ST JOSEPH’S PRIMARY SCHOOL

DUNGOG

ANTI – BULLYING: PREVENTION & RESPONSE POLICY

Developed 2012

Reviewed 2013
1. PREAMBLE

The Staff of St Joseph’s - Dungog “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 our goal to promote a safe environment where individuals may grow and develop. Well-articulated, clearly understood and consistently 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)

St Joseph’s School will have as its goal, “…the formation of Christian disciples, with appropriate world view, character and behaviour.” (Catholic Schools a the Crossroads, p14)

The modelling of positive behaviours and anti-bullying strategies has become an important aspect of student learning and parent reporting. What is critical is the: careful and well documented implementation of school policy, inclusion of student evaluation of processes, regular policy review, dialogue at staff level, 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 students level of social competence and their friendship networks are predictive of academic achievement (Caprana, 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 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 led to trauma.

“ Cyber bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, mobile phone & pager text messages, instant messaging (I M) and defamatory personal websites, to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others”. (“Cybersmart – Cyber safety website”)

3. RATIONALE

The role of St Joseph’s 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 behaviour 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 behaviour; 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 110)
4. **AIMS**

This policy aims to:

4.1 Support and reflect the Diocesan Schools Policy “Anti – Bullying: Prevention and Response”

4.2 Assist St Joseph’s - Dungog in the prevention, reduction and response to bullying behaviour (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 Facilitate a consistent approach to the management of St Joseph’s - Dungog record keeping processes in relation to bullying investigations.

4.5 Ensure the right of students and staff to expect a school that is actively promoting an 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. Positive Behaviour Support

The school actively addresses the behaviours of the students using a Positive Behaviour Support Program. This involves the identification of relevant school rules, the visualisation of these rules and the explicit teaching of each of these weekly.

5.2.2. Early Intervention Strategies

i) Identification of bullying behaviour

This may occur through a parental notification of concern, through teacher observation of behaviour, through student notification of behaviour, or through notification from a previous school on the enrolment of a new student.

In the first three instances: the concerns must be recorded and investigated to validate whether this is bullying behaviour or a “getting along” issue. In some instances it will be the ongoing nature of the concerns which may validate the behaviour as bullying, rather than the level of harm. This is behaviour which is persistent and which does not change after intervention. Sometimes this will be done by the classroom teacher, who may be the first point of contact. The teacher has specific responsibilities which
are outlined further in the document in relation to this. The teacher will consult with the school Principal as the monitoring of behaviour continues. Once the behaviour is deemed to be bullying behaviour, the case remains with the Principal to manage and monitor.

The flow chart from the Support document is then followed.

In the fourth instance where a previous school identifies the enrolling student as having bullying behaviour, it is imperative that the previous school shares information on the strategies already in place, triggers for behaviour, what has worked or not worked and the level of discipline the student is already engaged in. Whilst allowing the student to have a new start, none the less, school rules need to be clearly articulated and consequences need to remain in place.

The support flow chart continues to be implemented.

ii) Communication

Open communication between parents of both / all students must be maintained and clear procedures followed. Parents need to be informed of student behaviour regularly as concerns are identified. The behaviour book tracking and notification to parents is an important tool for this. Parents may also be able to support and inform the school about concerns they have and how best to support their child.

Communicate concerns with teachers, the Learning Support teacher and team and other professionals attached to the school (School Counsellor, etc)

Seek the support of outside agencies: CSO staff and specialists, referring specialists, Benevolent Society, Zimmerman House, Relationships Australia, DOCS, etc

5.2.3. Resources to support the school to restore Justice

Pastoral Care and Discipline Policy

Positive Behaviour Support

Classroom teacher

Learning Support Teacher

Parents

Reflection Room Opportunities

School Principal

Other professionals and Outside agencies (Assistant Director, Psychologist, Catholic Schools Office Behavioural Support).

Local Police Liaison Officer

Parish Priest
5.3. Reporting and Record Keeping

5.3.1 Procedure for the reporting of incidents, parents and staff and students

(i) When an incident is reported, a record is kept of the circumstances. 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. It must also be signed or dated by the relevant staff member.

(ii) 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 some instances a photograph may be taken for the school to keep on record. (Check the legalities of this)

(iii) 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 action will be taken to address the situation, in a timely fashion.

(iv) The students will be asked to write in their own words or can explain 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.

(v) 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.

(vi) It needs also to be recognised 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. At times the weight of evidence may support the likelihood of something occurring. At times investigations may be occurring with behaviours across a number of students. Sensitivity and confidentiality needs to be applied here and may result in consideration being given to prior history or evidence across investigations.

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

(viii) When it becomes apparent that bullying is allegedly involved in an incident, the Principal 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 staff 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 counsellors, medical practitioners where required, staff and 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 Principal and possibly the Learning Support Teacher and School counsellor.

Confidentiality is important but not to be placed before the welfare of the student. 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 behaviour in order to support them.

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

i) Behaviour Books

Minor behaviours which are not allegations of bullying are kept in the schools behavior books. 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 behaviour.

It is also an important tool to be used in the identification of potentially bullying behaviour and to put preventative structures into place. (eg) Reflection area / room.

When an allegation is made, the monitoring of these books 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 staff have an active role in monitoring Behaviour Books to implement preventative action. Three entries results in notification of parents and an interview with the Principal. It could also result in a Cautionary Letter. NB On occasion the Principal may choose to simply speak to a student after three entries if the behaviour is minor and to then monitor any improvement or lack there of. It should be noted in the Behavior Book that the conversation has been held.

These are kept during the year in the students classrooms. There is also a behaviour book for different part of playground duty. These are kept in the playground First – Aid bag (Stored in the Year Two classroom). At the end of the year these are archived.

The Principal has the role of recording the details of these with the purpose of collation in the schools data base to aid tracking of students and the collection of data for any school preventative programs:

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 Principals Driv called Conversations and Incidents. Each child who is nominated as requiring attendance at Refection area / Room or the distribution of a Cautionary Letter has their own folder. A hard copy is sent home to parents and a hard copy printed for filing in the Child’s incident file. This is kept separately from the child’s record card.

iii) Summary of Behaviour

In the event of a claim, a summary of any incidents that have been recorded may be collected and listed. This may also involve the listing of other more serious incidents which the student may have been involved in since their enrolment or over a period of time. This may include previous Cautionary Letters, Suspension/s etc. This can be included as evidence to support a Cautionary Letter.

Sometimes the weight of evidence may be a crucial point in determining the outcome or influencing future action/s or punitive decisions.

A summary of behaviour when collated is also kept in the Child electronic Folder, and a hard copy placed in the Incident File.

iv) Incident Reports

Sometimes these can be one off events. An electronic version, sometimes scanned copies of students reports, or parent letters is kept in the child’s electronic folder. Hard copies are placed in the relevant child’s Incident file. Where possible a copy is placed in the other parties electronic folder and hard copy as well to aid tracking of incidents. When creating a summary of data it is important to check both sources.

v) Incident File

These individual files are kept in the Principals Office in a drawer of the Principal’s Filing Cabinet.

vi) 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 and/or support has been allocated, but ongoing monitoring may be required.
5.4. **Investigations**

5.4.1 **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:

1. **The timing of an incident.** (eg) the end of the day
2. **The availability of students** to interview or gather information: A student may be away for some reason.
3. **The availability of a member of the school staff** – (eg) A staff member who has been monitoring behaviours may be away.
4. **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.

5. **The complex nature of the incident**

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 should take priority wherever possible.

6. **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.

7. **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 decisions being made.

The school will prioritize 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.
5.4.2  *Procedural Steps for the Investigation:*

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.

5.4.3  *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 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.

5.4.4  *The perpetrator*

Continuing from above: .... it is likewise important 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.

5.5  *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 Discipline policy could include anything from: the removal of privileges within the school context, inclusion in the behaviour book for monitoring and accompanied by minor discipline (loss of play), interviews with the Principal, Cautionary letters outlining specific discipline if behaviours continue, through to the complete disciplinary gamet of suspension, exclusion from representative activities or incursions and excursions up to and including 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, the Principal 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 Youth Liaison Officer contact details: __Snr Constable Alison Stewart (C/- Raymond Terrace Police Station)(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, Benevolent Society, Relationships Australia, Catholic Care and whom so ever the Principals deems appropriate to support the students. etc.

Ensure that access is available to the schools complaints and appeals procedures, brochures that apply to bullying matters etc.

5.8 Communication of Policy/ procedures

To ensure that opportunity is provided at staff meetings and through PD to be aware of the schools policy on bullying.

Include in the schoolteacher Handbook and Parent 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 is encompasses the full range of discipline including suspension and expulsion.
6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 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 preventatives 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/ delegate police –support (Police Liaison Officer), Zimmerman House or other 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 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.

6.2 The Learning support teacher

i) Will maintain the visuals and ensure that these are provided to each class at the beginning of each week for explicit teaching purposes.

ii) Through the Learning support team ensure that as new areas of concern develop regarding behaviour, create another explicit teaching resource and link it directly to the school rules.
6.3 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) Respond to a parent’s concern re alleged bullying behaviour by students in a compassionate and active way. Maintain accurate records of conversations from parents in their teacher handbook relating to behavioural concerns, the action taken by them and the point at which the behaviour was passed to executive level.

iii) Use resources like the behaviour books accurately to assist staff to be proactive in tracking student behaviour which is negative - and potentially bullying behaviour.

iv) Be proactive in raising their concerns if busyness of school life appears to be pushing the monitoring or managing of the case to below the level of priority it should have.

v) To participate in discussions on how best to support the victim and the bully and to actively implement the strategies recommended.

vi) Provide feedback on the success of these strategies in a timely and proactive way.

vii) Seek advice from their supervisor(s) if they require confirmation or clarification regarding an incident of alleged bullying behaviour.

viii) Maintain an up to date knowledge of school policies relating to bullying behaviour.

ix) Support the Principal in the full implementation of the school policies.
6.4 The Students will:

i) Promote positive behaviours that respect and accept individual difference and diversity.

ii) Work actively to remain within the schools four school rules: Be safe, Be respectful, Be responsible, Be a learner

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. BUDGET

St Joseph’s - Dungog 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

St Joseph’s - Dungog 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 to reviewed at regular intervals.

Last Updated: August 2012