



# Harassment & Bullying Policy

## **Beliefs**

Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and as a worthwhile person. It is the right of every student to have a safe and secure learning environment, free from harassment. It is the responsibility of all those who are a part of the school community to establish this safe and secure environment. Harassment and bullying is a serious issue that affects the learning environment and threatens self esteem, social development and career prospects of students and members of the community.

## **Definition**

Harassment is a repeated, intentional and unwelcome act and may be racist, sexual or general in nature. It can include physical, verbal or emotional intimidation.

Involvement can be either:-

- direct personal involvement in the harassment
- being present when harassment by others is taking place

Harassment includes:-

- bullying, teasing, abusing, hitting and/or pushing others or threatening to do so
- taking and/or damaging property or threatening to do so
- making or writing unpleasant comments
- racist or sexual harassment
- getting a gang (or group) together to frighten someone
- name calling, rude gestures, offensive jokes and pictures
- spreading rumours about someone else

This policy covers the time at school (in the classroom, school yard or toilets, camps, excursions or other school events).

## **Signs**

Some signs that a student is being bullied may be:

- Unexplained cuts, bruises or scratches
- Damaged or ripped clothing
- Vague headaches or stomach aches
- Refusal to go to school
- Asking for extra pocket money or food
- Tearfulness, anxiety or difficulty sleeping
- 'Hiding' information on mobile phones, emails or in comments on their social networking pages.

## **Reporting of a bullying incident**

### **How is bullying reported?**

Students can be reluctant to report incidents of bullying so, when a student or parent reports an incident, this should be taken seriously. Other sources may be a school staff member or even a member of the public.

### **Who should we report to?**

Parents and students may choose to report incidents of bullying, including cyber bullying, to their class teacher in the first instance and, if the incident is serious or unresolved, to the principal, or to someone on the school's staff they have confidence in. It is difficult for the school to follow up on an incident if it is unaware of it and, therefore, reporting of incidents should be made easy and encouraged.

### **How to report?**

Parents and students may find it helpful to write down the details of the incident as a first step. A face-to-face discussion is usually the best way of reporting an incident and, if they are dissatisfied with the outcome, they can follow up with a written statement with the request for a further meeting. If seriously concerned about the manner in which the school is dealing with an incident, a parent can contact his/her local Regional Office for support (PH. 86820700).

### **When to Report?**

Reporting of an incident should occur as soon after the incident as possible. This gives the school the best opportunity to follow up the incident and intervene.

Principals need to provide to the school Governing Council updates each term in relation to school bullying data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered. This report should be made available to the general school community via the newsletter and be placed on the school's website for easy access by parents.

### **Responsibilities of principals, staff, students and parents**

**The principal will decrease the likelihood of bullying and violence in the school if he/she:**

- Develops, implements and reviews regularly the school's anti-bullying policy (ie schools are encouraged to review annually and to involve staff, parents and students)
- Surveys regularly all or a random selection of students, parents and teachers, in line with the review schedule for the school's policy.
- Provides to the Governing Council updates each term in relation to school bullying data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered and includes the topic of bullying behaviour as a council meeting agenda item at least once per term.
- Ensures that new staff and new students and their families are aware of the school community's negotiated anti-bullying policy and decision-making procedures open to them if they wish to influence school practice.
- Ensures the inclusion, as part of the school's enrolment process, a requirement for parents and/or students to annually acknowledge/agree to the school's Student Code of Conduct.
- Provides students with orientation in school policy, at least when they are in transition and particularly in the school's anti-bullying policy and other relevant behavioural expectations, with follow up at least in years 4-7.
- Manages the incidents of bullying in a way that is consistent with the DECD School Discipline Policy.
- Provides in-service training and development to staff in effective strategies in managing bullying.
- Ensures ongoing training and development of teachers, induction of students and the provision of information to parents.
- Manages a whole-school-change approach to ensure the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum is implemented in all year levels.

- Ensures that all parents
  - have access to the school's anti-bullying policy, the DECD Bullying and harassment at school: Advice for parents and caregivers leaflet, and information about Keeping Safe child protection curriculum and related documents, including providing them on the school's website.
  - have access to the reports to Governing Council each term, via the newsletter and on the school's website.
  - Are aware of their rights to advocacy and of avenues open to them should they have grievances to the school's management of an incident of bullying.

**School staff members will decrease the likelihood of bullying and violence in the school if they:**

Develop and foster positive relationships with students and families.

Communicate and interact effectively with students and engage in cooperative problem-solving relationships to address issues of bullying

Participate in developing, implementing and reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy, curriculum and in-service offerings, and the procedures for managing incidents of bullying. Critically reflect on practices and develop the knowledge and skills needed to manage incidents of bullying successfully.

Establish, maintain, make explicit and model the school's expectations relating to bullying

Participate in training and development related to decreasing bullying in schools.

Support students to be effective bystanders.

**Parents will support the school in maintaining a safe and supportive environment if they:**

- Keep the school informed of concerns about behaviour, their children's health issues or other matters of relevance.
- Communicate in a respectful manner with the school staff about issues of concern soon after these concerns arise.
- Follow up on these concerns and, if necessary, contact the Regional Office if the concerns are not resolved following intervention by the principal.

**Students will support the school in maintaining a safe and supportive environment if they:**

- Are respectful towards other students, staff and members of the whole school community.
- Participate in sessions regarding the school's anti-bullying policy, the Keeping Safe child protection curriculum, being an effective bystander, and other sessions regarding behavioural expectations.
- Communicate with an appropriate adult if bullied or harassed or if they are aware that someone else is being bullied or harassed.
- Learn to be an effective bystander, so that bullying and harassment are discouraged through peer influence.

**ACTIONS: Responses to incidents, follow-up and reporting to parents**

Some flexibility is needed in how incidents are tackled, depending on the nature, severity and extent of the bullying. When sanctions are applied, they should be appropriate to the severity of the offence. In extreme cases, under the regulations pursuant to the Education Act, principals can suspend or exclude students from attendance at school if they:

*...act in a manner that threatens the safety and well being of a student or member of staff of, or other person associated with the school (including by sexually harassing, racially vilifying, verbally abusing that person).*

Principals can use these Regulations for incidents that occur off-site and/or out of school hours if another student's safety or well being has been threatened. Therefore, these Regulations can be used for incidents of cyber bullying or violence.

The student who has been bullied may need support and assistance from the school after the problem has been resolved. This is because the effect of being bullied may result in continued anxiety, which can affect a student's capacity to learn.

'Response level and types of behaviour' provides a guide regarding behaviour descriptors and suitable levels of response.

Follow up of students who are victims or perpetrators of bullying may be required to ensure they feel safe at school and remain connected to the school following an incident.

The State Government's response to the Cossey Report requires site leaders to notify parents of the victim of violence at the earliest opportunity.

### ***Consequences***

On a **FIRST OFFENCE** a process of conciliation will take place. The person will be spoken to by a member of staff and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken (eg reminder of appropriate treatment expectations) and consequences of further offences will be made explicit to them. They will be asked to stop the harassment. The name of the person making the complaint will be kept confidential unless they permit it to be released.

On a **SECOND OFFENCE** the notification form (time-out form) will be completed and documentation put on student file.

Regular offences will lead to parent/caregivers notification. Disciplinary action will be taken in conjunction with the school's behaviour management policy and the severity of the harassment. This could include internal suspension, loss of privileges, lunch and recess time detentions or suspension.