Anti-Bullying Policy

Rationale

Saint Stephen's College is a *Positive Education* school, with the focus on creating positive relationships to enable students to flourish through development of mental, physical and emotional health. The College Anti-Bullying Policy details the College's commitment to providing an environment for all students that is safe and supportive, and one that nurtures individual students to achieve to their potential.

As such, Saint Stephen's College does not tolerate bullying in any form and comprehensive processes are in place for managing behaviour identified as bullying. This policy is based on the National Safe Schools framework and sets out the requirements for dealing with bullying.

The basic beliefs underlying the policy are:
1. Every individual has value in a community;
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms;
3. Every conflict can be resolved. All parties need help to solve conflict;
4. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community;
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.
6. Everyone has a responsibility to address bullying behaviour.

Commitment of the College

Saint Stephen's College:
- Affirms the right of all members of the College community to *feel* safe and *be* safe at school;
- Encourages and positively reinforces behaviour which is courteous, considerate and values diversity;
- Prioritises the safety of students, as well as their right to learn and achieve to their full potential;
- Educates students about issues related to bullying, including teaching skills for managing bullies;
- Offers support to all students through its Pastoral Care Program and the role of all staff to promote wellbeing;
- Deals with behaviour identified as bullying promptly, seriously and in a just manner;
- Maintains that everyone has the right to be free from all forms of bullying;
- Reserves the right to investigate and respond to claims of bullying, regardless of the incidents occurring off campus or out of school hours, if the behaviour causes harm to the student at school.
- Expects a high standard of behaviour from students at all times;
- Expects adults to model positive behaviour to students;
- Adheres to the College Privacy Policy when responding to bullying complaints.

Relevant Legislation

Education and Training Legislation Amendment Act 2011
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 (Qld)
Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Regulation 2001 (Qld)
Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld)
Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2006 (Qld)
Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001 (Qld)
Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001(Qld)
Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 (Cth)
Education (Overseas Students) Act 1996 (Qld)
Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)

Developing character, inspiring hope

Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents/carers, students and visitors to the College.

Point of Contact

The Class Teacher/Tutor, Head of Program/Head of Year should be the first person contacted. Alternatively, talking to a Peer Helper or reporting through "Stymie" (www.stymie.com.au).

Definitions

"Bullying is **repeated** oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person and occurs when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, or their property, reputation or social acceptance." (safeschools.deewr.gov.au, 2011)

Key to the definition of bullying is:

- Intention to cause hurt;
- Imbalance of power;
- Ongoing and repetitive;
- Predatory nature;
- Often not apparent to the casual observer;
- Includes a wide range of hurtful behaviours, both physical and emotional;
- Includes condoning negative behaviour by not acting.

The College may distinguish between breaches of behaviour and apply different policies as appropriate to meet legal obligations, such as child protection.

There are three broad categories of bullying:
- **Direct physical bullying** e.g. hitting, tripping, pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **Covert bullying** e.g. lying and spreading rumours; playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate; mimicking; deliberate exclusion; damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance; threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.
- **Cyber-bullying**, which involves the use of email, text messages or social media to humiliate and distress. This may also include using a website to post unkind or inappropriate comments and photographs about another person.

The College reserves the right to investigate and respond to claims of cyber-bullying if the incidents cause harm to the student at school. Cyber-bullying is different from other forms of bullying because:
- it is often difficult for adults, who are not as technologically savvy as their children, to detect;
- it is often outside the reach of schools as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones; and
- hurtful messages can be communicated to a very wide audience, around the world, with remarkable speed.

Victims of cyber-bullying are encouraged to take screenshots of the bullying as a form of evidence, to empower the College's response.

What bullying is not:
- **Mutual conflict** where there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem; however, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- **Social rejection or dislike** – It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specifically and does not involve deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation. A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference it that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on <u>more than one occasion.</u>** However, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will not be ignored or condoned.

Policy Approach for Dealing with Bullying

The College employs a 'no-blame' approach to bullying. That is, its main aim is to stop the bullying, rather than punish the perpetrator, although that does not preclude punishment if bullying persists.

For any incidents of bullying, a member of staff will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps should be taken:

Identification
A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problem to implement the anti-bullying program.

Initial interview
The relevant staff member interviews the victim and bully separately, and records the details of the incident in writing on a standard proforma. The staff member makes both parties aware of the bullying strategy and policy, and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The staff member works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The staff member attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame, or to punish, but to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the school policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

Follow-up Interview
After an agreed time, the staff member checks with the student to determine if the intervention has been successful.

If the problem continues, both parties record the incident/problem in writing on a standard proforma. The staff member makes the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having. Help from a qualified counsellor may be arranged. Consequences may also be applied at this stage.
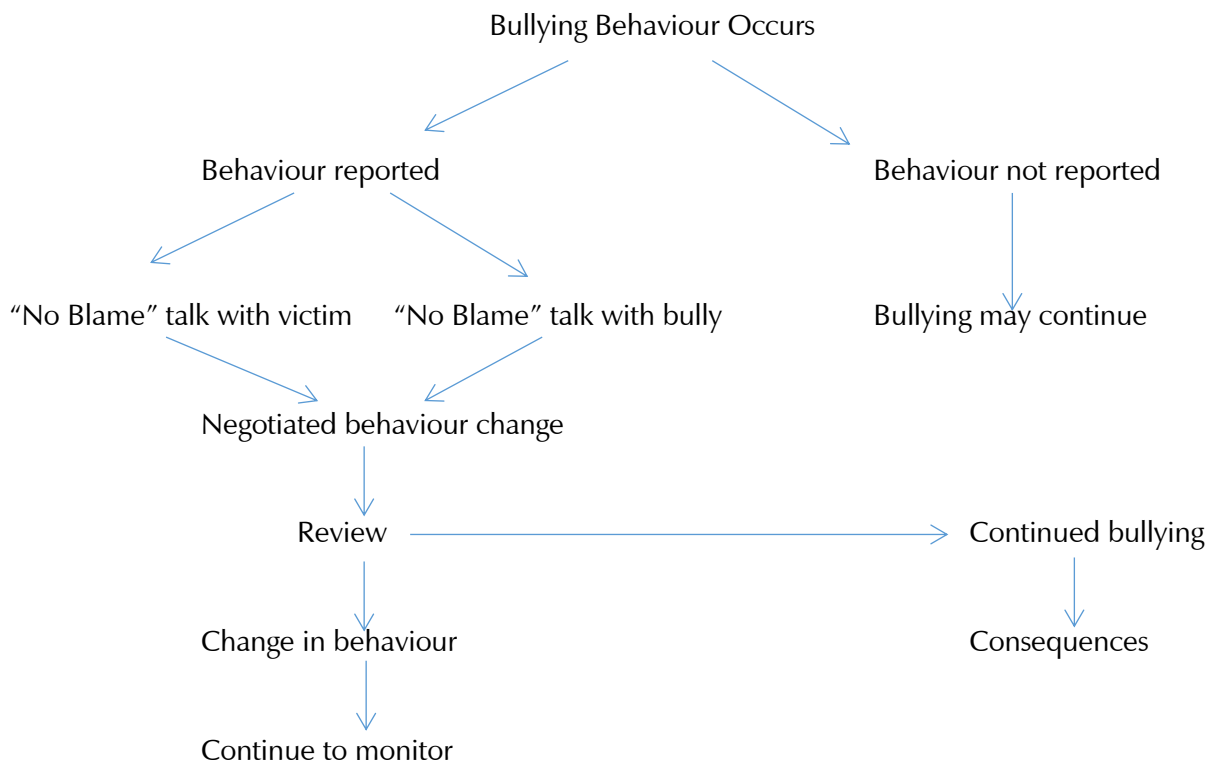
Consequences
These could include, but are not confined to:
- Official warnings to cease offending;
- Detention;
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises;
- Meeting with parents;
- Internal Suspension;
- External Suspension;
- Permanent exclusion.

The staff member may communicate during this process, complying with Privacy Policy limitations, to both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences for the behaviour.

Response to Bullying Flow Chart

Bullying Behaviour Occurs

Behaviour reported → Behaviour not reported

"No Blame" talk with victim   "No Blame" talk with bully   Bullying may continue

Negotiated behaviour change

Review → Continued bullying

Change in behaviour   Consequences

Continue to monitor

Staff Responsibilities
Staff members will:
- Watch for early signs of distress in students. This could be evident in <u>any</u> aspect of school life;
- Ensure they are familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy;
- Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately to stop the bullying;
- Offer the victim immediate support and help, and outline what will now happen;
- Educate all students with regards to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident;
- Model positive behaviour in interactions with other people.

Student Responsibilities
Students should:
- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted senior student, Peer Helper, staff member **or**, anonymously, via *Stymie*;
- Keep evidence of cyber-bullying eg. screenshots;
- Actively support students they know are being bullied;
- Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents should:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child, such as an unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, equipment that has gone missing, request for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life;
- Report concerns to relevant College staff without undue delay;
- Keep a written record if the bullying persists: Who, What, Where and When?;
- Advise their child to tell a trusted teacher;
- Tell their child that there is nothing wrong with them;
- Support their child to devise a strategy to manage the behaviour;
- Model positive behaviour in interactions with other people.

Review Date

A review of the College's policy is undertaken every 24 months, taking into account data collected and input from stakeholders.