bullying that interfere with the safety and well-being of other students need to be reviewed in the context of other relevant diocesan student welfare policies, and appropriate action taken.

This typically requires a careful inquiry into precisely what has happened, conducting interviews with bullies, victims and observers. Serious talks are conducted with the parents of the bullies. Sanctions may be applied, including possible suspension of the perpetrators.

Where the bullying behaviour has involved a crime, such as common assault, school-based actions will include a report to the Department of Community Services (DOCS). Further referral to other agencies may also be made and the advice of the Police may be sought. (CEO Anti-bullying Policy)

(Adapted from: Rigby, K. (2003) *Stop The Bullying: A handbook for Schools*, ACER Press, Melbourne)

Procedure to follow when a bullying complaint is made

- The staff member to whom the complaint was made begins this process in consultation with the Principal/Assistant Principal
- A Complaints Register proforma is obtained.
- The situation is investigated and dealt with using one, or a combination of the above approaches.
- The Complaint Register form is completed and maintained in the students' file/s.
- The situation is monitored by both teachers and Principal/Assistant Principal.