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Student Anti-Bullying Prevention and Response Procedures

PURPOSE

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and intrinsic to our education ministry. Consequently, the principle that the person is made in the image and likeness of God, is central to the mission of all our parish school communities. All students have the right to learn in a safe and supportive environment free from intimidation, humiliation and harm.

The purpose of these procedures is for Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Limited (DLCSL) to provide direction to Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lismore on how to prevent and respond to allegations of bullying behaviour. We seek to reinforce the values of care and consideration for others, to be respectful of each individual and to be witness to these Christian values not only in the school community but also in the broader community.

APPLICATION

These procedures apply to all employees in Catholic schools, Catholic Schools Office (CSO) and any related entities under the administration of DLCSL.

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PROCEDURES

1. DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 **Bullying** means the unwanted, repeated and intentional use of words or actions against someone or a group of students to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing. Bullying behaviour has three (3) key features:
 - a) It involves the intentional misuse of power in a relationship;
 - b) It is ongoing and repeated; and
 - c) It involves behaviours that can cause harm.
- 1.2 **Covert bullying** means bullying which is not easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight, such as excluding people from groups or spreading lies or rumours. It is also known as indirect bullying.
- 1.3 **Cyberbullying** means bullying behaviour that occurs through the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones.
- 1.4 **Overt Bullying** means behaviours which are obvious and easily observed by others, that is, the identity of the person displaying bullying behaviours is usually known. It can involve physical actions such as punching or kicking or observable verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting. It is also known as direct bullying.
- 1.5 **Parent** means a guardian or other person having the custody or care of a child.

2. BEHAVIOURS THAT MAY CONSTITUTE BULLYING

- 2.1 Behaviours that constitute bullying include but are not limited to intimidation, humiliation, victimisation and harassment, including that based on sex, race, religion, ability or gender variance. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).
- 2.2 Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium, and long term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. Bullying can refer to one-off acts where a group of students target a specific student.

- 2.3 Bullying can be by direct or indirect means.
- 2.4 Bullying can be easy to see, called overt, or hidden from those not directly involved, known as covert.
- 2.5 Bullying behaviours may occur on or outside school premises and during or after school hours. Some bullying may constitute criminal conduct such as assault, threatening behaviours, property damage or harassment and stalking.
- 2.6 Bullying can occur online (cyberbullying) or face to face.

3. BEHAVIOURS THAT DO NOT CONSTITUTE BULLYING

- 3.1 Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:
 - a) Mutual arguments and disagreements;
 - b) Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection;
 - c) A single episode of hurtful words or actions; and
 - d) Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.
- 3.2 However, these conflicts listed above still need to be addressed and resolved.
- 3.3 Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. A restorative meeting may help resolve the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

4. A SCHOOL'S DUTY OF CARE

- 4.1 Schools take reasonable care for the safety and wellbeing of students at school or when involved in a school activity.
- 4.2 Schools implement explicit teaching and learning aimed at deterring bullying activities.
- 4.3 Principals in consultation with Human Resources will report the conduct to the police where a criminal offence has been identified.

5. BULLYING OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS

- 5.1 The school leadership team has an obligation to respond if bullying behaviour occurs outside the school environment between two (2) students that attend the same school.
- 5.2 The school will respond in a manner appropriate to the situation.

6. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

- 6.1 Preventing and responding to bullying is the shared responsibility of all school staff, volunteers, and contracted staff employed by schools, students and parents.
- 6.2 The prevention of, and responses to, incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour in schools is more readily achieved in a caring and supportive school culture. Schools will establish strategies and

practices to encourage positive student behaviour that promotes positive relationships and reflects Gospel values of respect, compassion and forgiveness.

- 6.3 The implementation of whole school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising, incidents of bullying within a school community. This includes annual staff professional learning.
- 6.4 Schools create a supportive and caring school culture by:
- a) All staff developing positive staff-student relationships so students are cared for and known;
 - b) Educating students, staff and parents about bullying and social responsibility;
 - c) Celebrating the diverse backgrounds of members of the school community and teaching multicultural education, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and spirituality, to promote mutual respect and social cohesion;
 - d) Educating students to exercise digital responsibility in the appropriate use of technology, with a focus on cyberbullying;
 - e) Ensuring students understand what constitutes bullying;
 - f) Staff displaying vigilant supervision in the classroom and playground;
 - g) Embedding content to teach respectful relationships, problem solving, resilience, empathy, emotion regulation and age-appropriate skills which can support pro-social behaviour;
 - h) Promoting upstander behaviour and teaching the skills required for students to shift from being passive bystanders to active defenders;
 - i) Expecting positive staff-student relationships to increase the likelihood of a student seeking help for bullying;
 - j) Promoting a culture of reporting through ongoing education and multiple reporting channels;
 - k) Having school procedures that ensure ongoing recording and tracking of reported bullying incidents;
 - l) Identifying patterns of incidents including persistent bullies, targets or environmental concerns;
 - m) Identifying and responding to any contextual issues in the school community such as race, disability, sex and gender variance;
 - n) Acknowledging that the reason for bullying behaviour can be complex and require an inquiry approach to understand the behaviour of the student and the students impacted by the behaviour; and
 - o) Consider promoting student awareness by authentically participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

At school, it is everyone's responsibility to take the necessary steps to stop bullying behaviour.

7.1 **Schools will:**

- a) Promote a positive school culture where bullying is not accepted;
- b) Investigate complaints of bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved;
- c) Provide documented advice for students, staff and parents on ways to report bullying;
- d) Notify the Police if the bullying situation has involved violence, threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct such as child pornography;
- e) Seek advice from Human Resources;
- f) Complete a Mandatory Reporter Guide for cases of significant bullying;
- g) Maintain thorough records of bullying incidents and related interventions; and
- h) Seek advice from the NSW Police Local Area Youth Engagement Officer when required. They can provide advice on a wide range of areas associated with bullying.

7.2 **Responsibilities of staff:**

- a) Understand the school and system policies relating to bullying, behaviour, responsible use of technology and pastoral care;
- b) Support the school in maintaining and promoting a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment;
- c) Model behaviour indicative of the Gospel values of respect, compassion and forgiveness;
- d) Provide a classroom that is safe, supportive and inclusive;
- e) Actively listen to students;
- f) Teach students to identify, report and respond to bullying at school and online;
- g) Manage reports of bullying and escalate matters to the Principal (or delegate) when necessary; and
- h) Actively engage in restorative practices.

7.3 **Responsibilities of Leadership Teams:**

- a) Actively promote a positive school climate;
- b) Identify patterns of bullying behaviour and initiate school action to respond;
- c) Ensure that new and casual staff are informed regarding the school's approaches and strategies to prevent and respond to student bullying behaviour. This includes school volunteers;
- d) Ensure that staff will be supported with professional learning that provides evidence-based ways to encourage and teach positive social and emotional well-being and discourage, prevent, identify, and respond effectively to student bullying behaviour;
- e) Ensure that expectations about student behaviour are promoted;

- f) Ensure that parents are notified of bullying incidents involving their children;
- g) Ensure the school website has information to support parents if children have been involved in bullying behaviour (as the person engaging in bullying behaviour, as the person being bullied or as the person witnessing the bullying behaviour); and
- h) Regularly review procedures to ensure they are contemporary and sustainable.

7.4 **Students will:**

- a) Model behaviour indicative of the Gospel values of respect, compassion and forgiveness;
- b) Seek help from a trusted adult if aware of or involved in a bullying incident;
- c) Seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident;
- d) Participate in learning experiences that address understandings, values and skills relating to resilience, anti-bullying and responsible use of technology;
- e) Follow behaviour expectations outlined in the school's Acceptable Use of Technology agreement; and
- f) Aim to keep evidence of alleged bullying and produce it on request (if age appropriate).

7.5 **Parents should:**

- a) Read and abide by the terms and conditions of the School Enrolment Agreement;
- b) Model behaviour indicative of the Gospel values of respect, compassion and forgiveness;
- c) Notify the school promptly of all bullying situations involving their children;
- d) Work collaboratively with the school to resolve bullying when it occurs;
- e) Encourage children to report incidents to a trusted adult;
- f) Model prudent use of technology and supervise and discuss internet content and time spent using technology, to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens by discussing appropriate responses to bullying and cyberbullying;
- g) Help their children to problem solve friendship issues so their child can learn to distinguish between relationship conflicts and 'bullying';
- h) Report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying to the Police; and
- i) Follow due process and use relevant procedures when bringing complaints and grievances to the notice of a school and/or the CSO.

7.6 CSO will:

- a) Support schools to implement approaches based on a contemporary understanding of bullying, including schools based professional learning when required;
- b) Provide support to Principals in the management of bullying incidents; and
- c) Manage complaints about how a school has responded to a report of bullying.

8 RESPONSE PROCEDURES

8.1 Responding Considerations

Effective incident response and reporting procedures respect the dignity and privacy of those involved, whilst observing due process and procedural fairness.

In all circumstances schools will:

- a) Take bullying incidents seriously;
- b) Provide support to the impacted student(s);
- c) Take time to listen to the facts including discussing the incident with all students involved, including bystanders;
- d) Take time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- e) Effectively communicate with parents;
- f) Maintain records of reported bullying incidents; and
- g) Escalate the school response when responding to persistent bullying behaviour and/or severe incidents.

8.2 Responding to a Report of Bullying

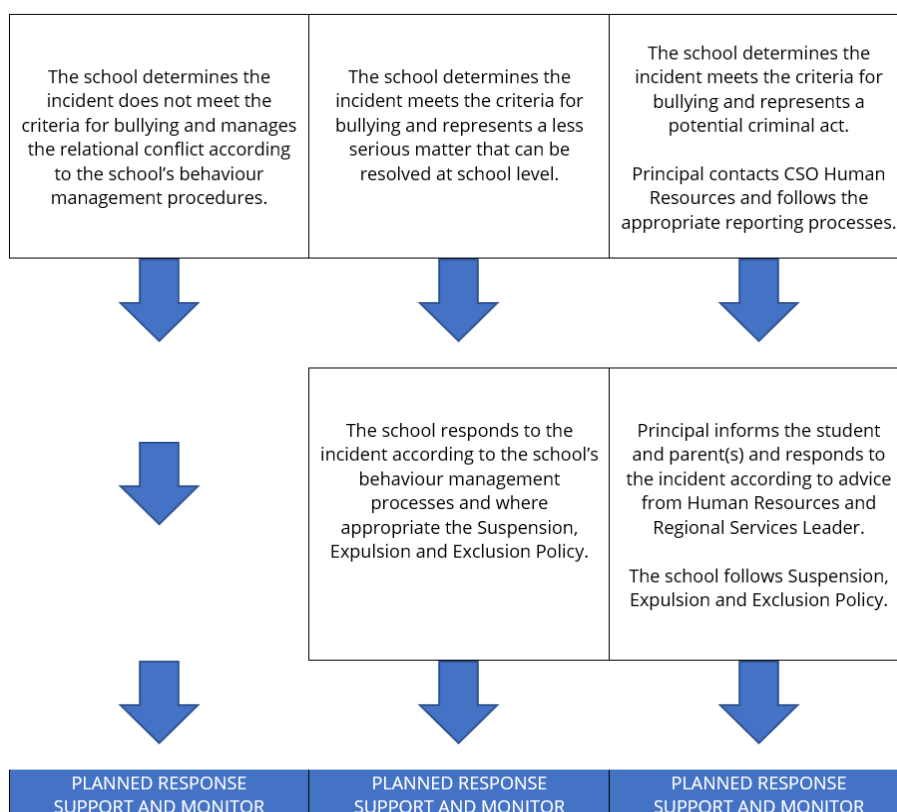
- a) Responding to an initial parent report of possible bullying:
 - i. Listen empathically and check your understanding of what the parent has said;
 - ii. Acknowledge the issue is important and offer assistance;
 - iii. Make a plan to keep the student safe while the school finds out what is happening. This could include discussing strategies to meet the needs of the student for a set period of time;
 - iv. Discuss with the parent(s) ways they can help such as encouraging positive friendships and the student identifying staff that they can go to for support;
 - v. Explain further steps that will be taken;
 - vi. Plan to meet with the parent(s) to review progress; and
 - vii. Document what you have agreed to do;
- b) Response by school leadership:
 - i. Gather and record information using Attachment One Template – Responding to a Bullying Allegation; and

- ii. Seek advice from Human Resources and determine reporting obligations. Is the behaviour life-threatening or is there a risk of harm? Was there aggression? Dominance? Persistence? Are there concerns regarding possible psychological injury?

8.3 Implementation of Behaviour Management Procedures

- a) Even though a behaviour may not be defined as bullying the school may be required to respond according to its behaviour management procedures.
- b) See Table 1 – Behaviour Management Procedures below:

Table 1 – Behaviour Management Procedures



9. PLANNED RESPONSE

The school will implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours.

9.1 Response to student exhibiting the behaviour:

- a) Response will be based on the severity of the incident and follow the Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Policy;
- b) If determined appropriate with advice from Human Resources, collaboratively develop a Risk Assessment Management Plan or Behaviour Plan with the parent(s) and student. Include any explicit expectations that are required for a specific length of time as a condition of re-entry to school. Consult with Pastoral Care Officers or Inclusion Officers (for students with a disability) in the development of the plan. This may include restrictions, frequent daily feedback, targeted emotion regulation, or social skills lessons;

- c) Inform staff of strategies required to support the student in the classroom/playground;
 - d) Determine appropriate restorative processes with the impacted student(s);
 - e) Planned review meeting with student, parent(s) and key staff; and
 - f) Continued bullying by a student will result in a further action plan being devised, appropriate consequences and further dialogue with the parent(s).
- 9.2 Response to student(s) impacted by the behaviour:
- a) Seek advice from Pastoral Care Officers or Inclusion Officers (for students with a disability);
 - b) Develop a wellbeing plan with the student and parent(s) based on the identified needs;
 - c) Determine appropriate restorative processes;
 - d) Provide strategies for the staff to support the student in the classroom and/or playground; and
 - e) Planned review meeting with student, parent(s) and key staff.
- 9.3 Response to bystanders:
- a) Determine an appropriate action for any bystanders;
 - b) Record actions; and
 - c) Monitor progress.
- 9.4 Response to impacted staff:
- a) Debrief with impacted staff;
 - b) Offer AccessEAP support; and follow up on their progress;
 - c) Where appropriate, individual support with classroom management may be required if the behaviour has been occurring in the classroom; and
 - d) Follow up with impacted staff.
- 9.5 Other strategies:
- a) Implement cohort year group, or whole school targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example "Be an Upstander";
 - b) Whole of school inquiry of behaviour to determine the current context of social cohesion in the school using student voice;
 - c) Continued monitoring by the staff for an agreed period of time; and
 - d) A Wellbeing Referral to the school Pastoral care team for specific intervention may be made for the student(s) who instigated the behaviour or the student(s) impacted by the behaviour.

10 RECORD KEEPING

- 10.1 All complaints of bullying will be recorded and securely stored.
- 10.2 All actions by the school will be recorded.

- 10.3 A summary of actions can be recorded using Attachment One Template – Responding to a Bullying Allegation or COMPASS Chronicle.

ENQUIRIES

Assistant Director, Mission Services

Lead, Pastoral Care

RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

DLC SL Child Protection Policy

DLC SL Suspension, Expulsion and Exclusion Policy

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)

Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)

Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)

Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)

Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 (NSW)

Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)

Education Act 1990 (NSW)

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)

Attachment One: Template – Responding to a Bullying Allegation

School:

Date:

Staff member completing the form:

Alleged Target	Yr/ PC	Alleged Instigator	Yr/ PC	Witness	Yr/ PC

Describe the reported incident/s and location.

Who reported the incident?

Did a staff member witness the incident?

What evidence supports the allegation?

Response Procedures

Procedure	Date	Notes
Student interview/s (alleged target)		
Student interview/s (alleged instigator/s)		
Bystander Interviews		
Staff interview/s		
Parent interviews (alleged target)		
Parent interviews (alleged perpetrator/s)		

Was the allegation of bullying confirmed? Why or why not.

Actions undertaking	Notes
☐ Medical assistance required	
☐ Inform parent(s)	
☐ Contact police (Incident Number)	
☐ Risk Assessment & Management Plan	
☐ Staff debriefing	
☐ Suspension/expulsion required	
☐ Behaviour plan	
☐ Counselling (in school or external)	
☐ Restorative practices	
☐ Wellbeing plan	
Other	