

ASSUMPTION CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



Dealing with Bullying & Harassment Procedure (Students)

EFFECTIVE DATE:	January 2023
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INTRODUCTION:

As a community who strives to Make Jesus Real, we are called to create a safe and engaging learning community based on respect and dignity for all. At our school each person is recognised as a unique individual bringing special qualities and gifts to share and so we all have a right to be respected and a responsibility to respect each other. Therefore, we do not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. All members of our community are committed to ensuring a safe and supportive environment, which promotes personal growth and fosters positive self-esteem for all. We aim to maintain an environment in which everyone feels valued and respected and where individuals are appreciated, understood and accepted.

DEFINITIONS

In order to respond effectively to bullying, it is important to understand the differences between it, aggression, violence and conflict.

Bullying is a repetitive attack that causes distress not only at the time of the attack, but also by threat of future attacks. It is characterised by an imbalance of power and can be defined by the impact on the vulnerable person. It is an act that causes hurt or fear in another person. It may be:

- Deliberate or a result of thoughtlessness.
- A physical attack on the person or their property.
- Verbal teasing or insulting.
- Indirect such as spreading rumours, excluding people from groups or manipulation of others to mistreat another student.
- Creating hurt or fear in others through cyber bullying, that is, the use of electronic devices such as mobile phones, SMS messaging, social networking sites, chat rooms and other applications available through the use of the internet.

Bullying

- Involves the misuse of power.
- A wilful, conscious desire to repeatedly hurt, threaten, or embarrass someone.
- Repeated and unjustifiable behaviour, after the child has been made aware that their behaviour is hurtful.
- Intended to cause fear, distress and/or harm to another.
- May be physical, verbal, social or psychological.
- Conducted by self-empowered individual or group against a target individual who is unable to effectively resist.
- Is repetitive.
- Prolonged over time.
- May be an attitude rather than an 'action'
- Is hurtful and / or demeaning.

Bullying comes in many forms, including

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name-calling, using hurtful or racist names• Threatening verbally, or through body language• Deliberately ignoring or excluding• Using sexual innuendo and harassment• Spreading rumours• Teasing or mocking• Hiding the property of another	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Repeatedly 'putting down' another• Making fun of another person so that others laugh at them• Giving another person 'the eye' sending hurtful notes, text messages• Posting photos / images /videos to the internet in order to demean, insult or make fun of another
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Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Harassment can be seen as a particular form of bullying.

Violence may be defined as an act of physical aggression where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened or assaulted, or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is distinguished from bullying in that it is usually a one-off extreme use of force resulting in injury or destruction. Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind.

Conflict involves a disagreement between two or more people where one or more individual's needs are not being met. **Conflict**, so defined, does not involve an abuse of power as the people involved are of equal powers. In such situations, conflict resolution strategies can be used to provide opportunities for personal growth.

PROCEDURES

Bullying Minimisation

Assumption Catholic Primary School takes measures to minimise the number and severity of bullying incidents. We will:

- Encourage acknowledgement and greeting of each other. Names are to be used by all staff and students when addressing people. When we do this, we acknowledge the humanity in the person we are speaking to.
- Conduct regular and explicit teaching about bullying in classes, especially at the beginning of the year.
- Make students aware of their responsibilities with regard to the Bullying Procedure.
- Implement lessons to help develop resilience to bullying.
- Have duty teachers attend to instances of inappropriate behaviour and inform class teachers.
- Treat information regarding bullying confidentially.
- Encourage students to express themselves to those who hurt them, for example, "I don't like it when you..."

Teacher's Responsibility

- Teachers are to be familiar with the schools Positive Behaviour Procedure.
- Teachers are to be models of caring and tolerant behaviour.
- In the first weeks of each school year and ongoing throughout the year, the non-acceptance of bullying is to be discussed in class.
- Teachers are to make students aware of their responsibilities with regards to the positive behaviour procedure.
- Implement lessons to develop resilience to bullying. All children receive lessons from the keeping safe, MJR, Aussie Optimism programmes.
- Attend to reported instances of bullying behaviour.
- Treat information regarding bullying confidentially.

Management of Bullying Incidents

When an incident of possibly bullying has been observed by, or reported to a staff member by students, or parents, we will:

1. Investigate whether the bullied student has let the other party know their behaviour is causing distress (e.g. I don't like it when you say/do that).
2. A decision needs to be made about whether this is an incident of bullying. Check definition. Refer to Positive Behaviour Procedure if determined not to be bullying.
3. Protect the bullied child from further harm.
4. Write down the name/s of the bullied child/ren, and who reported the incident and bystander/s.
5. Interview the bullied child to find out what happened.
6. Interview the child/ren identified as the bully/ies.
7. Suggest strategies that the bullied student might use to avoid being bullied in the future.

8. Individually interview the bystander/s. Discuss strategies these students might use to stop bullying or avoid bullying in the future.
9. Where the student being bullied is sufficiently resilient to participate in a Restorative Conversation, Conference or Circle, to enable the recognition of harm caused, the acknowledgement of wrongdoing and the giving of undertakings in order to repair harm. Any intervention will focus on helping all children involved through "No Blame Approach" (**Appendix One**). Counselling is available from the school psychologist.
10. Advise the Principal of the bullying incidents.
11. Monitor the situation over the following days.
12. Where necessary, speak to the class without using names or identifying students.
13. Where appropriate and using discretion, work with parents of the bullied child to assist the prevention of their child being bullied in the future. Keep them informed of progress and the measures taken.
14. If necessary, where appropriate and using discretion, inform the parents of the child who is bullying and work with them to establish joint strategies for behaviour modification.
15. Where students fail to respond to the 'shared concern' approach or to the Restorative approach to behaviour change, the disciplinary process is invoked. In such instances, sanctions are likely to be imposed. Such sanctions might include the withdrawal of privileges, parent interview and behaviour contract, internal suspension, suspension, and, ultimately, exclusion. All of these responses require consultation with parents and would seek to enlist their support in helping the student engaged in bullying understand and modify the offensive behaviour

In supporting students who are being bullied, the student should be encouraged to:

- Tell the person engaged in bullying behaviour to stop.
- State quite clearly that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive.
- Stand up for yourself in a positive way.
- Avoid the situation.
- Walk away and stay away from the people bullying you or the place where it occurs.
- Ignore the bullying completely and carry on with what you were doing.
- Use positive self-talk to help boost your confidence: e.g. I don't deserve to be treated like this. I am not the one with the problem.
- Seek help. Talk about the experience to someone who is trustworthy (close friend, student councillor, teacher).
- Report the bullying to a member of staff and feel confident that any incident can be resolved without making the situation worse.

Students who report witnessing instances of bullying are to be encouraged to adopt the role of '**strong bystander**'. They are to be encouraged to act upon the following suggestions:

- Intervene as soon as bullying occurs to someone else by telling the person engaged in bullying to stop. This is very powerful if the by-standing / onlooking student has influence with the student engaged in bullying.
- Refuse to join in with the bullying. Bullies are seeking power. Being one of their pack or being an audience for them gives them power.
- Support students who are being bullied; just standing by them can be enough, or, perhaps, walking away is a useful strategy to show that you do not wish to be involved in that behaviour.
- Tell an adult that you are concerned about the bullying.
- Accept responsibility for reporting bullying whether it happens to you or to someone else.

Parents who are concerned about bullying may find the following suggestions helpful:

- Take an active interest in your child's social life and in what is happening at school.
- Encourage your child to bring friends home and to accept and tolerate differences in others.
- Build your child's self-confidence by recognizing and affirming his or her positive qualities, and by valuing him or her for whom she / he is.
- Discuss with your child the school's expectations about behaviour and ways to respond if his or her rights are infringed.
- If your child discloses bullying,
 - Tell your child you are glad he or she has talked to you about the situation.
 - Be aware of your own response and react in a calm, helpful and supportive manner.
 - Remind your child that the bullying is not their fault.
 - Ask your child what they think can be done to make the situation better.
 - Don't provide solutions but encourage them to suggest ways that they can deal with the problem.
- Make sure your child knows how to get help and support at school. Encourage them to seek that support.
- Talk with your child's teacher straight away to report bullying.
- Once you, your child and the school have decided on some actions, support these decisions at home.
- Arrange follow-up meetings to discuss outcomes; and
- Keep in contact with the school even if the situation seems to have improved, to ensure the changes continue.

APPENDIX ONE: Using the 'No Blame Approach'

Use the following type of script to help the bullies resolve the pain that others may be going through. Deal with the bullies one by one. Deal with the 'least bully' last.

The Individual Chat's Method

Stage 1 Thanks for Coming.

Explain why the student is there. "We need your assistance in solving some concerns. You are not in trouble". Work with the students on a one to one basis.

Stage 2 What's been happening

I hear that _____ has been having a hard time recently. Can you tell me anything about it?' Then focus responses by asking, "What have you done?" (Be a broken record on this point).

- Let the student talk
- Avoid closed questions
- Do not question if they complain about the person being bullied. Bring them back to 'what have you done?' When the whole process is complete, then you may ask what the person being bullied has done.

Stage 3 Bad

'So it sounds as if _____ is having a hard time of it. How do you think _____ feels?

- As soon as the bully acknowledges these emotions, move to Stage 4.
- If the bully says, "it's his/her fault, accept the statement but still point out that this person is having a hard time of it.

Stage 4 Make it Better

'I agree?" What do you think you could do to help make _____ situation better?" OR 'I was wondering what you could do to help improve _____ situation?"

- Accept their positive suggestions.
- Negative suggestions – ask 'How will this improve _____ situation?'
- Do not bargain or question.
- Do not discuss how.
- If you think that the suggestions do not cover critical behaviours, prompt the bully by saying, 'what do you think you could do about ...(those behaviours)?'
- If the bully can't think of ways for helping, you may suggest an idea. Say, 'I have an idea. Would you like to hear it?' Try to give several. Allow the student to chose the one they are most comfortable with.

Stage 5 Review

'Thanks for talking with me today and making these suggestions to make _____ life easier. How about we meet again n a week's time, for two minutes, to see if things are better". (Arrange specific time and place).

This interview should not be longer than seven minutes long. Complete the "reporting of a Bullying Incident by Teacher's Form as soon as you can after this session.

NB In a week's time, review with the person being bullied first, then the perpetrators. If there are still concerns go through the process again (one more time only) and get the perpetrators' revised suggestions.