



# STAR OF THE SEA COLLEGE

## Student Anti Bullying Policy

### Rationale

Star of the Sea College is committed to providing all students with a learning environment that is safe, supportive and empowering for all its members.

In this policy, bullying behaviour is inclusive of cyberbullying. All forms of bullying behaviour can offend and harm others, cause them pain, embarrass and endanger them, or damage their self-esteem.

This policy is directed to all members of the College community – students, staff and parents – with the expectation that all will collaborate in supporting its intentions and procedures. It should be read and observed in conjunction with College policies pertaining to *Pastoral Care of Students, Promoting a Healthy, Safe and Respectful School Community, Student Behaviour Management and Information and Communications Technologies*.

### Principles

- Every person has a right to be treated with respect and as a worthwhile individual.
- Every member of the community has a right to a safe environment, free from bullying.
- Bullying behaviour seriously undermines the ethos of the College, is not acceptable, and will not be tolerated.
- If students are bullied they have the right to complain.
- All bullying matters will be taken seriously.
- All matters will be investigated with discretion, confidentiality and sympathy.
- Positive action will be taken and where necessary disciplinary action will be put in place.

### Definition of Bullying

- Bullying is a repetitive attack that causes distress at the time or in the future. It involves an imbalance of power and leaves people feeling distressed and without power.
- Bullying behaviour can be of a personal, sexual, emotional, psychological or physical nature.
- Bullying is unwelcome or uninvited behaviour that students find humiliating, intimidating, offensive or frightening.

Bullying may include:

- Unwelcome and uninvited verbal behaviour such as racist taunts, threats, sexual comments or continuing comments;

- Unwelcome and uninvited conduct such as making rude gestures, staring, or displaying pictures, posters or graffiti that may cause offence;
- Unwelcome and uninvited behaviour towards a student, such as hitting, pinching, pushing, verbal abuse, rude, offensive or intimidating text messages, emails or posts on social networking sites, spitting, or sexual approaches such as patting, touching, embracing, fondling and grabbing.

### What Bullying is Not

- **Mutual conflict:** where an argument or disagreement occurs but both parties are upset and want resolution to the problem.
- **Social rejection:** this is not bullying unless directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts of meanness,** or random acts of aggression or intimidation. These will not be ignored but are not acts of bullying.
- **Changes in peer group dynamics and composition:** it is not unusual for a shift in friendship groups to occur as students move through adolescence and interests and personalities develop.

### Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chatroom, discussion group, online social networking (e.g. Facebook or Myspace), instant messaging or web pages. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as SMS or MMS.

Cyberbullying can occur when people are involved in:

- **Flaming:** Sending angry, rude, vulgar messages about a person to an online group or to that person via email or other text messaging
- **Online harassment:** Repeatedly sending offensive messages via email or other text messaging to a person, repeated calls or hang-ups
- **Cyberstalking:** Online harassment that includes threats of harm or is excessively intimidating
- **Denigration (put-downs):** Spreading rumours, sending harmful, untrue, or cruel statements about a person to other people or posting such material online
- **Masquerade or Identity Theft:** Pretending to be someone else, taking on their identity and sending or posting material so that another person looks bad
- **Outing:** Sending or posting material about a person that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages, photos or images
- **Exclusion:** Cruelly excluding someone from an online group.

### Procedures

- A. **Students** are encouraged not to stay silent or to retaliate. They should discuss the matter with parents /sisters/brothers and report any bullying or harassment to a staff member, such as:
- Homeroom Teacher
  - Pastoral Leader
  - Counsellors
  - Deputy Principal: Students
  - A College Leader
  - Principal

- B. **Staff** will always investigate the incident and act promptly. Each incident is recorded by the Pastoral Coordinator.
- Students on both sides of the issue are usually interviewed.
  - Contact with parents is made if required.
  - Techniques of a restorative manner will be applied in responding to bullying issues.
  - Students are usually brought together in serious incidents to establish a mediated plan of action.
  - An Anti-Bullying Action Plan is displayed in each learning area and full information is printed in the student organiser.
- C. **Parents** should encourage their daughter to report the incidents to their Homeroom Teacher or Year Level Leader. If your daughter is unwilling to do so, then the parent should contact the College.

In the case of cyberbullying, parents are reminded of the strength of the law. Contact with police ought to be considered. Most of these issues occur outside of school hours.

### **Consequences**

When it becomes clear that a person has bullied another member of the student community, there will be consequences for their actions. Some of the possible consequences for those who bully or harass others are listed below:

- interview with the Deputy Principal Students and Pastoral Leader;
- a Bullying Incident Report naming the person who did the bullying is placed on the College Bullying Incident File;
- the person who bullied signs an agreement, witnessed by their parent/guardians, stating that s/he will not bully anyone, in any way, again;
- repairing or replacing damaged property;
- withdrawing access to certain privileges/resources at school for a period of time;
- police involvement;
- suspension.

**Repeat bullying will be treated as a very serious offence and the consequences will be more severe. Depending on the situation, the consequences may include withdrawing a student from certain subjects or negotiating a student's transfer to another College.**

### **Related Policies**

Star of the Sea College Policy, *Pastoral Care of Students*

Star of the Sea College Policy, *Promoting a Healthy, Safe and Respectful School Community*

Star of the Sea College Policy, *Student Behaviour Management*

Star of the Sea College Policy, *Information and Communications Technologies: Student Policy*

**Policy revised: November 2016**

**Next review date: November 2018**

**Person responsible: Deputy Principal Students**