Learning and Growing Together

Bullying Policy

Name: Bullying Policy

Approved by: Tarrington Lutheran School Council

Reviewed: April 2020

Next review: March 2023

Overview – what is bullying?

- Bullying is when one person, or a group exercises power over others and deliberately sets out to cause hurt, embarrassment or distress.
- Bullying is repeated incidents of offensive or aggressive behaviour.
- Bullying can occur because of a variety of reasons related to difference.
- Bullying can also be a result of fear, jealousy or distrust, lack of knowledge or misunderstanding.
- Bullying is an action or a manner, real or perceived by the recipient.

Types of bullying

Overt bullying – Overt bullying (sometimes referred to as face-to-face or Direct bullying) involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or overt verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.

Covert bullying – Covert bullying (sometimes referred to as indirect bullying) is a subtle type of non-physical bullying often less detectable to adults.

- Covert bullying behaviours mostly inflict harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem.
- Covert bullying can include repeatedly:
    - using hand gestures and odd or threatening looks

- o whispering, excluding, turning your back on a person
- o blackmailing, spreading rumours, threatening, stealing friends
- o breaking secrets, gossiping, criticising clothes and personalities.

Cyberbullying – Cyberbullying can be conducted in many ways, using different media including:

- the sending of abusive texts or emails;
- taking and sharing unflattering or private images, including naked or sexual images;
- posting unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites;
- excluding individuals from online chats or other communication;
- assuming the identity of the victim online and representing them in a negative manner or manner that may damage their relationship with others;
- repeatedly, and for no strategic reason, attacking players in online gaming.

Like other forms of bullying such as verbal abuse, social exclusion and physical aggression, cyberbullying has the potential to result in the target of bullying developing social, psychological and educational issues.

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

- it can be difficult to escape and invasive—it can occur 24/7 and a person can be targeted while at home
- 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 once
- 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.

Bullying is not:

- Mutual arguments or disagreements
- Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection;
- One off acts of meanness or spite;
- Single random acts of nastiness, aggression or intimidation.

Rationale
- Bullying is a universal problem in schools and can occur amongst people at any level or stage of life.

- The school will provide a positive culture where bullying is not ever accepted, endeavouring to ensure that all have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach and work, and a right to feel safe and secure in the school environment.
- School bullying provides challenges, but properly managed, also provides valuable opportunities for students to learn social skills and to get along with others.

Aims

- To create and maintain a culture whereby all forms of bullying are unacceptable.
- To empower all members of the school community with the knowledge, skills and practical help to respond appropriately in any circumstance involving bullying.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is offered to both victims and perpetrators.
- To involve parental and peer-group support and co-operation as appropriate.
- To end the bullying and to ensure students involved learn the necessary skills to get along with other students, and to minimise the chance of reoccurrence
- To restore the relationship between students and for them to learn from new skills in accordance with Restorative Practices.
- To approach bullying using best practice strategies.
- To reinforce within the school community what constitutes bullying.

Implementation

- Everyone within the school community has a responsibility to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to report it, whether as observer or victim.
- Parents, teachers and community will be made aware of the school's position on bullying.

A: Primary Prevention

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and the strategies for counteracting them.
- Ensure community awareness and seek input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the school's programs and responses.
- To provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving across the school.
- The school's policy on bullying will be clarified and communicated to the school community at the beginning of each year.

B: Early Intervention

- Encourage the reporting of all bullying incidents that occur within the school community and programs.
- Encourage parents to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.
- Publicly recognise and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems.

C: Intervention

- Once identified; perpetrator, victim and witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be investigated and documented.
- Consequences or punishment should not interfere with the stated aims. In effect, the school's primary objective is that interventions should follow best practice and may include traditional disciplinary approaches, victim strengthening, restorative practice and circle time, The Support Group Method, The Method of Shared Concern and other strategies.
- Both perpetrator and victim will be offered pastoral care support.
- Intervention needs to be timely.
- If bullying is ongoing, parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the School's Student Code of Conduct.

D: Post Violation

- The school favours restorative practices, and at its discretion may suspend consequences for the bully if they fully engage in a restorative processes.
- Should students refuse to engage in restorative practices or other interventions and/or there have been significant breaches of the school's rules such as physical violence, consequences may involve:
    - exclusion from class
    - exclusion from yard
    - School suspension
    - withdrawal of privileges
    - ongoing counselling from appropriate agency for both victim and perpetrator
    - ongoing monitoring of identified perpetrators and victims

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's five-year review cycle.

References:

Bullying. No Way – http://bullyingnoway.gov.au

Cybersmart – www.cybersmart.com.au