

Introduction

At Mary Queen of Heaven Catholic Primary School (Mary Queen of Heaven) the dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and is intrinsic to our education ministry. Consequently, the principle that the person is made in the image and likeness of God is central to the mission of our parish school.

This policy identifies the interconnectedness of the characteristics of quality Catholic learning and teaching. It is intended to value, respect and promote the self-esteem and dignity of each student, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. The school will actively promote anti-bullying messages, alerting students and staff of the need to be vigilant.

It is essential that we create and maintain a respectful, safe and supportive learning environment that promotes student wellbeing, personal growth and positive self-esteem amongst our diverse range of learners ([eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)).

The prevention of and responses to incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour are more readily achieved in a caring and supportive school culture that promotes positive relationships and reflects Gospel values. Bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, aggression and violence disregard core values of our faith, including dignity, respect, justice, equity, compassion, trust and courage. Importantly, such actions can adversely affect the wellbeing of our students and are therefore unacceptable.

Purpose

This policy:

- encourages a culture that is firm about unacceptable behaviour
- articulates how bullying is defined and addressed; including the means taken to prevent incidents and the response taken when an incident occurs
- supports the school's Mission and Vision Statement and guidelines of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS)
- actively promotes anti-bullying messages, alerting students and staff of the need to be vigilant.

Principles

This policy is grounded in the beliefs that:

- every person has the right to be treated respectfully and feel safe from any form of verbal, physical and emotional abuse, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures (such as Aboriginal culture)
- the school is committed to building and nurturing a community that values diversity
- parents are the prime educators of their children
- the school community is involved in the development of school policies
- identification and reporting of unacceptable behaviour is essential to the effective implementation of this policy
- complainant(s) will be protected from victimisation

- learning technologies are used ethically and responsibly in the school environment, and in a way that minimises the opportunity for children, young people and students to be harmed
- communication is respectful and human dignity is valued
- regular monitoring of school policies is necessary, and improvements are made where appropriate.

Definitions

Bullying: is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person that creates a risk to health and safety. It occurs when an individual or a group deliberately upsets or hurts another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. Forms of bullying include:

- **Physical bullying:** pushing, shoving, fighting, pinching and any other unwelcome physical contact used intentionally to intimidate or hurt someone.
- **Verbal bullying:** put downs, particularly those referring to physical characteristics, can result in loss of self-esteem. Racial discrimination of any kind is a form of bullying.
- **Gesture bullying:** non-verbal signals used to silence and intimidate a victim.
- **Extortion bullying:** physically stronger and more powerful students may bully other students into giving up their possessions, buying food and drink, or taking part in rule breaking activities.
- **Exclusion bullying:** deliberately being left out of activities is a most hurtful form of bullying.
- **Visual bullying:** offensive notes or material, graffiti, or damaging other people's possessions.
- **Sexual bullying:** touching, sexually orientated jokes, drawings of, or writing about someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking questions about someone's private life.
- **Cyber-bullying:** the use of various forms of electronic media to spread text and visual messages to cause hurt, embarrassment, intimidation.

Categories of Bullying: There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying:** This form includes hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. **Direct verbal bullying:** This form includes name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
3. **Indirect bullying:** This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often 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 and social acceptance
 - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress someone.

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying including:

- **Mutual conflict:** In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution

to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation, with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

- **Social rejection or dislike:** Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specifically and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
- **Single-episode acts:** Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Harassment: is unwelcome behaviour that intimidates, offends, or humiliates a person or group because of a particular characteristic such as identity, race, culture or ethnic origin; religion; physical characteristics; gender; sexual orientation; ability or disability.

Procedures

All members of our school community must be aware of the possibility of bullying and take action to prevent bullying if it is reasonably foreseeable.

Responsibilities: The school

Mary Queen of Heaven will respond to all reported incidents of bullying, perceived or actual, sensitively, fairly and promptly by:

- using an Anti-Bullying Response Pathway when we become aware of incidents. The Pathway assists with a regulated and thorough response.
- implementing an Anti-Bullying Action Plan as part of the Response Pathway.
- keeping a written record of any bullying investigation.
- encouraging students, staff and parent and carers to report bullying and cyber-bullying to the class teacher or directly to the principal
- investigating complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved.
- ensuring that complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying are handled in a way that is sensitive to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and that recognises the diverse circumstances of students
- nominating a person or staff to co-ordinate strategies for the resolution of specific bullying incidents reported in this school
- notifying parents/guardians/carers of bullying incidents involving their children and allowing them to have input into decisions that affect their children, where this is appropriate
- notifying the relevant Regional Leadership Consultant of any serious incident
- contacting the Police/Police Youth Liaison Officer if the bullying situation has involved violence, threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct
- maintaining records of bullying incidents and related interventions in accordance with the the Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards.
- conducting Student Safety Audits at least once a year to promote safe, inclusive and respectful learning environments
- promoting student voice and empowerment in classrooms and through the use of Student Representative Council to discuss matters associated with bullying, cyber bullying, safety and wellbeing
- reviewing and evaluating the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively.

- engaging with parents/guardians/carers to review and evaluate the school's anti-bullying policy and the responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are working effectively.

Responsibilities: Staff

Staff at Mary Queen of Heaven aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each student by:

- implementing the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures by responding promptly and appropriately to reported incidents of bullying, in a way that is sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and circumstances of students
- supporting the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour
- engaging in professional learning to support appropriate anti-bullying responses which could include cyber safety, restorative justice practices, mediation and developing social skills in students. Such opportunities are made available to staff on the same basis as other professional learning.
- supporting all aspects of related school policies
- remaining vigilant in how students are using technology through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour
- embedding critical thinking, values clarification, respectful relationships and developing empathy into our teaching practice
- responding to bullying and cyber-bullying concerns by providing age appropriate guidance and boundaries so that students can learn to self-regulate
- responding to bullying and cyber-bullying concerns .

Responsibilities: Students

Students at Mary Queen of Heaven have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. The staff at Mary Queen of Heaven will encourage and support students to:

- follow the anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures
- immediately seek help from a trusted adult if they are aware of or involved in a bullying or cyber-bullying incident
- seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident
- understand that any social networking site that identifies the school by name or image or implication is part of the school environment
- in age-appropriate circumstances the student should keep evidence of alleged bullying and produce it on request (for example phone text messages).

Responsibilities: Parents/Guardians/Carers

Parents/guardians/carers at Mary Queen of Heaven have responsibilities to use technology appropriately and respectfully. Mary Queen of Heaven will work in partnership with parents/guardians/carers in responding to incidents of bullying. Staff at Mary Queen of Heaven will:

- remind parents/guardians/carers about the need to reinforce the school messages in the proper use of technology to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens
- encourage parents/guardians/carers to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider) and, as relevant, to the school
- ask parents/guardians/carers to contact the school immediately through the class teacher or directly through the principal if they know of any bullying incident

- expect that parents/guardians/carers will model behaviour that is indicative of Gospel values and that reflect the school's Vision and Mission statement. Thus parents/guardians/carers are required to act respectfully to all members of the school community at all times.
- encourage parents/guardians/carers to report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider). When such bullying concerns the wellbeing of their own child, parents/guardians/carers are to contact the principal.
- encourage parents/guardians/carers to be involved in decisions regarding incidents of bullying that affect their child, where this is appropriate.

Communication

Mary Queen of Heaven communicates this policy and associated procedures by publishing on the school's website, via the school newsletter and in staff meetings, induction and other briefings.

Students are made aware of this policy through Wellbeing lessons throughout the school week and in the 'Getting Ready to Learn' units of work at the beginning of each school year.

List of Appendices

- Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying Response Pathway
- Appendix 2: School Anti-Bullying Action Plan
- Appendix 3: Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool
- Appendix 4: Anti-Bullying Policy Checklist for Schools

References

- [Privacy Compliance Manual](#) (2020). Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) (CEVN website)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. [Bullying Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2021. [Cybersafety and Responsible Use of Digital Technologies](#)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic). 2020. [Mobile Phones - Student Use](#).

Resources

[Bully Stoppers](#) – a resource containing information and advice for the school community, including students, parents and school staff.

[Bullying. No Way!](#) – a website for Australian schools, managed by the Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group (SSSC) which has representatives from all states and territories, including the Catholic and independent schooling sectors.

[eSmart](#) – assists schools to develop a culture that promotes the safe, smart and responsible use of technology.

[eSafety Commissioner](#) – provides a range of up-to-date information and resources, coupled with a complaints system to assist children who experience serious cyberbullying and image-based abuse.

[Australian Student Wellbeing Framework \(2018\)](#)

[Student Wellbeing Hub](#)

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV). (2018). [Positive Behaviour Guidelines](#)

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools. (2018). [eXcel: Wellbeing for learning in Catholic school communities](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Vision and Context](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2017). [Horizons of Hope: Learning Diversity](#)

Catholic Education Melbourne. (2018). [Identity and growth: A perspective for Catholic schools](#)

[Public Record Office Victoria Recordkeeping Standards](#)

Related MACS Policies

- Enrolment Policy
- Student Behaviour Policy and related CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines
- Pastoral Care of Students Policy
- MACS Duty of Care Guidelines

Responsible director	Director, Learning and Regional Services
Policy owner	General Manager, Student Wellbeing
Approving body/individual	MACS Board
Approval date	13 April 2022
Risk rating	High
Date of next review	April 2024

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION	
Related documents	MACS Enrolment Policy Student Behaviour Policy and related CECV Positive Behaviour Guidelines Pastoral Care of Students Policy MACS Duty of Care Guidelines
Superseded documents	Anti-bullying Policy (including cyberbullying) – v1.0 - 2021
New policy	

Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying Response Pathway

1. Policy Access and Awareness

- Policy on the school's website; articles and resources on bullying made available through newsletter and other means.

2. Initial disclosure made, first response

- School becomes aware of an incident involving possible bullying. Physical contact stopped (if this involves physical action). Safe environment established for the victim.

3. Life threatening incident or risk of significant harm involved?

- Yes – go to Point 6 below
- No – go to Point 4 below.

4. Information gathered on Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation form

- Completed by staff member – copy to principal. Pay attention to repeated offences, intent to harm, imbalance of power.

5. Is this bullying?

- Yes – go to Point 6 below
- No – go to behaviour management as per school policy.

6. Informing appropriate personnel

- Principal informs relevant staff (teacher, leadership team).

7. Formal information gathering

- Principal collects statements from interviews. Investigation Form contains advice.

8. Case Management instituted by principal (nominated person)

- Anti-bullying plan adopted. Principal and senior staff agree on a written anti-bullying action plan to stop the bullying. Includes support for the victim. Parents/Guardians/Carers of victim involved.

9. Situation monitored

- Nominated person reports as required in the anti-bullying action plan to principal.

10. Review of plan's effectiveness – Has the plan and the actions stopped the bullying?

- Yes – all records retained, monitoring continues at a lower level
- No – matter referred to MACS Regional General Manager. Plan may be modified, additional support may be offered, suspension and or expulsion may be considered or police may be involved.

Appendix 2: Anti-Bullying Action Plan

Mary Queen of Heaven has implemented the following strategies and actions to minimise bullying and to ensure that responses to any bullying incidents are treated seriously and the response is appropriate to the student's age and capacity, and takes into account any cultural, linguistic or diversity factors.

An action plan to support an anti-bullying response to a bullying incident should consider the following elements for inclusion:

- details specific to each situation or person
- addressing issues identified in the Investigation Form
- parent/guardian/carer involvement and agreement, signatures required
- outlining the role of key staff in monitoring, assisting and addressing the bullying clearly listed in the plan
- roles of supporting staff clearly outlined
- various support measures for victim listed (counselling, peer support, teacher contact, safe zones)
- monitoring mechanisms outlined
- sanctions and restrictions for the perpetrator/s listed
- strategies for the instigator of the bullying incident listed (behaviour plan, assistance with empathy, counselling, family support, lunch restrictions)
- outlining the class teacher's supporting role
- first and second review points (~~actual date~~) with dates indicated
- ongoing communication with parents/guardians/carers.

Appendix 3: Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool

Bullying is a serious offence and is not acceptable in Mary Queen of Heaven Catholic Primary School (Mary Queen of Heaven). All school employees are required to report alleged violations and every act of bullying will be duly investigated, and parents/guardians/carers informed.

Directions:

The *Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool* is to be used when an alleged bullying incident is reported.

This document is to be confidentially maintained in accordance with the *National Catholic Education Commission's Privacy Compliance Manual* on the CEVN website:

<https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Melb/Document-File/Polices-Compliance-and-Legal/Privacy/Privacy-Compliance-Manual.aspx>

Upon completion, the *Bullying Record Keeping and Investigation Tool* is to be filed in the appropriate student records and the incident entered into the school's database.

Investigating Teacher/s:

Name of student/s involved:

Date/Time/Location of incident:

Was the incident life threatening or was the target a high-risk concern? YES/NO

If YES, immediately inform the principal and as appropriate:

Seek medical assistance	Inform parent/guardian/carers	Contact the police	Inform DHS (if appropriate)	Inform the Educational Consultant	Inform the Parish Priest
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If the incident is not life threatening or the child is not a high-risk concern, continue completing this document.

Where did the incident occur? Please circle:

Online Bus/transport In playground In classroom Outside school Other

Who reported the alleged incident? Please circle:

The alleged victim/s	Other student(s)	Parent/guardian /carer	Staff member	Member of wider school community	Other
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Describe the incident:

Is there concern the alleged incident may have been influenced by any of the following? Please circle:

Race/culture

Beliefs

Disability

Gender

Socio-economic

Other

Is there any relevant background/history to this alleged incident?

What effect is the situation having on the alleged target's wellbeing including self-esteem, physical health, relationships with peers, ability to learn, absenteeism?

Were there any witnesses to this incident: (Identify student names and/or class groups)

Description of the incident, according to the witness:

Did this student play an active role in the incident?

Indicate other investigative procedures carried out. Please circle:

Interviewed
parents/guardians/carers of alleged
target/s

Interviewed
parents/guardians/carers of
alleged perpetrator/s

Interviewed
parents/guardians/carers of
witnesses/bystanders/accessories

Date/Time:

Date/Time:

Date/Time:

Annotations on interview with parents/guardians/carers:

After investigation, was the allegation of bullying confirmed? Please circle:

Yes

No

If No, please sign below and place a copy of this document into student/s' file and refer to schools' Behaviour Management Policy as required.

If Yes, please sign below, place copy of this document into student/s' file and refer incident to the Principal or Principal's delegate.

Signed:

Date:

Where will this incident report be filed for future reference? (Mary Queen of Heaven to include file server reference)

Appendix 4: Anti-Bullying Policy Checklist for Schools

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

YOUR BULLYING POLICY MUST:

Make a clear statement on the school's stance on bullying, harassment and violence ☐

Define what constitutes bullying, harassment, discrimination, violence, cyber-bullying and sexual harassment and use language consistent with the Equal Opportunity legislation. ☐

Provide information about the effects bullying has on individuals ☐

Be reviewed annually and involve parents and students in the process ☐

IN ACTIONS RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS, YOUR BULLYING POLICY SHOULD:

Allow for flexibility depending on the nature, severity and extent of bullying in light of natural justice principles ☐

Inform parents about serious incidents involving their child ☐

Follow up victims and perpetrators ☐

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCESSES AND REPORTING MUST CONSIDER:

How is bullying reported? ☐

Who is it reported to and when must it be reported? ☐

Responsibilities of the principal, staff, students and parents ☐

YOUR BULLYING POLICY SHOULD BE COMMUNICATED IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY BY:

Ensuring students/parents/teachers/community receives a copy of the policy (and consider how, and when a copy is provided?) ☐

Making sure the policy is placed on the school's website and is communicated regularly (for instance in assembly) ☐

RECORD POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BY:

Documenting processes and forms used such as action plans, reporting forms, bullying register, follow-up documentation forms, advice to parents/students/staff ☐

PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION:

Ensure all prevention, intervention and post-intervention strategies that are used are well documented ☐

Document how bullying is addressed through the curriculum ☐

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:

Provide training and development to teachers, parents and students (and decide who will provide this training and development, as well as how and when) ☐

When/how will training and development be updated? ☐
