

# 4.11 BULLYING / HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY

FOR ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

## 1. OBJECTS:

- (a) to provide children with a comprehensive program of education that is conducive to the development of their talents and skills for responsible Christian living and service.
- (b) to encourage children to strive for excellence in learning according to individual ability.
- (c) to help children value themselves as persons created in the image of God.
- (d) to help the school community to better know their Saviour, Jesus Christ.
- (e) to assist parents in fulfilling their responsibilities to children.
- (f) to help children develop values which will benefit civil society.
- (g) to provide and maintain a built environment conducive to enhancing the education program. In keeping with the Christian ethos of the school, children are encouraged to show love and concern for one another.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

*Harassment* and *Bullying* are terms which are often used to describe quite different behaviours, yet they each represent descriptors along a continuum of aggressive behaviours.

Central to both bullying and harassment is the inappropriate use of power which deprives others of their rights.

### (a) WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons.

#### **Bullying behaviours may include:**

- Physical behaviours, e.g. hitting, kicking
- Verbal – eg. Name calling, put downs, threats
- Social – eg. exclusion, ignoring
- Psychological – eg. Spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions

It is usually continuing, and often hidden from the gaze of teachers and administrators.

In many cases of bullying, there are elements of harassment and discrimination on the ground of 'difference'.

**(b) WHAT IS HARASSMENT?**

Harassment of any kind is unwanted and unwelcome. If a particular behaviour embarrasses, upsets or hurts another person, then it can be classified as harassment. It is often used to describe negative behaviour toward someone on the basis of differences.

Harassment can occur in Religious, Behavioural, Racial, Intellectual, Disability and Sex based forms.

**RELIGIOUS HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- belittling another's religion, putting down or ridiculing another's faith and/or practice of their beliefs.
- hindering others from expressing their faith freely and openly e.g. By subtle intimidation or deliberate distraction in worship, devotions and discussions.
- using language which shows disrespect to God's name.

**BEHAVIOURAL HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- physical: e.g. bullying, hitting, damaging the property of others.
- verbal: either spoken or written: e.g. repeated 'put downs', calling names, ridiculing, threatening, spreading rumours or offensive comments.
- exclusion: e.g. deliberately leaving others out of friendship groups, discussions, team situations etc.
- graphic: e.g. defacing pencil cases, school bags, property; graffiti etc.
- extortion: e.g. demanding money, food or other belongings etc.

**RACIAL HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- deliberate or repeated racist comments, gestures, or any other conduct which hurts people, based on their nationality, colour of skin, ancestry or any related cultural practices.

**INTELLECTUAL HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- discrimination against those of exceptional talents and abilities
- discrimination against those with limited talents and abilities and those with specific learning difficulties.

**DISABILITY HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- demeaning a person on the basis of physical attributes, e.g. appearance or physical disability.
- treating a person with a disability less favourably merely because they have that particular disability.

## **SEX BASED HARASSMENT INCLUDES:**

- sexist harassment - behaviour which insists that gender stereotypes be maintained and exercised in the school, workplace, or home.
- sexual harassment - sexual behaviour which is deliberate, uninvited, or threatening and which is perceived by the recipient to be embarrassing, offensive, demeaning or compromising, e.g. unwelcome touching or closeness.
- sexual assault - a term which covers a number of criminal offences, such as indecent assault, aggravated sexual assault, sexual intercourse with a person under 17 years of age (or, in specific circumstances, under 18 years of age) and rape.

## **SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING / HARASSMENT**

When children are victims of harassment they can feel frightened, unsafe, alone, embarrassed and confused. It may negatively affect their learning, confidence or ability to sleep or concentrate. Relationships with friends and family may deteriorate. Children can stop feeling good about themselves or not want to come to school.

Victims of harassment can suffer serious long-term effects, which diminish their ongoing quality of life.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION**

3.1 Parents will be made aware of this policy, and the accompanying document "Building our Community into a Safe place to be" (Appendix A) upon enrolment of their child.

Children will be made aware of all forms of bullying/harassment and the action they may take, as part of the school's Human Development and Skills for Growing Courses. Within these programs each child will:

- Discuss content as listed in "Building our Community into a safe place to be." (Appendix A)
- Be informed that bullying/harassment is against God's law and State and Federal laws and is not acceptable;
- Be made aware that all children have a right to a friendly and safe environment;
- Be made aware and encouraged that it's 'okay to tell'.

### **4. ACTION**

If a child is reported to have been bullied/harassed (which by definition means that the actions are deliberate and ongoing) then the school will generally take the following steps in association with their Student Behaviour Management policy:

- All children involved will be interviewed to ascertain the actions that took place and those who were involved.
- Parents will be informed of the incident

- Meetings may be held with all concerned parties in an attempt to find solutions to the problems encountered by those involved.
- Strategies will be put into place to assist all parties to reach a positive resolution. The situation will be monitored and reviewed.
- If successful, students will be congratulated and praised for their efforts.
- If unsuccessful, other approaches and/or strategies will be investigated and put into place and may include:
  - Logical consequences
  - Time out
  - Denial of privileges
  - Individual student management plans
  - Parental involvement
  - Counselling
  - Removal of the bully away from the victim into another class or play area
  - Suspension
  - Expulsion

## **5. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Staff will:**

- Model and reinforce behaviour which expresses care for others;
- Respond to observed or reported acts of bullying/ harassment;
- Encourage children to report bullying/harassment
- Raise children's awareness that bullying/harassment is not acceptable;
- Listen and accept complaint and act on it;
- Help the child resolve the situation
- Report bullying / harassment cases to Principal;
- Respect confidentiality at all times.

## **6. IF A STUDENT IS SEXUALLY ABUSED/HARASSED**

Under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, people must report to the Department of Community Services if they believe a child or young person is at risk of harm and/or, if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person.

- 6.1** If staff suspect that a child may be involved in some form of abuse which appears to involve more than one child, they need to report it immediately to the Principal for reporting to the Department of Community Services.
- 6.2** Staff members or students who believe that they (the student) are being, or have been, sexually harassed should make it known that the comments, attention, contact or behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. If the sexual harassment continues, or if the staff member or student is unable or unwilling to handle the matter themselves they should contact an advisor:

- 6.2.1 School Principal**
- 6.2.2 School Deputy Principal**
- 6.2.3 Designated Teacher**

for information, advice or to make a formal complaint.

**6.3** Investigations of complaints and/or allegation will be conducted in a prompt, fair and confidential manner consistent with the Mandatory Reporting Policy. The only staff members and students who will be made aware of a complaint will be those people whose involvement is necessary in order to resolve the problem.

**6.4 The Role of Staff**

All staff have a duty to ensure that any sexual harassment brought to their attention or witnessed by them is addressed as soon as possible in accordance with the procedures set out above.

**6.4.1** It is the legal responsibility of the School and all employees to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and victimisation by enforcing this policy.

**6.5** For more information on staff involvement in harassment, please refer to the Sexual Harassment Policy of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

This policy was last ratified by School Council in....

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