ST MICHAEL'S PARISH SCHOOL ASHBURTON

Bullying Prevention Policy

1. Rationale

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and inherent to our education ministry. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM) recognises the right of all students to feel safe and be free from bullying.

At St Michael's, we do not tolerate bullying, harassment or violence in any form and we believe bullying can have a serious long-term impact on one's sense of self-worth, personal growth and self-esteem. Every person has the right to feel safe from verbal, physical and emotional abuse. As a result, St Michael's has zero tolerance for bullying.

2. Definitions

The Australian Government website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/teachers/index.html states that:

"Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have 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. However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved."

Bullying may occur in relation to but is not restricted to:
- Culture
- Gender
- Race
- Ability or disability
- Physical appearance
- Beliefs
- Age
- Religion
- Economic status
- Sexual harassment
- Homophobia

Types of bullying include direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, indirect bullying and cyberbullying.

2.1 Direct physical bullying
Direct physical bullying includes:
- Punching, kicking or pushing
- Interfering with or damaging property
- Offensive gestures, notes or material

2.2 Direct verbal bullying
Direct verbal bullying includes:
- Threatening, verbal abuse
- Shouting
- Teasing

2.3 Indirect bullying

Indirect bullying includes:
- Spreading rumours
- Deliberately excluding someone from activities or events
- Victimising someone because that person has made a complaint, is proposing to make a complaint, has helped someone else make a complaint and/or is acting as a witness to a complaint
- Mimicking

2.4 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying includes behaviour that constitutes direct and indirect bullying using digital technologies such as a mobile phone or over the internet on social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter.

2.5 What bullying is not

Bullying is not:
- Single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- Single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- Random acts of aggression or intimidation
- Mutual arguments, disagreements or fights

These actions can cause great distress and should be addressed, but they are not examples of bullying unless someone is *deliberately* and *repeatedly* doing them.

For conduct to constitute as bullying, there does not have to be any intention to cause harm or discomfort. Every individual should therefore consider how their conduct could be perceived by others, even in circumstances where they think their behaviour is acceptable.

(See Appendix: Further Definitions of Bullying)

3. Principles

At St Michael's, we believe that:
- Everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Every person's emotional wellbeing needs to be nurtured.
- Each member of our school community requires a strong sense of wellbeing, respect, belonging, security and communication opportunities to enhance their health and wellbeing.
- All members of the community need to have the opportunity to acknowledge and then restore any harm that occurs through the Restorative Practices approach.
- All staff, parents and students have the right to be listened to and be valued, and will reciprocate these values to others.
- All staff, parents and students will have a common understanding of the values that create a safe and secure environment.
- All students take responsibility for achieving their personal best and gaining a sense of self-worth and identity in the school and wider community.
- All students take responsibility for their own behaviour and understand that their behaviour, both positive and negative, has an impact on themselves and the community around them.
- All staff, parents and students respond to conflict in a way that promotes the preservation and restoration of positive relationships wherever possible.
- Students have a right and are encouraged to report bullying when it happens to themselves or someone else.
- Students learn more effectively if they feel safe and have clearly stated and consistent expectations.
- Expectations of all community members need to be clear and explicit, and everyone needs to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities.

4. Responsibilities

All members of the community are responsible for ensuring that acceptable standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

4.1 Responsibility of staff

All staff at St Michael's have a responsibility to:
- model appropriate behaviours at all times;
- address all reported and observed incidents immediately in accordance with the steps set out in this policy;
- discharge their duty of care to students; and
- report incidents of bullying to parents, the Principal, Deputy Principal and Student Wellbeing Leader.

Reporting such incidences includes the following process and procedures:
- The School's Leadership are required to formally adopt and implement this bullying prevention policy.
- This bullying prevention policy must be made available to school personnel and published on the school website.
- The parents of the parties involved should be contacted at an early stage to inform them of the matter and explain the actions being taken (by reference to the school policy).
- The relevant teacher must keep appropriate written records which will assist his/her efforts.
- The school will endeavour to resolve the issues and restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved.

The relevant teacher must record the bullying behaviour. The teacher is required to produce this report by the next school day and a copy must be provided to the Principal or Deputy Principal as applicable.

The procedures include arrangements which require, at least once in every school term, that the Principal will provide a report to the Leadership team setting out:
1. The overall number of bullying cases reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal since the previous report;
2. Confirmation that all of these cases have been, or are being, dealt with in accordance with the school's bullying prevention policy and these procedures; and
3. The Leadership team must undertake an annual review of the school's bullying prevention policy and its implementation by the school. Written notification that the review has been completed must be made available to school personnel and published on the school website.

4.2 Responsibility of students

All students at St Michael's have a responsibility to:
- not be a bystander and assist a peer if they are being bullied by reporting it to a teacher; and
- not bully others.

4.3 Responsibility of parents

All parents at St Michael's have a responsibility to:
- be aware of the signs of bullying, for example, unwillingness to attend school, damaged clothes, pattern of feeling unwell, and missing equipment;
- inform the classroom teacher or Principal as soon as possible if they become aware of bullying behaviour;
- support their child to inform a teacher if he/she is being bullied or has observed it; and
- provide the school with screenshots of cyberbullying.

Parents and carers are not to approach a student alleged to have engaged in bullying conduct or their parent. Instead, parents and carers should address their concerns to their child's classroom teacher, a member of the school Leadership team or the Principal.

5. Procedure

If a bullying situation is reported to the school, the following steps will be followed.
1. The complaint will be investigated by the classroom teacher and a member of the school Leadership team.
2. If the complaint is shown to have substance, then the following process will be followed:
   a. The complaint will be managed with a sense of urgency which may include restrictions on play areas and interactions with others.
   b. The investigation will include the classroom teacher, a member of the Leadership team and the children involved.

c. Restorative conversations for the victim and the bully in the presence of the classroom teacher and a member of the Leadership team if appropriate.
d. Appropriate peer support for a student who has been bullied will be organised.
e. Notifications to all parents and carers will occur.
f. If appropriate, a Behaviour Plan will be formulated for a student found to have bullied another student.
g. Counselling/support for the victim and the bully may be offered.

When assessing actions to be taken in response to particular reports of bullying conduct, the need to provide the utmost support for the victim will be given paramount consideration.

6. Preventative Measures

St Michael's will:
- promote positive behaviour through values education programmes;
- provide staff with ongoing professional learning related to bullying;
- explicitly teach material on bullying, resilience, social skills and social emotional learning in the general curriculum;
- provide material and resources on bullying, resilience, social skills and social emotional learning regularly in level and school newsletters, school website and apps; and
- participate in days of action against bullying.

In dealing with the issue of bullying, St Michael's draws on the major intervention methods offered by Ken Rigby (2010):
- **Traditional Disciplinary Approach** which includes preliminary discussions with the class, talks with parents and students.
- **Strengthening the victim** with strategies to assist them to learn to respond to matters using a positive approach.
- **Mediation** involves all parties seeking help from a mediator/teacher to resolve the issue that is causing conflict.
- **Restorative Practices** are designed to restore damaged relationships between individuals or groups.
- **The Support Group Method** which involves interviewing the victim, then the group of students or individuals involved, then ending with a combined meeting with all parties.
- **The method of Shared Concern** is based on reports and/or observations and then meeting with students suspected of bullying individually.

7. Additional Resources

- National Centre Against Bullying - Alannah and Madeline Foundation
- National Safe Schools Framework
- Safe Schools Hub
- Bullying No Way: www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
- Bully Stoppers
- Lifeline
- Kids Helpline
- Parenting Ideas - Michael Grose
- Ken Rigby (2002) *"New Perspectives on Bullying"*
- Rigby, K (2010) Bullying interventions in schools: Six basic methods. Camberwell: ACER.
- Sheryl Hemphill (2014): *"School Bullies Twice As Likely to Engage in Violent Behaviour"* - Catholic Communications, Sydney Archdiocese
- Australian Communication Media Association (ACMA)

8. Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the St Michael's School Improvement Plan review cycle.

9. Ratification

This policy was ratified by John Whitehouse (SAC Chairperson).

Appendix: Further Definitions of Bullying

(Rigby, 2002) defines Bullying as involving a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + (typically) repetition + and unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim."

(Hemphill, 2014) defines "School-based 'traditional' bullying as aggressive or hostile intentional acts perpetrated repeatedly by one or more individuals towards a victim with an intent to harm. Bullying is further differentiated from other forms of aggression on the basis of power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim such as the difference in physical size or strength or status within the school community. Bullying can be covert, such as spreading rumours and exclusion, or it can be overt such as verbal and physical abuse."