Anti-Bullying Policy

And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8)

At St Patrick's we believe that all members of our community have a right to a learning and work environment that is free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring which will not tolerate bullying. According to research ‘conflict often precedes bullying’ Therefore if students can learn to manage conflict ‘then the potential for bullying to succeed can be reduced’. (Chirnside 2009, p. 20) Consequently at St Patrick’s Mitchell a fundamental part of the Behavioural Management plan is to teach, model and encourage conflict resolution skills throughout the curriculum and school community. One part of this plan is to use the BRIDGE BUILDERS program. This program provides a universal understanding of conflict, skills and a language to resolve conflict proactively and prevent it from escalating to bullying.

Rights and responsibilities of students, staff and parents

Students, staff and parents have the right to:
- learn and work in a positive environment
- participate in all school activities without being ridiculed or 'put-down'
- be accepted regardless of differences in race, cultural background, age, religion, appearance or ability
- safe access within the school grounds
- be listened to and supported when involved in bullying incidents
- be treated as a respected member of the St Patrick’s School community.

Students, staff and parents have the responsibility to:
- abstain from bullying others in any way
- actively discourage bullying when it occurs
- report any bullying incidents of which they are aware
- be familiar with and help promote the School’s anti-bullying and Behaviour Management policies and procedures

What is bullying?
Definition

“Bullying is the deliberate hurting of another person by a more powerful person or group of persons. It can be physical, verbal or psychological. It is typically repeated but can be a single instance.” (Rigby, 1996)

According to the definition, ‘one-off’ incidents involving social isolation, conflict, random acts of aggression/intimidation or meanness are not defined as bullying. Bullying can be physical, verbal, cyber, social and emotional.
How do we prevent bullying?

“It is not one single ingenious thing that makes a difference, but the sum of many small moves” (Cross, 2004)

At St Patrick’s we:

- Create a school/classrooms with a positive emotional environment
- Model respect to students, parents and other staff members
- Explicit teaching of friendship skills eg “Socially Speaking” by Alison Schroeder
- Use incidents as they occur to teach pro-social behaviour
- Not tolerate put-downs of students by other students
- Encourage the development of self-esteem in their students
- Never ignore observed or reported bullying incidents in the classroom or playground
- Listen to students. Never accuse a student of “dobbing” when reporting bullying
- Provide specific programmes to promote pro-social behaviour eg BRIDGE BUILDERS, Circle Solutions.
- Raise awareness of bullying through newsletter articles, guest speakers and performers, parent information evenings and assemblies.
- Participate and awareness of the Behavioural Management and Anti-Bullying policies.

How do we respond to bullying?

At St Patrick’s we:

1. Instances of bullying must be reported, usually to the class teacher and/or Principal.
2. The relevant teacher will investigate the incident, using a ‘no blame’ approach, and may seek further information to clarify the situation.
3. The teacher will complete an incident report and forward it to the Principal for consultation and to decide on the course of action to be taken.
4. Parents/guardians of both the victim and the child exhibiting the bullying behaviour are notified and on-going communication commenced.
5. The school will take action by implementing goals, consequences and measures appropriate to the circumstances of the incident.
6. Follow up and monitoring of the students involved will occur.
7. The Principal and staff will conduct an annual review of all instances of bullying.

Additional Responses

- provide counselling to students involved in bullying incidents.
- empower the student who has been bullied by providing strategies they might use in dealing with conflict.
- Attempt to apply restorative justice principles such as verbal apology “I am sorry I…. and I will try not to do it again” Other student “I accept your apology” and/or “I forgive you”
What do you do if you are experiencing conflict?

If you can…..
- Ask them to stop, stand and speak confidently
- Ignore, try to show no reaction (do something else or find a good friend)
- Take turns and try to share
- Make “I” statements eg. “I don’t like it when you ….”
- Make an agreement: try using “paper, scissors, rock” to help take turns
- Think of others feelings and be generous in your thoughts

And if things don’t improve…..
- get help by speaking to someone you trust. This could be your parents, an Elder, a friend, a teacher, School Counsellor, or Principal.

Parents can help children their child/ren who are encountering conflict:
- Listening to their child – be available and encourage them to express their feelings and the problem. Don’t escalate the problem.
- Communicate problems to the school – prepare the facts and share your concerns with a willingness to hear another perspective.
- Manage your emotions – don’t react in ways that maximise or minimise your child’s conflict or bullying.
- Understand the power of your words – harsh or judgemental words can make it harder for your child to cope.
- Maintain healthy food and sleep routines- whole foods and getting enough rest provide the fuel to help children be more resilient and cope better with interpersonal challenges.
- Encourage children to value themselves – help them to avoid comparisons which may lead to putting themselves or others down.
- Encourage healthy friendships – in and out of school.
- Model and teach your child to have a brave body and mind.

(Exerts from: Empowered for Life, 2015, Jocelyne Chirnside)

Concluding Statement

A stand-alone anti-bullying policy is the single most effective action a school can take to deal with bullying (Petersen, 2001). This policy reflects a whole school approach that serves as St Patrick’s Mitchell commitment of action towards preventing and minimising bullying.

Bibliography

2. Chirside,J. (2009)” How do Teachers Perceptions of Conflict Influence their Responses to Conflict in the Classroom ( Thesis)
3 Cross, D. “Safe and Supportive Schools- Reducing Bullying”, Bullying Colloquium, AISQ, Brisbane, August, 2004.

May God bless and animate you with His own divine spirit, that you may prove it is Jesus Christ you love and serve with your whole heart.
Catherine McAuley