



St Augustine's Catholic College

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Rationale

"Bullying" or "harassment" is any gesture or written, verbal, graphic, or physical act (*including electronically transmitted acts – i.e., cyberbullying, through the use of internet, mobile phone, smart phone, computer, or other wireless handheld device, currently in use or later developed and used by students*) that is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress and may be motivated either by bias or prejudice based upon any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression; or a mental, physical, or sensory disability or impairment; or by any other distinguishing characteristic, or is based upon association with another person who has or is perceived to have any distinguishing characteristic.

Bullying and harassment also include forms of retaliation against individuals who report or cooperate in an investigation under this policy. Such behaviours are considered to be bullying or harassment whether they take place on or off school property, at any school-sponsored function, or in a school vehicle or at any time or place where a child's imminent safety or over-all well-being may be at issue.

One of the best ways to combat bullying is to create a caring environment in which students support each other. The College also tries to create a climate where all students feel that bullying should never be tolerated and that any instances should be brought into the open.

Awareness of this issue is raised in the following ways:

- The Drama department runs a full term module on issues relating to peer-group/teenage bullying for year 8 students, who work on formal presentations that are then delivered to all year 7 groups. On request these presentations are used for supporting issues in the Primary feeder schools
- Religious Education giving Christian values of love and care;
- The Pastoral programs where the underlying issues of self-esteem and valuing others is explored in relation to specific issues

Support for students who have experienced bullying is important. Form Tutors and the Pastoral Team are always able to listen to and help students. The following strategies have been introduced:

- Mentoring Scheme, encourages trained, sixth form "listeners" who are there to support lower school students. There are also 1:1 mentoring schemes for sixth form mentors working with an individual, vulnerable
- student, helping them with schoolwork, listening to their problems and being their friend;

- Counsellor Service when a professional counsellor comes into college to counsel individual students;
- Student support from outside agencies (Educational Welfare Officer, Education Psychologist, Social Services, School Nurse).
- Anti-Bullying Ambassadors
- The Bullying e-mail service

What is Bullying?

- Bullying” is conduct that meets **all of the following criteria**:
 - is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;
- is directed at one or more pupils;
- is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means;
- substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities by placing the pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress; and, is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

“*Harassment*” is conduct that meets **all of the following criteria**: is reasonably perceived as being dehumanizing, intimidating, hostile, humiliating, threatening, or otherwise likely to evoke fear of physical harm or emotional distress;

- is directed at one or more pupils;
- is conveyed through physical, verbal, technological or emotional means; Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, or programs of one or more pupils;
- adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or benefit from the school district’s or public school’s educational programs or activities because the conduct, as reasonably perceived by the pupil, is so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive as to have this effect; and,
- is based on a pupil’s actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic
- (see above), or is based on an association with another person who has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

Response to bullying must be urgent. Working with the bullies is also important. Often students become bullies as a reaction to their own problems or because they themselves have been bullied in the past. It is important to try to find out WHY the bullying behaviour has occurred. Shaming, shouting at or intimidating bullying behaviour only reinforces this kind of behavior so should be avoided. Ways of dealing with bullies are:

- confronting them with their actions, helping them to realise that they were wrong and giving them the opportunity to apologise and make amends;
- making them aware of the feelings of the person they have bullied so that they can see the harm that they have caused;
- getting students, friend and bullies together to talk about incidents that have happened and their consequences and to plan future strategies:

Restorative Justice

The Pastoral support structure for students is immediately accessible through their individual form tutor, in the first instance then the Head of Year.

The Pastoral Team; comprising the Form Tutor, Head of Year, Head of Pastoral (and support) and the Head Teacher, will be the main body within the College to deal with identified individual cases of Bullying or Harassment – up to and including the exercise of the Restorative Justice measures or other action deemed appropriate.

Factors for Determining Consequences

- Age, development, and maturity levels of the parties involved
- Degree of harm (physical and/or emotional distress)
- Surrounding circumstances
- Nature and severity of the behaviour(s)
- Incidences of past or continuing pattern(s) of behaviour – historical issues
- Relationship between the parties involved
- Context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred

Factors for Determining Remedial Measures

- Personal
- Life skill competencies
- Experiential deficiencies
- Social relationships
- Strengths
- Talents
- Traits
- Interests
- Hobbies
- Extra-curricular activities
- Classroom participation
- Academic performance
- *Environmental*
- College culture – expressed in the Gospel Values
- College ethos and consistent measures taken by staff to engender the skills of students to contribute to this. Special emphasis on our responsibility to support all individual members of the College community.
- Student-staff relationships and staff behaviour toward the student
- Level of consistency in staff responses to bullying or harassing behaviours
- Level of consistency in application or severity of consequences given to students
- Staff-staff relationships witnessed by students
- General staff management of classrooms and other educational environments
- Staff ability to prevent and de-escalate difficult or inflammatory situations
- Social-emotional and behavioural supports
- Social relationships
- Community activities – incorporating CTS specifically
- Neighbourhood culture
- Family situation