

# **ST EUPHEMIA COLLEGE**

**7-12**



**ANTI BULLYING**

**PROCEDURES**

**2014**

## Procedures

Implementation of the Anti Bullying Policy will help to develop a school culture and environment that is concerned with keeping students safe and supported, both inside and outside the classroom. In an anti bullying culture, everyone is treated with respect, bullying behaviour is not tolerated and students feel safe to report incidences of bullying without reprisals.

### ***WHAT IS BULLYING?***

Bullying is the use of aggression conducted by an individual or group against others with the intention of hurting another person. It usually has three common features. It is **deliberate**, hurtful behaviour, it is **repeated**, often over a period of time and it is difficult for those being bullied to **defend** themselves. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

#### ***Emotional***

being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (eg hiding books, threatening gestures)

#### ***Physical***

pushing, kicking, hitting, taking belongings, punching or any use of violence

#### ***Racist***

racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

#### ***Sexual***

unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

#### ***Homophobic***

because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality

#### ***Verbal***

Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insulting, threats.

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the children involved. The bully might have power not only because he/she is bigger and stronger, but also because other children side with the bully often to protect themselves. Boys are more often bullied by a single individual, girls more often by groups.

### ***THE EXISTENCE OF BULLYING***

The first crucial step in developing and applying a policy on bullying is to acknowledge that it exists. The aim is to minimise its occurrence and to modify behaviour so that every student feels safe. This document is based upon that premise.

It is important for the College community to be aware of the following in relation to bullying in schools:

- it is largely hidden and not easily observable
- reduction of the problem relies on information getting to those who are most able to act. Silence on the part of victims, their parents or caregivers, staff and other students only contribute to the problem
- a whole school approach is necessary for measures to be effective
- education and awareness are key elements in the process
- the policy needs to be well publicised so that everyone in the School community is familiar with it and can be involved in its implementation
- there is need for ongoing review of strategies
- no one strategy works. Effective reduction of bullying comes from a multi faceted approach.

Although most students are not actively involved in bullying (either as the bully or the victim) and they know that it is wrong, they are unlikely to help the victim unless they are asked, or they are made to feel that they have a responsibility to act. There are many misconceptions about bullying. Many students believe that the victims of bullying bring such action upon themselves, that bullying 'toughens' a weak person; and that it teaches victims appropriate behaviour. It is our responsibility to alter these misconceptions using a variety of strategies.

Victims of bullying often do not report incidents to adults because they do not want to be labelled by their peers as 'dobbers' or 'wimps'. They think it will only further increase bullying and they believe adults cannot help the situation or will side with the bully. Consequently, teachers (and other adults) are often not aware of bullying incidents, as it is frequently not reported to them.

### ***AIMS OF THE POLICY***

Being committed to the care and welfare of all our students, the College expects the policy to:

- raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with School management, teachers, students, parents or caregivers
- counter views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life
- provide a safe, happy and supportive learning environment for our students
- create a School ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidences of bullying
- develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying
- develop procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying
- develop a program of support for those affected by bullying and for those involved in it
- create a supportive climate in order to break down the code of secrecy that protects the bully
- provide suitable counselling services for both the bully and the victim
- provide strategies for parents or caregivers, teachers and students to respond to bullying incidents.

### ***SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS***

Bullying may be disguised. Victims may already be having trouble getting on with other children or with teachers. Bullying usually happens out of sight, away from teachers or other adults. The people who are most likely to know what is going on are other students.

They feel it is wrong to 'dob in' other students. If they tell anyone, it is most likely they will tell their friends, parents or caregivers before they will tell a teacher.

There are, however, signs which may indicate that a child is being bullied. For an extensive list, refer to [Appendix 1](#).

### ***PREVENTING BULLYING***

Prevention is better than cure so at St Euphemia College we will be vigilant for signs of bullying and always take reports of incidents seriously. We will use the curriculum whenever possible to reinforce the ethos of the School and help students to develop strategies to combat bullying behaviour.

Pro active strategies:

- make time for parents or caregivers
- check student records for any previous incidents
- establishing a clear monitoring framework to reassure parents or caregivers and students
- set timeframes for improvement or further action
- empowerment, involvement and accountability of playground supervisors and classroom teachers
- publish articles in the School newsletter help the School to spread the anti bullying message
- develop clear procedures for staff to follow if they become aware of bullying
- utilise peer mediation programs through the School Counsellor to assist students to resolve disputes before they deteriorate into ongoing harassment

- School Counsellor conducts workshops in relation to bullying. These are run in classes, small groups or with those involved in bullying incidents
- present information about bullying at school assemblies
- Principal has an open door policy. Parents or Caregivers, staff and students know they will be given time if there is a problem
- recognise that for intervention to be effective it must be consistent across the whole School
- model of appropriate problem solving, non aggressive behaviours by adults in the School
- discuss the issue of bullying regularly at staff and welfare meetings
- provide training to all staff
- intensive intervention for students who bully (conflict resolution, anger management and students who are bullied (assertiveness training and self protective behaviours)
- age appropriate segregation in the playground
- Anti Bullying lessons are taught in PDHPE, and English/Drama
- facilitate extensive peer support programs.

[Appendix 2](#) gives advice to parents or caregivers on how they can help their children with bullying issues.

### ***PROCEDURES***

Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. It is just as important to change the behaviour of the bully as it is to empower the victim to deal with their fear.

If there is a clear procedure for dealing with bullying, students are more likely to tell teachers when they are bullied or see someone being bullied. Parents or Caregivers need to be reassured and students need to feel safe at School.

### **Procedures to respond to reported or observed incidents of bullying, harassment or violence**

Dealing with bullying in the College involves mediation, disciplinary action, warnings, social skills programs, counselling and parental involvement. The College has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

1. All bullying is unacceptable. No one at St Euphemia College should ever be made to feel unhappy, undervalued or humiliated.
2. All members of the School have a responsibility to recognise bullying and to take action when they are aware of it happening. They should treat any report of bullying seriously and take action.
3. The students being bullied should be assured that they have acted correctly in reporting the bullying. All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be investigated and dealt with.
4. Staff should listen to the student or students and make such enquiries as may be necessary to clarify exactly what has been happening.
5. The teacher will refer the matter to the Year Coordinator or Faculty Coordinator who will take a calm, unemotional problem solving approach when dealing with the incidents.
6. In any incident of bullying, the Year Coordinator or Faculty Coordinator will speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all the students concerned. Students who are not directly involved can also provide useful information in this way. Everyone involved should complete an Incident Report writing down their account of the incident. Copies of these reports should be filed.

7. The most effective way of stopping the abuse is to ensure that the bully changes his or her behaviour. As a follow-up, the student who is bullying will be spoken to by the Year Coordinator or Faculty Coordinator to explain clearly why their action was wrong and to ensure a commitment from the student not to repeat the bullying.
8. The student or students carrying out the bullying will be made to recognise that not only is their behaviour damaging the victim, but that the others in the School do not like the behaviour. Be aware that comments such as "It was just a bit of fun", "But I didn't mean it", "I was only joking", "We were only mucking around" and "They're only being boys", do not excuse a bully from their actions.
9. The Victim will be told that we are relieved that the behaviour is 'out in the open' and that it can now be dealt with. The student will be given advice on how to deal with any further incidents and which members of staff to refer the problem to.
10. Counselling will be made available to both bully and victim if this is felt appropriate.
11. Serious cases of bullying behaviour by students will be referred immediately to the Principal
12. Where appropriate and using discretion, the Year Coordinator or Faculty Coordinator will inform the parents or caregivers of the child bullying and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification.
13. In serious cases, parents or caregivers will be informed and they will be asked to come in to discuss the problem.
14. Where cases of bullying involve assault or any form of physical violence, the matter will be referred to the Principal who will arrange for a meeting with the student and his/her parents or caregivers. The student will be suspended from school and if necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
15. Repeated offences may also result in suspension or exclusion where recent attempts at reconciliation have failed.
16. After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
17. Parents or Caregivers should be informed of actions taken in bullying incidents.
18. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should be raised directly with the Principal.
19. The principles of natural justice and due process will be followed in regard to students reported for bullying.

### ***THE ROLE OF THE SRC AND PEER SUPPORT IN BULLYING***

Student leaders can have a positive impact on school climate. Students listen to their peers and student leaders can enhance discussion on issues such as bullying.

When student leaders work to support anti bullying initiatives there are a number of advantages. For example, student led learning:

- provides opportunities for the exchange of ideas between students and student leaders
- provides learning experiences that engage students and are relevant to their needs
- enables students to learn and practice decision making skills.

The Peer Support program in particular uses older students as a support network and point of reference in the School for Year 7 students.

## **HELP ORGANISATIONS:**

NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet – Contacts for Help (Youth Services):

[http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/vpcu/contacts\\_for\\_help](http://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/vpcu/contacts_for_help)

<b>HELP ORGANISATIONS:</b>	<b>TELEPHONE</b>	<b>WEBSITE / EMAIL</b>
Kids Help Line (kids, teens & young adults)	1800 55 1 800	<a href="http://www.kidshelp.com.au">www.kidshelp.com.au</a>
		<a href="mailto:counsellor@kidshelp.com.au">counsellor@kidshelp.com.au</a>
Youth Liaison Officer Bankstown Police	9783 2199	

## **APPENDIX 1 - SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

A student may indicate by their behaviour that they are being bullied. Staff, parents, caregivers and students need to recognise these signs. A student may:

- be frightened of walking to or from School
- not wish to use public transport to travel to School
- plead to be driven to School
- change his/her usual routine
- be unwilling to go to School
- truant School
- become withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- start stammering
- attempt or threaten suicide or run away
- cry themselves to sleep at night or have nightmares
- feel ill in the morning
- begin to do poorly in schoolwork
- come home with clothes torn or books damaged
- have possessions go missing
- ask for money or start stealing money (to pay bully)
- continually lose recess or lunch money
- have unexplained cuts or bruises
- come home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- become aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- stop eating
- be frightened to say what's wrong
- give improbable excuses for any of the above.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

## **APPENDIX 2: ADVICE FOR PARENTS - WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

By the time children tell their parents or caregivers they are being bullied, they may have tried everything they can to deal with it on their own. Telling parents or caregivers is often a very hard step to take.

Children need to:

- feel believed and listened to
- develop trust in how parents or caregivers will handle it
- talk openly about what has happened
- gain some control over what is happening
- learn things they can do to protect themselves
- regain self confidence.

It is helpful if parents or caregivers:

- involve the children in making decisions about what to do
- listen to what children say
- tell them they understand.

It does not help if parents or caregivers:

- get angry or upset
- feel guilty or ashamed
- make the children think it is not important
- blame the children
- blame the School
- accuse people without knowing the facts
- look for scapegoats
- demand to know all the details at once
- look for easy solutions.

Many parents or caregivers do get angry, quite understandably, and want to go to the school and sort it out NOW! This is not acceptable.

Students will almost certainly be reluctant to involve the School straight away because something they would rather keep quiet could be spread around. The students might also feel at risk of the bully taking revenge.

As a first step, it is usually best to:

- encourage the child to talk through it as far as they want to, to make sure the basic facts are correct
- try to keep an open mind, remembering you are hearing one part of the story only
- ask questions compassionately
- help the students reflect on what has been done so far
- help the students work out what needs to be done.

It is important to find out:

- what happened
- who was involved
- where
- when
- did anybody else see it, and, if so, who?

**Never try to sort out the bullies yourself. This rarely works and often makes matters worse.**



## HELPING YOUR CHILD COPE

- If the bullying is happening on the way to or from School, see if your child can go a different way or join up with other students. This might help while things are being sorted out.
- If your child finds it hard to make friends, encourage them to make a special effort. One good friend can make a big difference. Invite school friends home to strengthen the relationships begun at school.
- Talk to your child about some of the things that have happened, and discuss some ways of dealing with them, such as:
  - pretending not to hear hurtful comments
  - using silent 'self-talk' such as, 'That's their problem, not mine', or, 'I'm OK', to reinforce self-confidence
  - developing greater self-assertiveness, so as to be able to face the bully without becoming scared, upset, abusive or violent
  - believing that it is OK to tell someone when bullying happens – that it is not 'dobbing'.

It is important that students understand the difference between 'dobbing in' and reporting something that is serious. Bullying is serious. People get hurt, and some are harmed for a long time.