



BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

Introduction

St Columba's College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministries College in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We are called to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Mary Aikenhead and the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, and the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' Mission and Vision, and values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

Purpose and Objectives

A key focus of Catholic schools is a commitment to nurturing the individual growth and development of the whole person. At St Columba's College we believe in building a culture which respects the dignity of every person and the promotion of good relationships between staff and students, and students with students. This also includes the establishment of formal pastoral care structures, procedures and practices that promote the personal growth and development of students.

Policy

St Columba's College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the College is respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at St Columba's College.

It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a 'whole-of-College community' approach involving students, staff and parents/legal guardians and uses Restorative Practices to restore relationships, repair harm and teach social responsibility
- bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the College on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/legal guardians to recognise bullying and respond appropriately
- bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

Bullying Prevention Strategies

St Columba's College recognises that the implementation of whole-College prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no-bullying' culture within the College:

- a structured curriculum that provides age-appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year
- education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies
- regular provision of information to parents/legal guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a College community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the College
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/legal guardians
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/legal guardians
- reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/legal guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below)
- regular risk assessments of bullying within the College are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff
- records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies, where appropriate
- statements supporting bullying prevention are included in students' planner pages
- education of staff, students and parents/legal guardians on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear
- anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within the College
- promotion of student awareness and a 'no-bullying' environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

Reporting Bullying

Students and their parents/legal guardians are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of the College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/legal guardians) that:

- bullying is not tolerated within the College
- their concerns will be taken seriously
- the College has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the College verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a student's House Leader
- informing a trusted teacher
- informing a Student Counsellor
- informing the Head of Students
- informing the Deputy Principal.

Responding to Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances the College:

- takes bullying incidents seriously
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- notification of/consultation with parents/legal guardians
- offering counselling to persistent bullies
- offering counselling to victims of bullying
- Restorative conferences and/or mediations
- disciplinary action, at the Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible to:

- model appropriate behaviour at all times
- employ the principles and practices of Restorative Justice in dealing with behavioural issues and breaches
- deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately, which includes recording on SEQTA
- be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims
- acknowledge the right of parents/legal guardians to speak with the College if they believe their child is being bullied.

Signage

Anti-bullying posters may be posted in strategic locations in the College to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

Implementation

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/legal guardian education and information
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported
- the creation of a 'no-bullying' culture within the College community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions, where necessary.

Definitions

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- Physical bullying which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or the threat of using physical assault to intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- Psychological bullying which is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- Indirect bullying which is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- Cyber bullying which is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

What Is Not Bullying

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- Mutual Conflict Situations which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation
- One-Off Acts (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

Signs of Bullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- crying at night and having nightmares
- refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?"
- having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of school work
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- beginning to bully siblings
- acting unreasonably.

Parents/legal guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the College through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a House Teacher or Student Counsellor), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Student Management Guidelines
- Student Wellbeing Policy
- Student Digital Citizenship Expectations

POLICY HISTORY AND SCHEDULE

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Delegated Contact Person: Head of Students
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