



## Harassment and Bullying Policy

### 1. Definition

Young people are usually physical in their actions and this often gives rise to a deal of rough and tumble in their interactions with others. They often delight in teasing their peers and being teased in return.

Bullying is different and occurs when an individual or group repeatedly coerce, threaten, persecute or oppress others. Bullying always involves an imbalance of power that makes possible the ill treatment of a victim.

Bullying may be verbal, physical, social or psychological in nature.

Harassment is a form of bullying. Bullying and harassment take many forms including:

- Verbal harassment (e.g. swearing, name calling, put downs, homophobic remarks, teasing, threatening, spreading rumours, racist remarks, ridiculing in class, comments related to sexuality, abusive or nasty phone calls).
- Physical harm (e.g. punching, spitting, kicking, pushing)
- Exclusion (e.g. deliberately leaving someone out of an activity or ignoring him/her)
- Extortion (e.g. demanding money, food, favours)
- Physical gestures (e.g. making faces, obscene gestures, mimicking to make fun of)
- Written abuse in the form of notes (paper and cyber space), graffiti, email, text messages
- Interference with, stealing or damage to, personal belongings

- Intimidation (e.g. acts designed to intimidate, frighten, terrorise or deny personal freedom).

Sex-Based Harassment is a form of conduct that encompasses a wide range of offensive behaviours. These include touching, pinching, grabbing, and patting; comments about one's body; sexual remarks, gestures, and jokes that demean others; passing obscene notes; and spreading rumours.

The School considers it is your duty as a member of our community to report any clear breach of this Policy, whether directed against you or someone else, to an appropriate person.

## 2. School's Commitment

The School aims to develop young men and women who:

- care for one another
- tolerate, respect and value differences found amongst the community
- allow all students to achieve their potential and be happy
- celebrate their own successes and those of their peers.

The key to the success of these aims is the maintenance of a culture throughout the School family that enables these attributes to flourish.

The School rejects any notion that bullying forms a natural part of growing up.

**BULLYING WILL NOT BE TOLERATED IN ANY FORM.**

## 3. Speaking Out

The School is working hard to dispel the myth of retribution and to overcome any misguided view that reporting is "dobbing". Experience indicates that young people need to:

- feel believed and "heard"
- develop trust in how staff handle issues

- be encouraged to talk openly about what has happened
- be encouraged to resolve conflict appropriately at home.

Parents can help by:

- listening to what their children say
- reassuring children that their feelings are valid
- discouraging their children from retaliating verbally or physically
- discussing different ways to deal with bullying issues to avoid fighting and working through a response list with each child
- involving their children in decision making about what to do (after first considering different responses)
- taking an active interest in their children's social development, social lives and acquaintances
- being alert to signs of distress in their children
- keeping the communication lines open between home and school
- supporting the School in its proactive and reactive response to bullying

It is not helpful if parents:

- let emotions and/or anger impair their thought process
- feel guilty or ashamed
- blame the children
- blame the school
- accuse people without ascertaining all of the facts
- look for scapegoats

- demand to know all the details at once before investigations can occur
- look for easy solutions
- act with injudicious haste and subjectivity thus possibly making matters worse for their child.

#### 4. Parents of students bullying others should:

- reinforce with their child the need to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive way
- model conflict resolution in a positive manner at home
- work with their child's pastoral carer(s) to help their child stop the bullying
- look for the underlying reason that is prompting this behaviour in their child.

#### 5. School Responses To Bullying Incidents

Overview - The Big Picture "No matter how thinly you slice the bread there will be always two sides" Whereas our School rejects bullying at all levels, families must realise that the victim as well as the perpetrator can be educated to reduce the incidents of bullying. When incidents of bullying occur, it is important for all concerned to understand that they can each play a role in bringing about a resolution to the problem.

A response to bullying incidents should not be solely focussed on punishment. The restoration of trust and relationships are very important and can often be achieved through a carefully run mediation process. Mediation provides an opportunity for both parties to listen and talk to each other. The person being bullied is able to give a clear message to the bully about how it feels to be bullied and it is firmly stated that the bullying is to stop. It also provides an opportunity for the bully to highlight the behaviours (if any) the person being bullied displayed that might have illicited a bullying response from others.

#### Pro-active Response

The School recognises the need to periodically review and consult with the student body on the incidence of bullying within the School and will:

- undertake regular surveys of students to establish the scope of bullying that is occurring
- identify the varying forms of bullying, where it occurs, who is perpetrating it and, if possible, who is suffering
- develop a culture of reporting incidents in order to protect students
- empower students with appropriate strategies to deal with bullying through developing a relevant curriculum within the appropriate part of the educational programme
- train peer mediators/leaders to work with both bullies and victims to understand and cope with the consequences of bullying
- develop/maintain a culture of safety and respect.

Reactive Response

The School will:

- respond to information obtained through surveys
- provide adequate supervision to those parts of the School where bullying occurs
- identify bullies, address their behaviours and offer support through counselling
- identify, if possible, victims for offer support, and address their behaviours
- deal with all episodes of bullying and harassment that are reported
- link victims and bullies, where appropriate, to peer supporters for counselling.

6. Dealing with a student who bullies

The School will not tolerate bullying behaviour.

Degrees of bullying will be taken into account. Incidents of severe or particularly unfair bullying will be dealt with in the most appropriate way.

The School reserves the right to assess each situation.

Key points for all members of the school community

- Respect the right of every person to feel safe, secure and happy.
- Think about how you relate to others.
- Value the rights, privacy and good of all individuals.
- Be open-minded and positive in your approach to resolving the problem.
- Choose to be part of the solution not part of the problem – it's all right to tell.
- Swift and appropriate action is likely to prevent the problem from escalating.

“As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons”

Desiderate, Mark Ehrmann