

## **POLICY ON BULLYING, HARASSMENT, AGGRESSION & VIOLENCE (Students)**

### **RATIONALE**

Aranmore Catholic College has amongst its aims the provision of an environment in which each student is personally involved, in which each can develop as a person of integrity, social conscience and courage.

To this end, we aim to establish a community in which everybody feels valued and safe, and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted. Every student has a right to enjoy his or her time at school.

This community does not tolerate bullying, harassment, aggression or violence. Respect for others is expected.

### **DEFINITIONS**

In order to respond effectively to bullying, it is important to understand the differences between it, aggression, violence and conflict.

**Bullying** is a repetitive attack that causes distress not only at the time of the attack, but also by threat of future attacks. It is characterised by an imbalance of power and can be defined by the impact on the vulnerable person. It is an act that causes hurt or fear in another person. It may be deliberate or a result of thoughtlessness. It may be a physical attack on the person or their property. It may be verbal teasing or insulting. It may be indirect such as spreading rumours, excluding people from groups or manipulation of others to mistreat another student. It may be the creating of hurt or fear in others through cyber-bullying, that is, the use of electronic devices such as mobile phones, SMS messaging, social networking sites, chat rooms and other applications available through the use of the internet. Bullying

- Involves the misuse of power
- Is repetitive – prolonged over time
- May be verbal, physical, social or psychological
- May be an attitude rather than an 'action'
- Is hurtful and / or demeaning.

Bullying comes in many forms, including:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• name-calling, using hurtful or racist names</li> <li>• threatening verbally, or through body-language</li> <li>• deliberately ignoring or excluding</li> <li>• using sexual innuendo and harassment</li> <li>• spreading rumours</li> <li>• writing graffiti about another</li> <li>• disclosing another person's 'secrets'</li> <li>• stalking</li> <li>• telling lies about another hitting, punching, kicking, bumping</li> <li>• teasing or mocking</li> <li>• Interfering with the property of another</li> <li>• hiding the property of another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• repeatedly 'putting down' another</li> <li>• making fun of another person so that others laugh at them</li> <li>• giving another person 'the eye'</li> <li>• sending hurtful notes, text messages</li> <li>• sending harassing or abusive emails and phone messages</li> <li>• making silent or abusive phone calls</li> <li>• spreading rumours via email or phone messages</li> <li>• sending offensive SMS phone texts</li> <li>• posting insulting messages on the internet</li> <li>• posting photos / images /videos to the internet in order to demean, insult or make fun of another</li> </ul>
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**Harassment** is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Harassment can be seen as a particular form of bullying.

**Violence** may be defined as an act of physical aggression where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened or assaulted, or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is distinguished from bullying in that it is usually a one-off extreme use of force resulting in injury or destruction. Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind.

**Conflict** involves a disagreement between two or more people where one or more individual's needs are not being met. Conflict, so defined, does not involve an abuse of power as the people involved are of equal powers. In such situations, conflict resolution strategies can be used to provide opportunities for personal growth.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Aranmore Catholic College works to provide a safe and supportive environment where the 11 principles and 6 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework (2003) are practiced.
2. Aranmore Catholic College owes a duty of care to its students.
3. As a Catholic school, Aranmore provides a supportive environment which:
  - acts to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence
  - encourages socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management and direct teaching of curriculum in areas such as interpersonal and self-management skills
  - promotes respect for self and others
  - develops physical, emotional well-being and resiliency

- develops interpersonal skills and positive mental health
4. Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence requires quality leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained personal growth, together with a whole-school community approach that draws upon the college's Vision Statement, its Pastoral Policy and that is consistent with the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia's Pastoral Care Framework.
  5. Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student's learning and behaviour in school, Aranmore Catholic College takes action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved. It falls within the school's duty of care to intervene when bullying or harassment of students or by students occurs when they travel to and from the college. We will also intervene when bullying or harassment occurs through the use of information communication technologies by members of our community out of school hours.
  6. All bullying, harassment aggression and violence will be responded to. When bullying harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders, (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.
  7. All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.

## **PROCEDURES**

1. Students who engage in violence, in most instances, will be suspended as soon as statements about the conflict have been gathered. The suspended student will be required to complete a Reflection Activity during their suspension. Before they are permitted to resume classes, they will be required to attend an interview with the Deputy Principal, Students, in the company of a parent / guardian. At the interview they will be required to convince the Deputy Principal that they are prepared to comply with Aranmore Catholic College's Code of Behaviour, to refrain from further acts of violence and are prepared to engage in a Restorative Conversation with the student(s) with whom they have been in conflict. As a consequence of the post-suspension Re-entry Interview and the Restorative Conversation, a formal agreement will be drawn up and signed by all stakeholders.

In the event of further acts of violence occurring or of the student breaking the undertakings they had given, the student's enrolment at the college will be in jeopardy.

2. When conflict, or aggressive behaviour which falls short of violence, occurs, the students involved will generally be withdrawn from classes to enable conflict resolution processes to be enacted. These might include Circle discussions where a number of students are involved, or Restorative Conversations / Conferences depending upon the nature of the conflict and the people who need to be heard in order to acknowledge the wrongdoing, repair the harm and restore right relationships. Such conflict resolution strategies might be facilitated by the appropriate Head of Year, The Deputy Principal, or the School Counsellor.
3. A whole-school approach is employed to address issues associated with bullying and harassment. Our approach to bullying operates at three levels:

## **Prevention**

- Consistently and comprehensively implementing college policies such as the Pastoral Care and Behaviour Education Policy, the Bullying and Harassment Policy etc.
- Providing effective pastoral care through the college's pastoral care structures and systems.
- Providing a pastoral curriculum that develops students' understanding of issues associated with bullying and teaches them the skills to enable them to recognize and deal with bullying behaviours
- Providing adequate, visible and active supervision of the canteen, yard, ovals and school entry / exit points by teachers.
- Providing a range of lunchtime activities that engage students' interest.
- Providing Professional Development programmes for teachers to ensure they are equipped to identify bullying and to intervene appropriately

## **Early Intervention**

- Teaching students the skills to enable them to engage in effective 'bystander' behaviour in order to successfully prevent bullying situations developing
- Developing college programmes and workshops that teach students the skills of peer intervention, peer counseling and conflict resolution.

Providing students with the opportunity to participate in peer support programmes

## **Later Intervention**

- Responding effectively to bullying incidents by employing a hierarchy of appropriate responses by teaching staff developed to apply to particular situations
- Direct intervention by teaching staff when bullying behaviours are perceived or suspected
- Small group and individual counselling of people who are bullied. This could include skilling students in developing assertiveness, developing in them the ability to deflect, disarm or ignore repeated hostile behaviour and may include engagement in a Restorative Circle, Restorative Conversation or Conference.
- Individual counselling of students who bully others and encouragement for them to change their behaviour. Frequently this will include Restorative Conversations and the forming of a Restorative Agreement
- Harnessing peer intervention and peer support relationships
- Working in partnership with parents to counter bullying through close individual communication.

4. All staff are required to make their disapproval of bullying evident in the way they respond to student behaviour. Direct intervention to deflect, stop or draw attention to the hurtfulness of student behaviour is appropriate. A passive response is not an option because when onlookers, particularly adults, ignore bullying behaviour, covert approval of bullying is conveyed. Where incidental intervention seems ineffective, or where systematic bullying is suspected, staff should

refer their concerns to the bullied student's Head of Year, the Deputy Principal, Students, or to the Student Counsellor.

5. In responding to a referred instance of bullying, Heads of Year, the Deputy Principal or the Student Counsellor might employ either the Pikas Shared Concern method of intervention, or might use a Restorative approach depending upon the situation and the students involved.
6. Briefly, in employing the Pikas Shared Concern approach, the following steps are used by the Head of Year, Deputy Principal, Campus Minister or Student Counsellor when responding to referred bullying:

***Step one – interview with the person being bullied***

- When the Head of Year, Deputy Principal, Campus Minister or Student Counsellor finds out that bullying has happened, he / she starts by talking to the target of the bullying about his feelings. The interviewer does not question the bullied student about the incidents but does need to know who was involved.

***Step two – convene a meeting with the people engaged in bullying***

- The intervening staff person arranges to meet with the person or group of people who have been involved. This might include some 'bystanders' or colluders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying.

***Step three – explain the problem***

- The intervening staff person tells the people engaged in bullying about the way the bullied student is feeling and might use a poem, piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise the bullied student's distress. The details of the incidents are not dwelt upon nor is blame allocated to the group.

***Step four – share responsibility***

- The interviewing staff person does not attribute blame but states that he / she knows that the group-members are able to do something to resolve the distressed person's dilemma

***Step five – ask the group for their ideas***

- Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the bullied person could be helped to feel happier. The interviewer gives some positive responses but does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour

***Step six – leave it up to them***

- The interviewer ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the person / group to solve the problem
- He / she arranges to meet with the person / group within a week to see how things are going.

### **Step seven – follow-up meeting**

- Within a week, the Head of Year, Deputy Principal, Student Counsellor or Campus Minister who led the intervention discusses with each student, including the bullying target, how things have been going. This allows the intervening staff person to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process. This step should be repeated until the staff member is satisfied that the matter is well on the way to being resolved

### **Step eight – on-going monitoring**

- At irregular intervals once resolution seems to have occurred, the staff person ‘checks’ progress has been maintained, and where appropriate, affirms the growth that the students have achieved.

7. Where the student being bullied is sufficiently resilient as to be able to participate in a Restorative Conversation, Conference or Circle, the *REAL Justice* questions are employed to enable the recognition of harm caused, the acknowledgement of wrongdoing and the giving of undertakings in order to repair harm. In such instances, a formal agreement should be the outcome of the process and consequences for failing to honour undertakings should be agreed to.
8. Where students fail to respond to the ‘shared concern’ approach or to the Restorative approach to behaviour change, the disciplinary process is invoked. In such instances, sanctions are likely to be imposed. Such sanctions might include Pastoral Detention, Saturday Detention, the withdrawal of privileges, parent interview and behaviour contract, Internal Suspension, Suspension, and, ultimately, exclusion. All of these responses require consultation with parents and would seek to enlist their support in helping the student engaged in bullying understand and modify the offensive behaviour.
9. In supporting students who are being bullied, the student should be encouraged to.
  - **Tell the person engaged in bullying behaviour to stop.** State quite clearly that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. Stand up for yourself in a positive way. If you look confident when you respond, this will show you mean what you are saying.
  - **Avoid the situation.** Walk away and stay away from the people bullying you or the place where it occurs.
  - **Ignore the bullying.** Ignore the bullying completely and carry on with what you were doing. Use positive self-talk to help boost your confidence: e.g. I don’t deserve to be treated like this. I am not the one with the problem.
  - **Seek help.** Talk about the experience to someone who is trustworthy (Close friend, Student Councillor, Peer Support student).
  - **Report the bullying to a member of staff** and feel confident that any incident can be resolved without making the situation worse.
  - **Be aware that there are a range of ways in which bullying behaviour can be reported to the school:** talk to a Form Teacher, the Head of Year, the Student Counsellor, the Campus Minister; ask a friend to get help from one of those people; ask parents or guardian to get

help from one of the teaching staff; report the situation by means of a written note handed in to the Front Office or to Student Services; have someone make a phone call, or send an email to a staff member; use the College Website to email a confidential message [nobullying@aranmore.wa.edu.au].

10. Students who report witnessing instances of bullying are to be encouraged to adopt the role of 'strong bystander'. They are to be encouraged to act upon the following suggestions:
- **Intervene as soon as bullying occurs to someone else by telling the person engaged in bullying to stop.** This is very powerful if the by-standing / onlooking student has influence with the student engaged in bullying
  - **Refuse to join in with the bullying.** Bullies are seeking power. Being one of their pack or being an audience for them gives them power.
  - **Support students who are being bullied** – just standing by them can be enough, or, perhaps, walking away is a useful strategy to show that you do not wish to be involved in that behaviour
  - **Tell an adult** that you are concerned about the bullying.
  - **Accept responsibility for reporting bullying** whether it happens to you or to someone else.
11. While the college's response to Cyber-bullying is the same as for other instances of bullying and harassment, specific advice is to be given to students about how to protect themselves from, and how to deal with, Cyber-bullying, should they encounter it:

#### **Prevention**

- **Never give out or share personal information with strangers or casual acquaintances**  
Personal information includes your name, the names of friends or family, your address, phone numbers, school name, sports team. Personal information also includes pictures of yourself and your email address. Ask permission before sharing any information with a website, a "chat buddy" etc. Passwords are secret. Never tell anyone your password except your parents or guardian
- **Don't believe everything you read**  
Just because someone online tells you that they are fifteen doesn't mean they are telling the truth.
- **Use Netiquette**  
Be polite to others online just as you would offline. If someone treats you rudely or meanly – do not respond. Online bullies are just life offline ones – they WANT you to answer (don't give them the satisfaction)
- **Never send a message to others when you are angry**  
Wait until you have had time to calm down and think. Do your best to make sure that your messages are calmly and factually written. You will usually regret sending a "flame" to someone else. Once you've sent a message, it is very hard to undo the damage that such "flames" can do.
- **Never open a message from someone you don't know**  
If in doubt about it, ask your parents, guardian or another adult.

- ***If it doesn't look or "feel right", it probably isn't.***  
Trust your instincts. While surfing the Internet, if you find something that you don't like, makes you feel uncomfortable or scares you, turn off the computer and tell an adult.
- ***You don't have to be "Always on" Turn off, disconnect, unplug.***  
Give yourself a break. Don't stay online or connected too long. Spend some time with your family and friends off line. Try a little less virtual reality and a lot more actual reality. "Put down the mouse. Step back from the computer!!"

### **Intervention**

If you are the victim of a cyberbully, take the following actions:

- ***Do not keep this to yourself! You are NOT alone!***  
Tell an adult you know and trust. It is very hard to solve such problems on your own.
- ***Don't reply to messages from cyberbullies***  
Even though you may really want to, this is exactly what cyberbullies want. They want to know that they've got you worried and upset. They are trying to mess with your mind and control you, to put fear into you. Don't give them that pleasure.
- ***Do not erase or delete messages from cyberbullies***  
You don't have to read it, but keep it; it is your evidence
- ***Report cyberbullying activity***
  - Inform your Internet, Instant Messaging or mobile phone service provider, the webmasters who manage YouTube, Facebook, Myspace etc
  - inform your Head of Year or the Deputy Principal, Students, and be ready to show the evidence you have retained
  - act on the advice you receive from these sources to 'block' the cyberbully from further communication with you

12. Parents who are concerned about bullying may find the following suggestions helpful:

- Take an active interest in your child's social life and in what is happening at school  
Encourage your child to bring friends home and to accept and tolerate differences in others.
- Build your child's self-confidence by recognizing and affirming his or her positive qualities, and by valuing him or her for whom she / he is
- Discuss with your child the school's expectations about behaviour and ways to respond if his or her rights are infringed.
- If your child discloses bullying,
  - Tell your teenager you are glad he or she has talked to you about the situation.
  - Be aware of your own response and react in a calm, helpful and supportive manner.
  - Remind your teenager that the bullying is not their fault

- Ask your teenager what they think can be done to make the situation better
- Don't provide solutions but encourage them to suggest ways that they can deal with the problem
  
- Make sure your teenager knows how to get help and support at school. Encourage them to seek that support,
  
- Talk with your teenager's Form teacher, Head of Year, the Deputy Principal (Students), the Student Counsellor or with the Campus Minister to find out what will be done,
  
- Once you, your teenager and the school have decided on some actions, support these decisions at home,
  
- Keep a record of what happens each day,
  
- Arrange follow-up meetings to discuss outcomes; and,
  
- Keep in contact with the school even if the situation seems to have improved, to ensure the changes continue.

13. The Australian Communications and Media Authority have produced a number of internet safety guidelines for parents. These can be found at:

<http://www.cybersmart.gov.au>

[http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/assets/mail/lib310668/cybersmart\\_guide-families.pdf](http://www.acma.gov.au/webwr/assets/mail/lib310668/cybersmart_guide-families.pdf)