Anti-Bullying Policy

Purpose
At St Brendan’s Catholic School, we believe that all members of the community have the right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. Bullying is unacceptable and the community has a shared responsibility to foster, promote and restore right relationships.

This policy builds on the school's Pastoral Care Policy to provide clear and agreed procedures and strategies for combating bullying in the school, responding to bullying behaviours and protecting and supporting all parties involved.

Policy Framework
Flowing from the Christian vision expressed in the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy, schools are called to establish relationships which are grounded in love, compassion, reconciliation and justice. In witnessing Christian values we reject ideas, beliefs and behaviours which marginalize or victimize people.

Definition
There is general consensus that bullying behaviour:
- is deliberate and often repeated
- intends to cause fear, distress, hurt or harm to another
- is action by a more powerful individual or group over a less powerful individual or group

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress. Examples of bullying include:

- Physical - hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others etc
- Verbal - teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours etc
- Non-Verbal - writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, rude gestures etc
- Exclusion - deliberately excluding others from group, refusing to sit next to someone etc
- Extortion - threatening to take someone's possessions, food or money etc
- Property - stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property etc
- Cyber - any form of bullying which is carried out through electronic means such as mobile phones, email, chat room, social networking, 'sms', web page etc

How do we prevent bullying at St Brendan’s Catholic School?
Ultimately, strategies to prevent bullying will only be effective when placed within the context of a culture in which respect for others is consistently taught and demonstrated across all facets of school life. The Christian values, which represent the antithesis of bullying, must be continually affirmed in words and actions.

Strategies to prevent bullying will fall within the following broad categories:
- 'moral education' in the context of religious education, liturgies and assemblies where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, reconciliation, tolerance, respect and justice are encouraged
- 'across the curriculum' values teaching (eg looking at the problem of prejudice within the context of a novel or a history lesson)
clear statements from staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying

teaching specifically related to bullying in the PDHPE curriculum

Positive Behaviour for Learning & KidsMatter frameworks

teaching more positive ways of resolving conflict, such as working co-operatively within the classroom and playground

staff and students as role models, particularly those in leadership roles such as peer support, school captains, house captains etc.

provision of activities which develop a culture of caring for one another and acknowledging the worth and contribution of others and which help to develop compassion

appropriate provision of counselling or other support services

provision of support for parents through information seminars, support networks etc

How do we respond to Bullying at St Brendan’s Catholic School?

Bullying is viewed as a breach of the school's ROSE rules. Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be taken. The response to bullying will provide:

- guidance and other support for the victim
- appropriate and consistent sanctions and support for the bully

Staff will be encouraged to report suspected incidents of bullying to the class teacher of both the victim and the bully. If they encounter an incident of bullying, they should first take steps to protect the victim. All staff are expected to pass on information about any bullying to the Principal/Assistant Principal and the Wellbeing Coordinator, for further action.

The School seeks to promote a culture in which students will be encouraged to:

- take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident
- report the bullying incident to a teacher as soon as possible
- make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted

Victims of bullying will be encouraged to follow the ABC of Conflict and Bullying:

- initially ignore the bullying and not show that it is upsetting. Many bullies will stop if they do not elicit a response. (A= Avoid the situation)
- confront the bully and let him/her know that his/her behaviour is unwanted and unjustified. This step should be taken if initial tactic is unsuccessful. (B= Be assertive)
- discuss the problem with friends and parents, who may be able to assist with strategies to deal with the problem (C= Call for help)
- notify their class teacher (C= Call for help)

What Parents can do

Parents play a key role in the support of both the victims and the perpetrators of bullying. The school must work in partnership with parents in the disciplinary process. Parents can assist in the following ways:

- Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable. Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously.
- Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault.
- Avoid bullying tactics around your child, so they don't get mixed messages.
• If the bullying is verbal, help your child develop the skills to ignore it so that the bully does not get the satisfaction of a reaction. Practice the way to walk past looking confident with head up. Practice a supply of quick (not insulting) responses - for example 'that's your opinion', 'care factor zero'.

• Avoid the urge to take everything into your own hands unless absolutely necessary, as this will make your child feel less in control.

• Help your child feel good about the other things in his life. Feed their self-esteem.

• When it is clear that your own child is the bully, recognise the seriousness of the issue and support the school in implementing this policy.

Procedures for investigating bullying and follow up

In discerning appropriate responses to bullying, school leaders need to balance the collective welfare of the school community with the individual needs of the student.

• Preliminary interview(s) will be conducted to ascertain the specific nature of the bullying. These interviews should be with individuals initially (i.e. victim, witness/es, student displaying bullying behaviour, staff etc).

• The initial interviews should focus on the safety of individuals. This should include:
  o a clear statement on the consequences if the bullying continues or if there are any reprisals as a result of the reporting of the incident
  o immediate preventative actions that will be implemented to avoid further incidents.

• Decisions will be made as to the level of severity of the incident and whether the parents of those involved need to be informed.

• Follow up interviews should focus on appropriate strategies to assist and support all involved within an Individual Behaviour Support Plan (IBP). This Plan will specifically identify the inappropriate behaviours, name the replacement behaviours, outline strategies to support the replacement behaviours and reinforcers (both negative and positive) when behaviours occur.

• A record of the separate interviews should be kept.

• Regular monitoring and follow up with the students involved is necessary.

• Review of the IBP will take place to modify strategies and supports.

• Any further recurrence of bullying may result in an issue of warning re suspension and could lead to the implementation of suspension procedures and, if necessary, removal of the student from the school through:
  - Suspension pending negotiated transfer,
  - Negotiated transfer or
  - Expulsion

Policy Dates

Policy written December 2003


Next review June 2015