



Stella Maris Primary School

Anti Bullying Policy

Rationale

Our anti-bullying policy aims to promote a safe and supportive school environment at Stella Maris Primary School. Every student, parent and staff member has the right to feel safe and supported at all times in an environment where care, respect and cooperation is fostered throughout the school community. A whole school approach to bullying where students, parents and staff work together to achieve a safe and supportive environment will underpin this policy.

Bullying of some form exists within all schools and the wider community and Stella Maris Primary School is committed to addressing this issue. Bullying can have severe negative effects on the individuals involved and this policy will clearly outline how our school aims to minimise incidents through prevention, early intervention, intervention and restorative practices. This policy will also detail how students, parents and staff can most effectively manage situations of abuse and victimisation, as addressing bullying behaviour is the responsibility of all members of our school community.

Definition of Bullying:

“Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, their reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.” (DE&T, 2006).

Types of Bullying:

Bullying behaviour may be direct or indirect. DE&T (2006) describe three broad categories of bullying:

- 1) Direct physical bullying such as hitting, tripping, pushing or damaging property.
- 2) Direct verbal bullying such as name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
- 3) Indirect bullying designed to harm someone’s social reputation or cause humiliation such as spreading rumours, nasty jokes, mimicking, excluding or cyber-bullying.

Bullying is **not** mutual conflict as there is not an imbalance of power. Although unresolved mutual conflict may escalate into bullying where one person repeatedly targets another in an attempt for retaliation.

Bullying is **not** single episodic events even if the negative behaviour previously defined is directed toward many different students. This inappropriate behaviour is taken very seriously and addressed it is not considered bullying, as a single individual is not being targeted on more than one occasion.

Effects of Bullying

The effects of bullying behaviour on students may include:

- Distress and loss of confidence
- Headaches and nausea
- Lack of sleep
- Reluctance to attend school
- Unexplained bruising and / or injury
- A decline in work standards
- Inability to concentrate
- Mood swings and problem behaviour
- Negative thoughts about self and others
- Withdrawal and / or depression
- Long term implications for individuals involved

The impact of bullying can be very serious and have far reaching negative consequences. Stella Maris aims to maintain a positive school climate at all times where bullying will not be tolerated.

Links to Other School Policies

This policy can be linked to other school policies in the following ways:

- Stella Maris Vision Statement, which states, “Every person feels safe, nurtured and valued as we build relationships and celebrate individual differences. We also develop life-long personal, social and emotional skills so that every person can develop, thrive and contribute to their world.”
- Drug Ed Policy, which uses the same range of approaches including prevention, early intervention, and intervention and restorative practices.

Primary Prevention

Stella Maris shall endeavour to provide preventative strategies for bullying behaviour through:

- Restorative Practices as the preferred approach to dealing with relationship issues.
- Classroom and Playground rules clearly visible in all classrooms.
- Restorative Practices and anti-bullying posters on display throughout the school.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying through developing a common language, surveys and information evenings.
- Developing a sense of belonging to our school community through: assembly activities such as grade items, birthdays, cake raffle, school singing and our school concert.
- Providing programs such as “You Can Do It” and “Peer Support” which promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour through our Annual School Spirit Award.
- Each classroom teacher continually clarifying and reinforcing the school policy on bullying.
- Provision of classroom programs that develop positive relationships, social skills, communication and problem solving, conflict resolution and an awareness of individual and cultural diversity.
- Regular use of circle time.
- Establishing a culture of “No-putdowns”
- Classroom teachers creating a supportive classroom environment where “students feel that they belong and are cared for and are valued and respected by the teachers and other students” (Freeman, 2006).

Early Intervention

Stella Maris shall endeavour to provide early intervention of bullying behaviour through:

- Encouraging students to report bullying incidents involving themselves and others.
- Parents being encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of any potentially bullying situations.
- Social skills programs to assist in anger management, conflict resolution and communication to individuals in need.
- Students who bully are to complete a “My Behaviour Sheet” to assist them in becoming aware of their responsibility to respect others.
- Supporting students at risk of being bullied with assertiveness techniques, STAMP strategy and inner confidence
- The introduction of a problem solving action plan for students who bully or are at risk of being bullied.
- Enlisting the help of OnPsych for counselling support.
- Actively advocating the responsibilities of the bystander during incidents.

Intervention

Stella Maris shall endeavour to provide appropriate intervention of bullying behaviour through:

- Fully investigating and documenting all incidents and allegations of bullying.
- Students who have been identified through bullying surveys and critical incident reports will be given counselling and support.
- Action plans being devised depending on the situation in consultation with the student, classroom teacher, parents and student well-being coordinator.

Restorative Practices

Stella Maris shall endeavour to provide restorative practices to help heal broken relationships through:

- Teachers are to provide positive reinforcement for positive peer relations.
- Enlisting student leaders to assist with peer mediation and support to assist in the continual development of positive social skills with the students involved.
- Conducting regular anti bullying surveys of the whole school to monitor bullying.

Cyberbullying

Definition:

“Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others.” (Bill Belsey www.cyberbullying.org)

While cyberbullying is similar to real life bullying, it also differs in the following ways:

- It can be difficult to escape and is invasive for it can occur 24/7 and a person can be targeted at home or almost anywhere.
- It can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly disseminated to a large audience, for example, rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at the “press of a button”.

- It can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the victim so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

Cyberbullying can include, but is not limited to, the items listed below:

- **Email** – Sending harassing, threatening and / or menacing messages to targets either directly or, anonymously or using another person’s address or alias.
- **Instant Messaging (IM)** Harassing and heated arguments (referred to “flaming”) can occur and include obscene language in private chat rooms such as MSN, Yahoo and Bebo.
- **Chat Rooms / Bash boards** During real time where students can anonymously write anything true or untrue to create and add cruel entries in a worldwide forum.
- **Short Text Messages (SMS)** Masquerading as another by using their mobile phone or computer to send harassing or threatening messages.
- **Websites / Social Networking sites** Mocking, teasing and harassing; voting online for the ugliest, fattest etc and posting visuals that can be altered (this can include sexually explicit material).

Cyberbullying can be a criminal offence under the following acts:

- Summary Offences Act, criminal offences include; “Production, dissemination or possession of child pornography” or “Publishing child pornography and indecent articles” (Section 91H of the *Crimes Act 1900*)
- Federal *Cybercrime Act 2001* including unauthorized access to, or modification of, restricted data.
- Specific sections of the Crimes Act relating to assault.
- Defamation under the *NSW Defamation Amendment Act 2002* (Individual civil action legislation).

Strategies in Response to Cyberbullying

The following general strategies are recommended to assist those who are victims of cyberbullying activity:

- Follow the STAND acronym (Appendix 1).
- Report any incidence of cyberbullying or upsetting hostile cyberspace behavior, including deliberate exclusion, to a parent, trusted adult, school teacher or principal.
- Do not respond to further messages / postings from the bully and, if possible, block their mobile phone or email address.
- Keep evidence of any cyberbullying (including screen captures, the bully’s screen name, text and images) to assist in tracking down the bully and reporting to the police.
- Report any concerns to the administrator of the service used for bullying. This may be the mobile phone provider, website administrator or internet service provider.
- Seek support from an appropriate and supportive contact such as Principal, Deputy Principal, Wellbeing Leader.
- Contact Police immediately in cases of possible serious threats to life or physical wellbeing or where a child protection offence such as child pornography or child “grooming” has occurred.

Procedures to Report Bullying Behaviour including Cyberbullying

The following procedure outlines how teachers are to manage bullying behaviour as they are observed or are reported to them. Adhering to this procedure will help to create a consistent approach to dealing with bullying.

- My Behaviour Sheet is to be completed by the students involved whenever a situation is observed or reported where a student deliberately hurts another through physical, verbal or indirect means even if the incident involves mutual conflict or is a first offence for the students involved.
- The teacher who is supervising at the time informs the classroom teacher who is to log the information on Nforma.
- Where bullying or cyberbullying is deemed to have occurred all parents of the children involved must also be contacted by the classroom teacher, Principal or Deputy to devise an action plan.

Staff Training and Support

Professional Development for staff members will include:

- Restorative Practices.
- Protective Behaviours.
- School wide Positive Behaviour Support.

Partnerships

Research indicates the best approach to dealing with bullying involves a whole school approach. We are all responsible for the wellbeing of each other and the following details the action required by each community group as a response to potential bullying situations.

- Role of the Student Being Bullied:
 - 1) Tell the person who is bullying you to stop.
 - 2) Talk to someone you trust.
 - 3) Tell the teacher on duty if the behaviour continues or you are hurt in anyway.
 - 4) Talk to your parents about the situation.
- Role of the Bystander:
 - 1) Tell the person it is wrong to bully.
 - 2) Talk to the teacher on duty.
 - 3) Don't join in with the bullying and be a friend to the person being bullied.
 - 4) Look after the person if they are alone and ask them to play.
 - 5) Talk to your parents about it.
- Role of the Teacher:
 - 1) Act immediately to stop the behaviour and attend to any injuries.
 - 2) Support the person hurt and reiterate that the behaviour is not acceptable.
 - 3) Gather as much information as possible and the child is to complete a "My Behaviour" sheet.
 - 4) When the children are calm Restorative Practices will be used to help heal the relationship.
 - 5) Inform the classroom teacher as soon as possible of the incident.
 - 6) Log the incident into N Forma so that repeat behaviour can be monitored.
- Role of Parents:
 - 1) Listen to your child and show concern and support.
 - 2) Help your child to develop positive strategies.
 - 3) Collect and write down information especially for cyber bullying.
 - 4) Work with the school to solve the problem.

Policy Dissemination

- All new staff and students are to be given a copy of the "Anti Bullying Policy".
- The policy will be disseminated through our school website or handed to families upon request.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed with students, parents, staff and community input as part of the school's four-year review cycle.

References:

Freeman, L. (2006) Wellbeing is Everyone's Business. Faculty of Education University of Melbourne.

DE&T (2006) Safe Schools are Effective Schools.



This policy was ratified in 2008.

This policy will be reviewed in each review year.

This policy was last reviewed in 2012.

Appendix 1

Stop – Tell the person who is harming another to stop immediately.

Tell the closest teacher.

Always help those being bullied.

Make friends with lots of different people.

Play nicely at all times.

Appendix 2

Silence – do not respond to abusive messages. The number one rule for dealing with cyber-bullying is: don't respond, don't interact and don't engage.

Take a copy of all abusive messages – these may be useful legally later on. Create a new folder, called "Abuse", and move hate mail and messages into this folder.

Accept that bullies don't think like you do – trying to sort it out with them or asking them to stop won't work. Recognise that you are not dealing with a person who has the same mindset as yourself. Cyber-bullies are cowards who often try to hide their identity and behave in nasty ways to build themselves up and to put other people down. Cyber-bullying is a pathetic act.

Never deal with this problem alone – get help! No one can cope with this alone.

Don't be provoked. Some cyber-bullies play "the baiting game". A provocative comment is made and those who respond in irritation are encouraged to engage in conflict with those who respond assertively. The provoker watches, waits and stirs the pot.

Reference

Fuller, A. (2011). *Cyber relationships*. *Inyahead: Andrewfuller.com.au*. Retrieved 23 January 2011 from <http://andrewfuller.com.au/extras/downloads/159.Cyber%20Relationships.pdf>