St. Christopher's Primary School - Bullying Prevention Policy

Rationale

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and inherent to our education ministry. The Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) and the Catholic Education Melbourne (CEOM) recognises the right of 'all students' to feel safe and be free from bullying.

At St. Christopher's School we do not tolerate bullying, harassment or violence in any form and we believe bullying can have a serious long term impact on a victim's sense of self-worth, personal growth and self-esteem. Every person has the right to feel safe from verbal, physical and emotional abuse that takes the form of bullying. As a result, bullying is not tolerated at our school.

Definition

The Australian Government website www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/teachers/index.html states that, "Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).
Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders".

Bullying may occur in relation to but is not restricted to:
- culture
- gender
- race
- ability or disability
- physical appearance
- beliefs
- age
- religion
- economic status
- sexual harassment
- homophobia

Types of bullying include direct physical bullying, direct verbal bullying, indirect bullying and cyberbullying.

Direct Physical Bullying includes such thing as punching, kicking, pushing and interfering with or damaging property, offensive gestures, notes or material

Indirect Bullying includes

- spreading rumours
- deliberately excluding someone from activities or events
- victimising someone because that person has made a complaint, is proposing to make a complaint, has helped someone else make a complaint and/or is acting as a witness to a complaint
- mimicking
- **Cyberbullying** includes behaviour that constitutes direct and indirect bullying using digital technologies.

Bullying is not

- single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- random acts of aggression or intimidation
- mutual arguments, disagreements or fights

However, these actions can cause great distress and should be addressed. They're not examples of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them.

Guiding Principles

At St. Christopher's we believe that

- everyone deserves to be treated with respect and dignity
- every person's emotional wellbeing needs to be nurtured
- each member of our school community requires a strong sense of wellbeing, respect, belonging, security and communication opportunities to enhance their health and wellbeing.
- all members of the community need to have the opportunity to acknowledge and then restore any harm that occurs through the Restorative Practices approach
- all staff, parents and students have the right to be listened to and be valued and will reciprocate these values to others
- all students take responsibility for their own behaviour and understand that their behaviour, both positive and negative, has an impact on themselves and the community around them.
- all staff, parents and students operate restoratively whenever possible
- students have a right and are encouraged to report bullying when it happens to themselves or someone else.
- students learn more effectively if they feel safe and have clearly stated and consistent expectations
- expectations of all community members need to be clear and explicit and that all need to be made aware of their rights and responsibilities

Responsibilities

All members of the community are responsible for ensuring that acceptable standards of conduct are maintained at all times.

Responsibility of School
- the School's Leadership are required to formally adopt and implement an anti-bullying policy
- the school's Bullying prevention policy must be made available to the school community, published on the school website and made available at the school office.

Responsibility of Staff
- to model appropriate behaviors at all times
- to address all reported and observed incidents immediately in accordance with the steps set out in this policy
- to engage in a duty of care for our students
- to report incidents of bullying to parents, Principal, Deputy Principal and Student Wellbeing Leader

Responsibilities of Students
- to report observed incidents to a teacher, parent or other adult
- to not be a bystander and assist a peer if they are being bullied by reporting it to a teacher
- to treat others with respect
- to inform the school if approached by the parent/carer of another child in regards to a bullying incident

Responsibilities of Parents
- to be aware of the signs of bullying eg.
  - unwillingness to attend school
  - damaged clothes
  - pattern of feeling unwell
  - missing equipment
- to inform the classroom teacher/Principal/Deputy Principal/member of school leadership team, as soon as possible if they become aware of bullying behaviour
- to support their child to inform a teacher if he/she is being bullied or has observed bullying
- inform the school if their child is approached by another parent/adult in regards to a bullying incident
- to be aware of information relating to student wellbeing as presented to parents via the school newsletter, parent information programs/forums, St. Christopher's Skoolbag App or in any other form offered by the school

Parents are not to approach another student or parent in relation to a bullying incident. Parents and carers should address their concerns to their child's classroom teacher, a member of the school leadership team or the Principal.

Process

If a bullying situation is reported to the school, or a staff member believes bullying has occurred, the following steps will be followed.

1. The complaint will be investigated by the classroom teacher and a member of the St. Christopher's leadership team. This will include the completion of the St. Christopher's Bullying Report Form which is located on the school website or in the school office. A copy of this will be given to relevant parents/carers. Discussions will be held with the bully and the victim and any other relevant persons (i.e. bystanders, witnesses).

2. If the complaint is shown to have substance, then any or all of the following actions will follow:

   a. restorative conversations for the victim and the bully in the presence of the classroom teacher and member of the school leadership team
   b. notifications to all relevant parents and carers will occur
   c. any formal meetings held with parents will be minuted and signed by those attending
   d. if appropriate, a Behaviour Plan will be formulated for the bully. This may include a restriction of playground areas, etc. The final decision of any behavioural consequences will be at the discretion of the Principal or Principal's nominated delegate
   e. counselling/support for the victim and the bully may be offered
   f. all staff will be informed so that all parties involved can be monitored
   g. parents and carers of students involved will be informed of action taken by the school
   h. suspension from school of bully*
   i. transfer of bully to another school*

*These measures would be appropriate only in extreme cases of bullying and only when other measures have not produced a satisfactory outcome.

Preventative Measures

St. Christopher's will:
- promote and encourage positive behavior
- provide staff with ongoing professional learning related to bullying
- explicitly teach material on bullying, cyberbullying, safety, resilience, social skills and social and emotional learning in the general curriculum
- provide material and resources on bullying, resilience, social skills and social and emotional learning regularly in school newsletters, school website and St. Christopher's Skoolbag App
- participate in days of action against bullying
- highlight school rules and this policy to students and teachers throughout the year

St. Christopher's will ensure that Ken Rigby's (2010) six major intervention methods are reflective in coming to a mutual resolution. These include:

- **Traditional Disciplinary Approach** which includes preliminary discussions with the class, talks with parents and students.
- **Strengthening the victim** with strategies to assist them to learn to respond to matters using a positive approach.
- **Mediation** involves all parties seeking help from a mediator/teacher to resolve the issue that is causing conflict.
- **Restorative Practices** are designed to restore damaged relationships between individuals or groups.
- **The Support Group Method** which involves interviewing the victim, then the group of students or individuals involved, then ending with a combined meeting with all parties.
- **The method of Shared Concern** is based on reports and/or observations and then meeting with suspected Bullies individually.

Additional Resources

National Centre Against Bullying - Alannah and Madeline Foundation
National Safe Schools Framework
Safe Schools Hub
Bullying No Way www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
Bully Stoppers
Lifeline
Kids Helpline
Parenting Ideas - Michael Grose
Ken Rigby (2002) New Perspectives on Bullying.
Sheryl Hemphill (2014) "School Bullies Twice As Likely to Engage in Violent Behaviour"-Catholic Communications, Sydney Archdiocese.
Australian Communication Media Association (ACMA)

Ratification

This policy will be reviewed annually in consultation with the school community.
It will then be made available on the school website or via the school office.

This policy was last reviewed 23 October 2018.