

Holy Name Primary, Forster

Anti –Bullying: Prevention and Response Policy



Holy Name Primary School does not tolerate bullying in any form. All members of the school staff are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment that promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

1. PREAMBLE

Holy Name Primary School “has the responsibility to promote a culture of trust, co-operation and respect in the lived experience of the Catholic Christian setting. Bullying in our school mitigates such a culture and inhibits the development of positive relational outcomes for the common good of students, teachers and care-givers.

It is Holy Name’s goal to promote a safe environment where individuals may grow and develop. Well-articulated, understood and implemented policies and procedures facilitate such a goal and minimize the risk of inappropriate behaviours becoming accepted, tolerated or even endemic. “(CSO Policy Anti-Bullying: Prevention and Response, p3 Feb)

Holy Name Primary School will have as its goal, “...the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate world view, character and behavior.” (Catholic Schools at the Crossroads, p14)

The modeling of positive behaviours and anti-bullying strategies in Holy Name has become an important aspect of student learning and a parent reporting. What is critical is the: careful and well documented implementation of school policy, the inclusion of student evaluation of processes, regular policy review and dialogue at staff level and for easy policy access for parents and the community.(CSO Policy Anti-Bullying: Prevention and Response, p3 Feb)

“We now know that students’ social and emotional learning facilitates their academic learning (Zins, Weissberg, Wang and Walberg, 2004) and that a student’s level of social competence and their friendship networks are predictive of academic achievement (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, 2000) . In summary, there are significant moral, social, emotional and educational advantages to

addressing bullying problems in schools.” (McGrath and Noble 2006 – from *Bullying Solutions- Evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools* p xvii)

2. DEFINITIONS:

Whilst there is no definitive and universally accepted definition of bullying, the most influential research in the area of what constitutes bullying has been proposed by Olweus (1993)

“... bullying may be defined as a student being exposed repeatedly and over time, to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more other students .This is may include physical contact, verbal assault, making obscene gestures or facial expressions, and intentionally excluding the student.”

The National Safe Schools Framework (2011) defines bullying as repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behavior that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

“..Bullying is thus conceived largely in behavioural terms, that is, it involves negative actions on the part of the perpetrator”. (Rigby 2006 *Bullying Solutions* p.4)

Even though Olweus and many others insist that for bullying to occur repeated actions are required, it is not unreasonable to call a single action bullying, if a ‘significant single and intense action’ has lead to trauma.

3. RATIONALE

The role of Holy Name Primary School, in partnership with parents and caregivers, is to nurture young people by providing optimum levels of support in learning, positive interpersonal relationship experiences and social support networks. The culture and atmosphere of the school plays a significant role in students developing a balanced approach to life and learning. With this in mind, bullying behavior is in conflict with the core values and purpose of the Catholic School. Bullying needs to be recognised, named and addressed to ensure that the school can work towards an authentic Christian school culture.

“... the school must be concerned with constant and careful attention to cultivating in the students the intellectual, creative, and aesthetic faculties of the human person; to develop in them the ability to make correct use of their judgment, will, and effectivity; to promote in them a set of values; to encourage just attitudes and prudent behavior; to introduce them to the cultural patrimony handed down from previous generations; to prepare them for professional life, and to encourage the friendly interchange among students of diverse cultures and backgrounds that will lead to mutual understanding. For all these reasons, the school enters into the specific mission of the Church.”(Lay Catholics in Schools: Witness to Faith p110)

4. AIMS:

This policy aims to:

- 4.1 To support and reflect the Diocesan Schools Policy “Anti – Bullying: Prevention and Response
- 4.2 To assist Holy Name Primary School in the prevention, reduction and response to bullying behavior (including cyber bullying)
- 4.3 Promote a proactive attitude to and clear understanding of procedures to be taken when addressing allegations of bullying.

- 4.4 To facilitate a consistent approach to the management Holy Name's record keeping processes in relation to bullying investigations.
- 4.5 To ensure the right of students and staff to expect a school that is actively promoting a school environment free from the fear of bullying, harassment, intimidation and victimization

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 The development of this school policy to support the Diocesan policy
- 5.2 Preventative Programs

5.2.1. Early Intervention Strategies

For a student who has been identified as being bullied or having been engaged in bullying behavior.

Contact the previous school to identify what strategies have already been put into place and maintain these strategies.

Seek the support of outside agencies: CSO staff and specialists, referring specialists, Benevolent Society, DOCS, Learning Support Teacher, Parents.

5.2.2. Resources to support the school to restore Justice

Police Liaison Officer Number: 65551299

Pastoral Care Policy

Class room teacher

Allocated Case Manager: Member of the School Executive.

Pastoral Care Worker

Parish Priest

5.3 Reporting and Record Keeping

It is essential that records of reports and incidents are maintained in such a manner that will enable the collation of evidence and the tracking of students.

Procedure for the reporting of incidents, parents and staff is listed in **Attachment 1**

5.4 Investigations

Timeline of investigation

Investigation into Incidents need to be conducted in as timely a fashion as possible. There are circumstances in schools which can impact on how fast an investigation can take place:

The timing of an incident. (eg) the end of the day

The availability of students to interview or gather information: A student may be away for some reason.

The availability of the member of the executive – (eg) An executive who has been monitoring behaviours may be away.

The availability of the Principal.

The nature of school life can sometimes mean that staff are involved all day in pre-scheduled parent appointments or professional development. In these cases, preventative measures such as limited access to high risk activities may be put into place until the school is able to bring its attention to the allegation at hand. This could mean restricted access to the playground, or to the class.

The complex nature of the incident may require a number of students to be interviewed in order to get a clear picture of what has taken place. This is time consuming and may mean that the investigation could take up to a week. School life needs to continue, but clearly the resolution of the incident would take priority wherever possible.

The availability of meeting with parents: It is critical that parents are included in the decision making around any incidents of bullying, particularly where violence has taken place, or where the bullying is of a serious nature which requires significant punitive action.

Medical Results: Sometimes the involvement of other agencies is also required to inform the decision making process and this can impact on the pace of final decision being made.

The school will prioritise the swift resolution within the context of the complex nature of school life. It would be hoped that even with the most serious of incidents that an investigation could be conducted and concluded with decisions being made within seven working days. In most minor incidents, one or two days should be sufficient.

Procedural Steps for the Investigation are outlined in **Attachment 1**

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal

- i) Develop a shared understanding with staff and community members of bullying behaviour that involves all forms of bullying including cyberbullying.
- ii) Ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of preventative strategies and programs to promote student safety and wellbeing
- iii) Provide support to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour.
- iv) Be responsible for the implementation of the schools anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- v) Initiate police –support (Police Liaison Officer) and or intervention when required.
- vi) Provide regular updates to parents or caregivers regarding the management of specific incidents.

- vii) Ensure that an annual communication of the contents of the policy to be made to the school community.
- viii) Maintain an ongoing and annual evaluation process of the policy with students, staff and caregivers.
- ix) Monitor student understanding and satisfaction of school processes.
- x) Identify patterns of bullying behaviour and initiate school action to address them.
- xi) Engage students in the anti-bullying processes within the school.

The staff will:

- i) Respond to a student's call for assistance, after his/ her reporting of inappropriate behaviours in relation to all forms of bullying. This includes the use of technology (ie) text messaging or social networking sites. Failure to take action may indicate a breach of duty of care owed to the student. (see Support doc 3)
- ii) Seek advice from their supervisor(s) if they require confirmation or clarification regarding an incident of alleged bullying behaviour.
- iii) Maintain an up to date knowledge of school policies relating to bullying behaviour.

The Students will:

- i) Promote positive behaviours that respect and accept individual difference and diversity.
- ii) Work actively to act within the school rules as outlined
- iii) To follow the school procedures in reporting and responding to bullying behaviour
- iv) Work collaboratively with staff and peers to resolve incidents of bullying
- v) Have an awareness and understanding of what constitutes bullying while being charged with the responsibility of being respectful of one another.
- vi) Participate in the annual evaluation of school anti-bullying processes and procedures.

7.0 BUDGET

Holy Name Primary School will encourage the staff to avail themselves of the Professional Development opportunities provided by the CSO each year and support this through the appropriate purchasing of resources that develop ongoing understanding and ownership of programs.

8.0 EVALUATION

Holy Name Primary School will annually revisit the procedures explicit within the anti-bullying policy and evaluate their currency.

This policy will become a part of the Schools Policy review cycle.

Reporting and Record Keeping

1. Any teacher who suspects that bullying is taking place should inform the Assistant Principal and Principal.
2. A meeting will be arranged with the teacher, Assistant Principal and Principal, at this meeting the three criteria for bullying will be examined:
 - What is the nature of the behaviour?
 - Is there a power imbalance between the alleged bully and the victim?
 - Is the behaviour a repeated act?
3. Depending on the seriousness of the bullying and the time available for an intervention this meeting will decide:
 - If intervention is needed.
 - If intervention is required whether the Teacher, Assistant Principal or Principal will instigate the intervention.
 - When the intervention will take place.
4. If intervention is to take place the seven steps of “ The No Blame Approach” will be put into action. These steps are briefly listed below.

1. **Interview the victim.** Find out what happened, who was involved and how the victim feels. Ask permission to share these feelings with the bullies. Emphasise that the bullies are not in trouble therefore there is no reason to be fearful of informing. Have the children record their responses.
2. **Convene a group meeting.** This should include the bullies and bystanders, but not the victim.
3. **Communicate to the group how the victim feels.** Try to produce an empathic response.
4. **Attribute responsibility to the group.** How can the group help the victim’s situation?
5. **Elicit helpful suggestions.** What can we do to make the victim happier?
6. **Hand over responsibility to act to the group.** It’s now up to you to change. **But** I will be checking.
7. **Individual meetings with participants.** Approximately one week later interview the victim and each group member to check progress.

School based record keeping and record sharing procedures (what and where the records are kept – who signs off)

i) Reflection Room Records and Gate 21 Records

Behaviours which are not allegations of bullying are kept in the Reflection Room on class lists or noted on Gate 21 under Pastoral. However, these could serve to illuminate a pattern of behavior of a student or a group of students. This data may then be used to inform an investigation. This is a form of tracking and can also be used to support a student who may claim that another student is involved in bullying behavior.

It is also an important tool to be used in the identifying of potentially bullying behaviour and to put preventative structures into place. (eg) Time Out.

When an allegation is made, the monitoring of these records can be used to collect data which may assist in determining whether or not there is sufficient evidence to support a claim of bullying.

Members of the Executive have an active role in monitoring the Reflection Room records to implement preventative action. Three entries results in the child being placed on Time Out and notification to parents . It could also result in a Cautionary Letter.

ii) Cautionary Letter

These play an important role in the monitoring of bullying behaviour. A letter of this kind notifies parents that reoccurring behaviours in relation to a child/ren have been taking place and that the school is concerned. It is an important point of intervention for parents and students. It outlines specifically the incidents, the concerns, requests parental support and outlines possible action which the school will be required to take if the bullying behaviour continues. It provides an opportunity for parents to seek more information and intervention from other agencies if required.

An electronic copy of these are kept in a folder on the Principal's Drive called Cautionary Letters. Each student who receives a Cautionary Letter has their own folder. A hard copy is sent home to parents.

iii) Signing Off

Any final allocation of discipline needs to be provided to the Principal. The case and its evidence needs to be provided to the Principal for final assessment, and in the cases of suspension, the inclusion of the CSO is also required. Signing off may not necessarily mean that the case is closed. It may mean that discipline is appropriate.

Procedural Steps for the Investigation

When an incident is reported, a record is kept of the circumstances. This record is to be placed on Gate21. This must include the date, who was involved, what happened, the time the incident took place, possible witnesses, and the action taken. It also needs to indicate who is doing the reporting and how. (eg) telephone call, referral from a staff member, or other.

When the incident involves a physical altercation which may result in bruising or marking of some sort or when the student reporting is distressed, parents need to be contacted. Details around the incident need to be collected as soon as possible.

In the event that the incident occurs without time for investigation on the same day, a courtesy note or phone call home needs to be made to alert the family and reassure them that the school is aware of the situation and that steps will be taken to address the situation.

The students will be asked to write in their own words or can tell in their own words what took place. The students involved may have witnesses who can support what happened if there are discrepancies in the telling of events.

It needs to be recognized that children sometimes need assistance with recounting an event accurately and this should be done in a calm and safe environment where the honesty of the student is encouraged and valued.

It needs also to be recognized that sometimes it will be impossible for events to be recounted with exact accuracy and that at this point the investigator may need to find points that all parties involved in the incident can agree on and accept that some areas may not be proven. Then the weight of evidence may be on the likelihood of something occurring. However, sensitivity needs to be applied here and may result in consideration being given to prior history.

The school also needs to recognize that these situations can be confronting for parents and also that children may alter their conversations based on how family expectations impact on them.

When it becomes apparent that bullying is allegedly involved in an incident, a member of the executive needs to be assigned to the monitoring of the student/s, for the purpose of consistency. Detailed records must be maintained and kept with accuracy around steps taken and action put into place. This is to enable another member of the executive to continue in the role if for some reason staffing changes.

Active and honest communication needs to characterize the sharing of information with the families of the students involved in a way which upholds the dignity of all the parties involved. The best outcome is the removal of the bullying action and the reconciliation of the participants, however, this may not always be as straightforward as we would hope and may take a variety of strategies, including the implementation of punitive measures where required. These would be in consultation with relevant bodies including, parents, the school discipline policy, school counselors, medical practitioners where required, staff, the Catholic Schools Office.

Where data provides information which means that prevention strategies may assist students or which highlights the need for monitoring at high risk times of the day, a whole school approach may assist in the welfare of all students. The appropriateness of sharing this information with the staff as a whole is to be determined by the Case Officer (Executive) with the Principal and possibly the Learning Support Teacher and School Counsellor.

Confidentiality is important but not to be placed before the welfare of the student.(ie) Details of allegations are not for general conversation around the staff room table, however, it could be appropriate that staff are made aware of the need to monitor a student/s behavior in order to support them.

Procedural steps that set out the process to be followed as a consequence of bullying allegations (see support doc 3.1 from the Diocesan Policy) inform the process.

ii) **The Victim**

It is important that appropriate support measures are documented and put into place for an alleged victim especially where heightened fear and concern is evident.

In these instances it is important that the trigger for fear is identified and that the most appropriate person/ people are enlisted to assist in the prevention of the trigger.

(eg) If it is within the classroom, then the classroom teacher needs to be informed and their expertise employed to put strategies into place. This could range from and include – restricted access of the classroom by the alleged bully, or clear expectations being put into place and supported by the classroom teacher, the Learning Support Teacher, members of the executive and/or Principal.

(eg) If it is on the playground or on bus lines etc, that the particular situation be analyzed and prevention and supportive measures for the victim be put into place.

It is important that the victim's parents are a part of this conversation so that they are confident in the strategies.

iii) **The Perpetrator**

Continuing from above: it is likewise important and that the alleged bully's parents are informed so that they are aware of the measures in place. This then means that the bully is clearly aware of what behaviours and communication must not occur, and also what consequences will be implemented in the event that the bullying reoccurs.

Possible Disciplinary Measures

The participation of a student in behaviour which is defined as bullying **will** result in disciplinary action. Once the behaviours are identified, and dependent on the immediate level of harm the discipline policy will come into play. Influences upon this will include the bully's ability to desist from their damaging behaviour.

Examples from the Behaviour Management Policy policy could include anything from: the removal of privileges within the school context , Time Out, interviews with the Principal, Cautionary letters outlining specific discipline if behaviours continue, through to the complete disciplinary gamet of suspension and expulsion as described in the discipline policy for failure to adhere to the schools policy of Anti-Bullying.

5.6 Police Intervention

When determining whether or not the Police need to be involved,(possession of a weapon, extreme assault and cyberbullying – sexting) the school will refer to Support Doc 4 of the Diocesan Support Documents.

In the instance where police need to conduct interviews at school, a member of the school executive would contact the CSO for advice, provide a private room for the interview to take place and ensure that the student involved was provided with a nominated member of staff with whom the student felt safe for the duration of the interview.

School Liaison Officer contact details: 6554 (BOS Requirement)

5.7 Post Investigation Support Services

The continuing monitoring of student behaviours with particular attention to those identified.

The ongoing implementation of support that has been identified as being appropriate for both parties (eg) Pastoral care Worker, School Counsellor, external Counsellors.

Ensure that access is available to the schools complaints and appeals policy

5.8 Communication of Policy/ procedures

To ensure that opportunity is provided at staff meetings and through Professional Development to be aware of the Holy Name's Anti-Bullying Policy

Include in the Staff Handbook and School Information Handbook reference to this policy for guidance and advice around anti bullying procedures and best practice.

5.9 Links to School Policy

There are direct links from this policy to the Pastoral Care Policy in the school, and the Discipline Policy in the school. This encompasses the full range of discipline including suspension and expulsion