ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY
(Pastoral Care).

At St. Mary's Catholic Primary School we acknowledge that bullying is largely a "societal issue." Thus, there is a need for partnerships between home, school and system authorities to manage what are generally complex matters. Ultimately, parents should feel confident that the children in our care can come to school knowing that they are safe, cared for and are in a supportive environment where their concerns are listened to.

In presenting this policy we acknowledge that Bullying is an issue in every school but the degree to which it impacts upon schools can vary greatly.

At the heart of our policy is the bible quotation that heads our Pastoral Care Policy……

> *"I shall look for the lost one,*
> *bring back the stray,*
> *bandage the wounded and make the*
> *weak strong.*
> *I shall be a true shepherd to them."*
> *(Ezekeil 34:16)*

At St Mary's Catholic Primary School we believe a safe and supportive school is described in the following way:

> *In a safe and supportive school, the risk from all types of harm is minimised, diversity is valued and all members of the school community feel respected and included and can be confident that they will receive support in the face of any threats to their safety or wellbeing.*
> *(National Safe Schools Framework)*

Aims:

- To establish and maintain a supportive environment in which all individuals feel safe.
- To establish and maintain an environment which is conducive to learning.
- To foster healthy relationships between children and develop their knowledge of their rights and responsibilities in these relationships.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrator.

Definition:

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, homosexuality or transgender. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders.

Bullying can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, in sporting teams, between neighbours or in the workplace.

This policy is quite deliberately placed within the context of one of our school's Foundational documents, namely Pastoral Care. Is this a stand alone document?

There are four widely acknowledged broad types of bullying:

Direct physical bullying: includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.

Direct verbal bullying: includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

Indirect bullying: is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
lying and spreading rumours
playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
mimicking
encouraging others to socially exclude someone
damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyberbullying: is direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

What bullying is not.

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.

Mutual conflict: involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

Social rejection or dislike: is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts: of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.

*Incidents not fitting into this Bullying Prevention Policy should refer to the Behaviour Management Policy

Implementation:

Parents, teachers, students and the community will agree to the school's position on bullying prevention.
The school will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying prevention.

Primary Prevention
Early Intervention
Intervention
Restoration

Primary Prevention

A fundamental rule that runs through our school is "Hands Off!" All children in our school will be made aware of this rule from their very first day at St Mary's Catholic Primary and it is something that is discussed frequently at school assemblies, in front of parents and on school newsletters. SEP

All members of the school community will be made aware of this policy and it will be published on the school website.

Children understand that the only time they may handle another student is when they are doing it a caring supportive manner e.g. when a child has fallen over and is need of attention. Thus "play fighting" or general unduly rough play is not tolerated.

At St Mary's we believe that many of our potential problems in this dimension of school life can be negated by positive, supportive and caring relationships and the provision of a welcoming and inclusive environment. Thus, the development of effective social skills is seen as a vital tool of ours in the challenge of dealing with Bullying behaviours.

The role of open, regular and honest communication between parents and school cannot be underestimated in our efforts to deal with Bullying behaviours. The regular expression of the place of Christian values in our endeavours to deal with anti – social and inappropriate behaviours cannot be underestimated.

Three key understandings in relation to our policy are that……..

- Victims of bullying are never made to feel as though they are "at fault".
- That the perpetrators of the inappropriate behaviour, upon showing genuine remorse for their actions, will always be made to welcome within the community.
- That witnesses /friends /peers are of vital importance in addressing any Bullying, teasing or harassment situations.

Early Intervention

As a first point of contact children will be referred through and to our general rules and procedures grid.

A key component of our Health and Physical Education integrated unit each year will be an exploration of the sorts of issues that cause our students to feel 'uneasy' about being at school. Thus, we can hear from the children whether there are in fact problems or concerns that are not necessarily coming to our attention.

Discussions that arise out of the bi –annual visit from the Life Education Van, regular community circles, sociograms, etc provide the children, and indeed parents with a framework of support should there be any problems re. children being harassed or bullied.

Lessons will therefore be devoted to Feelings, Developing effective group dynamics, dealing with Anger and Frustration, identifying support networks, etc.

Intervention

If, by definition (see above definition) it becomes evident to us that we have an instance of bullying in our school, having worked our way through normal disciplinary protocols, we will immediately need to establish support group meetings with all families involved. The Principal, Special Education Coordinator and teacher will facilitate these meetings.

The students involved will be a part of the meetings so that all matters for discussion are dealt with in fully transparent manner. Thus, matters that have been raised at home and not at school, or visa versa, will be opened up for discussion.

Codes of conduct will be established with the mutual agreement of all parties so that children can return to "normal" classroom or playground involvement as soon as possible. (see Behaviour Management Plan template following.)

Our fundamental premise is that no child is be expected to play or work in an area where they feel unsafe. Thus, until such time as children displaying inappropriate, bullying behaviours are willing and able to adhere to the above-mentioned code of conduct, agreed to by parents, teachers and children then they will not be able to interact with the general student body.

Should this situation transpire counselling would be a feature of our student program.

This will be structured for both victims and bullies. For victims to assist them in dealing with "difficult situations" in the future and bullies to provide them with more effective social skills and ways in which they can deal with people with whom they may not see eye to eye.

Including responding to incidents that have a serious impact on individuals or the school. In a more serious scenario there may be a need to refer to the "Management of Student Behaviour of a Harmful or Serious Nature" policy.

Restoration

Regular support group meetings will be a feature of our program should we have, by definition a "Bullying" problem at St Mary's. These would need to be weekly in the early stages of our resolution process.

REFLECTIVE MATERIAL:

"Hands Off! The Anti – Violence Guide to Developing Positive Relationships". Christine Forsey.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/bullying.aspx

"National Safe Schools Framework." Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

"Bullying, No Way." Online resource as part of the National Safe Schools Framework.

Bully Stoppers
http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/prinprevent.aspx

This policy was created in 2014.