Guideline/Procedure

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Safe School Policy (Bullying)

Purpose

Good Counsel College and Catholic Education is committed to the prevention of bullying by and of students in our school, and the implementation of appropriate response strategies which address school bullying, as mandated by law, Church teachings, and convention. We recognise the need to ensure that all students are able to learn and work in an environment where they feel safe and are free from bullying.

Background

This policy is based on the CES Student Anti-Bullying Policy which outlines the expectations of Catholic Education Services for all schools in the Diocese of Cairns to develop and implement effective strategies to address school bullying, consistent with the Queensland Schools Declaration Against Bullying and Violence.

Advice and resources are used and adapted from: www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

Defining Bullying

Dr Ken Rigby (in Working Together: A toolkit for effective school based action against bullying, 2010. P.6) defines bullying "as a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:

- Dominating or hurting someone;
- Unfair action by the perpetrator and an imbalance of power;
- A lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation".

The Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence Working Together Toolkit (2010. P. 6-7) identifies five types of bullying:

1. Physical Bullying
When a person (or group of people) uses actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

2. Verbal Bullying
Repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse.

3. Covert Bullying
Such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone.

4. Psychological Bullying

Examples include threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

5. Cyber Bullying
Using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

The following behaviours **do not** constitute bullying:
- Mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- One-off acts of meanness, intimidation or violence

While these behaviours would not be constituted as bullying (because they do not involve deliberate and repeated harm and a power imbalance) they need to be addressed in the same way as other inappropriate student behaviours.

Impact of Bullying

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term negative impacts on everyone involved, including bystanders.

However, interactions and behaviours which appear similar to outsiders can have different impacts on different individuals.

Unwanted behaviours may or may not cause apparent harm to the person targeted. This depends on the personal resources (attributes) of the individual who is targeted as well as the protective capacity and support of the system (school and family)around the individual.

Good Counsel College aims to respond to bullying whether or not the individual shows serious or immediate harm. Responding immediately and appropriately can stop bullying escalating or happening again.

Preventing Bullying

This document complements The College's Positive Relationships for Learning framework. The student code of behaviour states expectations for the way students are to act in their relationships with others.

The College runs a Social Emotional Learning program (to be timetable once per week from 2019) which embeds awareness about bullying across a range of topics. This allows for classroom discussions around bullying, social skills training, and develop peer support networks.

Student protection posters in every classroom aim to empower students to speak up by indicating possible teachers that students could approach about bullying. Students can also submit concerns to the email address gcc.safe@cns.catholic.edu.au

Responding to Bullying

When bullying is reported to a teacher, the following process is enacted. This may be done in consultation with others including Leaders of Wellbeing or the College Leadership Team:

1. Listen carefully and calmly, and document what the student tells you. (Clarify if there are immediate safety risks and let the student know how you will address these).
2. Collect additional information.
3. Discuss a plan of action with the students.
4. Inform the student what you intend to do.
5. Provide suggestions on what to do if the bullying occurs again.
6. Set a date for follow up review/s.

7. Record the incident/student contact in the school's student data management system.
8. Notify appropriate school personnel.
9. Contact the parent/guardian informing them of the incident and your course of action.
10. Make sure to follow up with students over the next several weeks and months.

Further details on these steps can be accessed at:
https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/RespondingToBullying/Documents/flowchart-for-responding.pdf

The aims for the school in responding to bullying are:
▪ to find a positive solution for everyone
▪ to stop it happening again, and
▪ to restore the relationships between the students involved

Restoring Relationships

Professor Ken Rigby, describes six methods of response:
▪ The traditional disciplinary approach
▪ Strengthening the target
▪ Mediation
▪ Support group method
▪ Restorative practice
▪ Method of shared concern

The choice by the College will depend on the students involved and the situation. This could vary widely, for instance in terms of severity, group involvement and whether there has been any provocation.

Details about these methods can be accessed at the following locations:
https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/RespondingToBullying/HowAustralianSchoolsRespond/RestoringRelationships
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/teachoverview.aspx

Enquiries

Enquiries about this policy must be made with the Assistant Principal – Wellbeing.

See Also (Related Policies and Guidelines)

▪ Good Counsel College – Addressing Bullying Complaints
▪ Bullying Complaint Form