BULLYING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

St Joseph’s School is a place of learning. As such, students have the right to learn and teachers have the right to teach in an environment that is safe and supportive. Bullying has always been an issue in schools, but it has only been in the last decade or so that there has been an increasing awareness of how detrimental it can be to the progress of students both academically and psychologically. This has gained particular relevance due to the evolution of bullying methods using new technologies, such as mobile phones and personal computers, and social networking interfaces.

There has been a shift away from the view that bullying is an inevitable part of the culture of schools, and that children need to learn to cope as a life skill. These changes in attitude have come about partly because of the amount of research that has gone into bullying in recent years. They have also occurred due to the increased awareness of issues of Child Protection, and the realization that bullying is part of that greater topic.

A broad range of legislative and other policy documents relate to Bullying. All have relevance and the list is long. The two items most important operationally for St Joseph’s school are the

1. Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act and Regulations 2001, and
2. Code of Conduct and Duty of Care. In particular sections 6.1.2 Student Management and 7.0 Duty of Care

With the current legislation, guidelines and volume of research, it is essential to respond to the issue of Bullying in our school community and to address the issues in a proactive way.

RATIONALE

MISSION STATEMENT

“St. Joseph’s School offers an holistic education within a Catholic Christian environment whilst developing and valuing the uniqueness of the individual as we encourage each student to become a life long learner.”

The mission statement of St. Joseph’s School stresses the idea of “a holistic education”, which suggests there is a desire for learning in a safe, healthy environment. Implicit in becoming a “life long learner” is the ability to learn in a safe environment free from bullying and harassment and where respect for human dignity is valued and promoted. The uniqueness of each person can only be respected in a Christian environment where Gospel values are the basis for all school structures and activity.
Ensuring that the St Joseph’s learning environment is safe and free from all forms of bullying is therefore critical to the successful fulfillment of our mission.

GOSPEL VALUES
Respect, personal dignity, individual worth, freedom, integrity, trust, justice, understanding, forgiveness, honesty, care, compassion.

DEFINITIONS
Bullying – Bullying is behaviour that can be defined as the repeated attack, whether physical, psychological, social or verbal in nature, by a person/persons in a position of power, which is formally or situationally defined, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or satisfaction. Bullying is an attitude as well as an act.

POLICY STATEMENT
St Joseph’s School, as part of the wider Christian community, embraces the belief that each person has the right to be safe at all times. The school will provide a positive culture where bullying is not accepted, and in so doing, all will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to teach, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment.

Because the school believes in the dignity of the human person, every effort will be made to ensure that the issue of bullying is well understood by all, and that anyone who is being bullied or is bullying is supported and helped. St Joseph’s will challenge cultures that support bullying and other forms of abuse in society, and will address situations of such with due recognition of the Catholic Church context and the pastoral care of individuals.

CONSEQUENCES
• St Joseph’s School will provide opportunities for all of our children to learn about what bullying is and how to develop protective behaviours. This applies to traditional forms of bullying as well as the emerging reality of cyber bullying.
• Opportunities will be presented to students that will allow them to identify bullying behaviour without compromising safety. Personal safety remains an essential part of the school curriculum.
• Structures and processes will be developed and set in place for the St Joseph’s Community so that teachers, parents, students and other members of the community are aware of and understand the issues surrounding bullying.
• Staff will be in-serviced as prescribed by the TCEO. Efforts will be made to particularly highlight the issue of cyber bullying.
• All teachers will have the opportunity to become familiar with the legislation and guidelines mentioned in the introduction. Implementation of policy and procedures will occur within their framework.
• St Joseph’s School will maintain and review procedures outlining the action to be taken and steps to follow in registering an allegation or concern. Similarly, procedures for assessment
and responding to allegations of bullying will maintained and reviewed. These developments will take into account the need to address those who are bullies, as well as the victims of bullying.

- Staff behaviour should at all times reflect an understanding of bullying issues and the right to a healthy and safe environment free from bullying and harassment.

Bob Knight
Principal

Dan Manahan
Board Chair

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