



# **St Francis de Sales, Oak Park** **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

## **RATIONALE:**

The St Francis de Sales School Community believes that bullying of any member of its community is totally unacceptable. The School protects the right of all adults and children to work and learn in a safe and secure environment.

In accordance with the National Safe Schools Framework we encourage all members of our school community to: value diversity; contribute positively to the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others; act independently, justly, cooperatively and responsibly in school, work, civic and family relationships; and contribute to the implementation of appropriate strategies that create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment.

**In our school everyone has the right to feel safe, to learn and to have fun.**

Bullying is the **repeated** mistreatment by individuals or groups of another or others by physical, mental or cyber acts where there is a perceived difference in power either because of age, size, status or friendship group.

It is the responsibility of all members of our school community to abstain from bullying, to actively discourage bullying when it occurs, to report bullying when they become aware of it, and to give support to students who are the targets of bullying.

## **BELIEFS & VALUES:**

At St Francis de Sales we are a community working in partnership to nurture the values and traditions of the Catholic faith in a welcoming environment.

We are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment that promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all. We understand the importance of developing the whole child and believe that students who are physically, emotionally and spiritually happy are able to deal positively with life's challenges.

Our motto is "Love and Truth" and we give witness to our motto by opening our hearts and minds to the truth of God's love.

We believe that our Student Wellbeing Policy links directly to our Vision for SFDS.  
At St Francis de Sales we...

- \*Provide a broad curriculum to members of the school community so that they become life long learners able to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world.
- \*Create a safe, supportive environment where mutual respect is maintained and diversity is celebrated.
- \*Foster a sense of belonging through strong relationships and open communication.

## **AIMS:**

### **The St Francis De Sales Anti-Bullying Policy aims to:**

Support both the target, the bully and bystanders and to help all parties recognise that bullying exists in all walks of life and that there are strategies to help them deal with it.

## **IMPLEMENTATION:**

### **The following structures are implemented through the school:**

The School will address bullying as part of:

- The curriculum
  - The behaviour management and ethos of the school
  - The supervision and organisation of the school
- There is a shared approach to Student Management (School Student Management Policy) which incorporates Professional Development of teachers, consistent approaches in management and discipline as well as the regular teaching of the Classroom Management Plan.
  - Supervision of the playground is designed to care for the safety of playground users and to effectively prevent or reduce accidents or incidents of socially unacceptable behaviour. (Teacher Handbook )
  - Time is allocated regularly at Staff Meetings to inform all staff of Behavioural/Bullying incidents and/or "hot spots". Individual behaviour plans are shared in order to ensure consistency.
  - Other internal communication processes are used to ensure all teachers are well informed and the safety of all students is monitored effectively.
  - "Bounce Back" is a program used across the school to assist children develop appropriate skills in Social, Emotional Learning (SEL). The program includes a unit on Bullying which is incorporated into the classroom programs annually.

- Circle Time is a strategy used across the school in various areas of the curriculum, but importantly in SEL to promote better relationships and positive behaviour.
- Children are encouraged to always tell a teacher when they are feeling unsafe, threatened or sad. Children are encouraged to get help immediately, from a trusted staff member.
- Socially unacceptable behaviour not deemed to be bullying, will be managed according to the Student Management Policy.
- The school will endeavor to prevent and manage all incidents of bullying.
- The following are the steps and procedures for teachers and parents to follow when they become aware of a potential bullying situation or a child has been involved in incidents which may constitute bullying.
  - Issue is reported to the Principal, Deputy or other member of the Leadership team.
  - The informed leader will follow the “Method of Shared Concern” (Rigby and Pikos) as described in Appendix One.
  - All incidents will be documented, recorded and filed in the school office.
  - As necessary the Leader will ensure parent conferences, counseling, consequences and restorative justice meetings occur.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Method of Shared Concern**

A. **A bully/victim problem** is identified. For this one needs to have reliable information about who is involved, including

- (a) the person or persons who are being bullied by another individual or group
- (b) the person or persons who continually engage in carrying out the bullying.

Information about **what is happening** and the **concern** felt by the victim is ideally obtained through **observations** and **reports**, rather than through talking directly with the victim. (This is to prevent repercussions on the victim for having "told")

B. A number of students are identified as having taken part in the bullying, or to have supported it in some way. Each one is seen **in turn**, starting (if known) with the likely ringleader.

In these meeting with individual students, it is important **not** to make any accusations. The meeting begins with the interviewer inviting the student to sit in a chair opposite (without an intervening desk) and waiting for eye contact before the interaction begins.

The interviewer starts by sharing a concern for the person who is being victimised. Once the feelings of the interviewer have been clearly - and sincerely - conveyed, the student is asked to say what he or she knows about the situation.

As soon as the student has acknowledged some awareness (not necessarily guilt) relating to what has been happening, the student is asked directly what he or she can do to help improve matters.

Note that the interviewer is not trying to "get to the bottom of the matter" and to apportion blame but to produce a constructive response and change the situation.

Commonly suggestions **are** elicited. But if they are not, the interviewer may make a suggestions, normally ones that are not so difficult for the bully to accept. The interviewer should express strong approval for **any** constructive proposals, but arrange for another meeting (at an agreed time) to find out what has actually been done. Close monitoring is essential.

At this meeting **no threats** are made nor any warnings given.

The remaining students in the group are seen, again individually, and the procedure repeated.

**C. Interview with victim** The victim is seen after **all** the suspected bullies have been interviewed.

It is essential that the interviewer begins by expressing concern, sympathy and **support** over what has been happening.

However, questions need to be asked to find the out whether the victim has been doing anything to bring on the bullying - that is by acting as a **provocative victim**.

The interviewer discloses that he or she has actually talked with the bullies individually and that each of them agreed to cooperate.

The interviewer undertakes to meet again with the victim to see how things develop.

D. **Further meetings are held with individual bullies** (as previously arranged) to check on whether they have honoured their promises and what progress has been made.

Once it is evident that good progress has been made, **a meeting with the whole group** is organised. At this meeting it is usually possible to (i) compliment the members on the progress that has been made and (ii) to "fall in with" (or somehow elicit) a suggestion from members of the group that the **victim be invited to join them** for a final meeting to demonstrate that the problem of bullying has really been resolved.

Assurances **must** be obtained from individual members that they will act positively towards the victim at such a meeting.

E. The victim can normally be induced to join the group for a final meeting, with assurances that there will be **no unpleasantness** at the meeting. If all goes well, the meeting will serve to demonstrate publicly that the bullying is well and truly over.

F. Notice that in cases where the **victim has behaved provocatively**, the interviewer must seek to facilitate adjustments in the behaviour of **both** sides, that is, play the **role of mediator**. The aim is to get the students to reach an agreement - ideally in writing and in an agreed form - about how each will behave towards each other in future.

## **THE RATIONALE OF "SHARED CONCERN"**

1. It is assumed that bullies **typically** (not always) **are insensitive to the harm, or the extent of the harm, they are doing to the victim**. This insensitivity is due to their involvement in a group which seems to give legitimacy to their bullying activities and prevents them from feeling personally responsible for the outcomes.

2. What they appear to gain mostly through bullying is a **sense of being part of a group which is "having fun."**

3. Yet **as individuals**, bullies commonly feel uncomfortable about what is being done.

4. A hostile blaming attitude on the part of an authority figure is likely to increase the desire for them to continue bullying and unite the bullies more strongly.

5. Working with **individuals** by initially sharing with them one's concern for the victim **is likely to elicit a more positive response.**
6. Although the method involves a non-blaming approach, it does **not** in any way seek to excuse or condone bullying. It is in fact quite direct and confrontational. **It strongly invites and expects a responsible response.**
7. Having made a commitment to the interviewer, generally means that members of the bully group will not talk to each other about what has transpired. Group influence is thereby weakened.
8. Careful monitoring of what ensues after promises have been made is absolutely essential
9. Interviewing the victim first should be avoided, because if the bullies suspect that the victim has informed on them, he or she will be further endangered.
10. Victims are not always "innocent", and it is important to understand what they may be doing to provoke the bullying. One may need to work directly on changing the victim's provocative way of behaving.
11. Although the aim is to re-individualise bullies, the idea is **not** to "break up" groups (students have a right to enjoy being in a group) but eventually to change their attitudes and behaviour towards the victim and other potential victims.
12. It is important to see the whole group of "bullies" together after progress has been made towards improving the situation, to congratulate them on what they have been able to do, and to work through any residual problems with the victim present.
13. An important benefit from this approach is that it can lead to a "change of heart" on the part of bullies and **remove the need for constant surveillance.**
14. The use of punishment is often ineffective. It may breed resentment, increase group solidarity, jeopardise the victim further, and challenge bullies to practise ways of bullying that are hard to detect.
15. It **does** require some careful thought and planning on **how** to use the method with students. However, **it need not be time-consuming. Short interviews and meetings** only are often all that is needed.
16. There is now good research evidence that the method is effective in at least two cases in three (see Smith and Sharp, 1994). It has been used in many British, European and Australian schools with excellent results.
17. However, In severe cases of bullying **or** where individuals do not respond to shared concern, **further action** may be needed, including interviews with parents and even suspension.