



Bullying and Harassment Policy

Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation of any sort will not be tolerated at Parkes Christian School. This policy outlines what bullying, harassment and victimisation is and how it can be identified and reported as well as the responsibilities of staff and students who encounter bullying, harassment and victimisation.

Definitions of terms

Harassment is any repeated unwanted, unsolicited and unreciprocated behaviour or statement that offends someone or humiliates them.

Victimisation is the specific targeting of one person by another person or a group of persons for repeated actions or comments of an unwelcome and unwanted nature. It is often inflicted on the subject in retaliation for a stand that has been taken against a wrong action or lodged a complaint against harassment or bullying.

Bullying is any repeated and/or intentional action or comment of a cruel, demeaning or intimidating nature by a person who is perceived to be more powerful than the person towards whom that action or comment is directed.

Sexual Harassment occurs if a person makes an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature and a reasonable person in the circumstances would have anticipated that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Physical abuse is any action of an unwanted nature inflicted upon a person that causes hurt or harm to their bodies.

Psychological abuse is any action or comment of an unwanted nature directed towards a person which has the effect of creating fear, isolation, distress, humiliation or affront in the victim.

Duty of Care is a legal term describing the responsibility of executive and teaching staff to be aware of and protective of the students' well-being while under their supervision. If an outcome is foreseeable, the staff members most closely involved with the students concerned have a "duty of care" to take action to protect their well-being. The executive also have a duty of care to ensure that there is appropriate policy and that policy is being monitored and enforced.

Framework and Rationale

The Bible declares that all humankind is "...made in the image of God" (Genesis 1:26-27) and, as such, bears His likeness and is worthy of honour from other human beings.

This is expanded further, when in Romans 12: 9-2, Christ's people are called to "...Live peaceably with all people" (v 18) and in Galatians 5:22-25, to exhibit "...the fruit of the

Spirit.” Jesus’ powerful words in Matthew 25:31-40 call us to allow our actions to speak the love of Jesus to those in need.

“For, inasmuch as you do it unto these, the least of your neighbours, you do it unto me.”

This is portrayed as the standard by which God will judge the faithful.

The scriptures then are clear that the Christian is called to act with awareness, compassion, thoughtfulness, grace, kindness and protection towards those who are vulnerable – not only within the church, but within the society. Therefore, it is appropriate that a Christian School community should be modelling, facilitating and educating with a view to all children catching a vision of what it means “to live at peace with all people” and to “bear the fruit of the Spirit”.

One of the most prominent characteristics of a Christian School must be its commitment to maintaining a safe and inclusive context for all students. To be known for this quality, the staff, the students and the parents must be firmly committed to it as a value. They must also have a commitment to:

- being aware of unacceptable behaviours
- understanding the sources of such behaviours
- actively educating at home and at school to instil such values
- working constructively together to prevent such behaviours from occurring in the school actively and
- creatively resolving unhelpful incidents that occur in the school context.

To achieve the ideal, there needs to be a recognition that the skills of communication and relationship do not just happen. They need to be taught and they need to be learned. Much learning takes place through the experiences of failure, disappointment and frustration. In the cases of harassment, victimisation and bullying, that learning needs to take place for both the victims and the perpetrators.

This policy therefore focuses on education, prevention, pastoral response, peer support and community leadership issues as much as it focuses on discipline.

Childhood and adolescence are periods in which students:

- are largely unaware of how others perceive them
- are often awkward and uncomfortable when facing people who are different from themselves
- are usually unskilled at expressing themselves sensitively and skilfully
- are sometimes unthinking in their actions and communications
- are unaware of the importance of setting limits in their risk-taking with others

We should therefore never be surprised that schools are places where behaviours, attitudes and comments between students have unexpected and unwelcome consequences. In such circumstances, the staff has a responsibility to all students (victims and perpetrators):

- to demonstrate understanding of the circumstances and the dynamics of the incident to seek to educate both parties as to why things went wrong
- to seek to build bridges between the parties and to see them fully reconciled
- to ensure that both parties have skills for the future to avoid repeat occurrences
- to establish monitoring procedures to help the parties to keep to their commitments.

Only in rare circumstances should it be necessary to revert to significant disciplines to deal with situations of this nature. However, it must be acknowledged that there will, in any school community, be students who wilfully and repeatedly offend in these areas. Having been through the pastoral and educational processes, they may reasonably be expected to know what is right and what is required of them. They will have been taught the skills and yet they have chosen not to exercise self-control. In such cases their behaviours have become:

- intentional or uncontrolled
- repetitive and
- a flagrant, unwelcome exercise of power over another person.

This is clearly within the definition of “bullying”. In its most serious forms, this behaviour becomes “assault” which is a civil wrong and, in certain circumstances, a crime. In this country, a child from the age of 10 can stand trial in a children’s court for such actions though this is unlikely to occur except in the most extreme situations.

Nevertheless, the standards of our society are defined by such laws and they coincide with our standards and our principles as a Christian School community. It is therefore appropriate that our policy and practices should be developed with these standards in mind.

Statements

- All members of the school community are entitled to feel and to be safe while in the school and while travelling to and from school.
- Harassment, victimisation and bullying are unacceptable behaviours.
- All members of the school community (staff, parents and students) have a responsibility to be working towards the school being a safe and inclusive environment.
- Any student experiencing harassment, victimisation or bullying can expect to be treated seriously when reporting an incident.
- Any student found responsible for repeated or intentional acts of harassment, victimisation or bullying must expect significant consequences.
- All students involved in incidents of harassment, victimisation or bullying (whether as victims or as perpetrators) can expect to receive counsel and advice to assist them in avoiding repeated occurrences of such incidents.

Statement of Unacceptable Behaviours

The range of unacceptable behaviours that fall under the headings of Harassment, Victimisation and Bullying can be grouped in a number of different ways. Irrespective of how they are grouped, there will be clear overlaps between the categories. These lists therefore serve only to assist in defining the territory of behaviours that have the potential to cause serious consequences were they not to be addressed.

Physical acts:

- hitting,
- kicking,
- pushing,
- tripping,
- punching,

- pinching,
- hair pulling,
- damaging property.

Verbal acts :

- taunting,
- teasing,
- name-calling,
- insults,
- put-downs or
- personal remarks of a racial or sexual nature.

Psychological acts:

- ostracism,
- rejection,
- emotional blackmail, such as threats of self harm,
- gossip.

Discrimination:

- exclusion based on grounds of race, sex, ability, appearance, disabilities.

Responsibilities of Staff, Parents and Students

For the school to succeed in its goal to minimise the occurrences of harassment, victimisation and bullying, there needs to be a commitment from all sections of the community to taking constructive steps when faced with incidents involving these behaviours.

1) Responsibilities of Staff

- a) To model appropriate standards in their speech, attitudes, values and behaviours that demonstrate respect for all .
- b) To refrain from actions designed to frighten, intimidate or demean students even under trying circumstances.
- c) To treat seriously any report of harassment, victimisation or bullying and investigate it impartially in establishing the facts of the incident.
- d) To ensure records of such reports are kept on file to assist in the identification of educational processes needed to help each student.
- e) To actively encourage a culture amongst the students of speaking up against all forms of victimisation. To actively affirm all students for qualities that they display.
- f) To take every opportunity to educate students and to raise their awareness of unacceptable behaviours. To take every opportunity to teach students appropriate skills of communication and relationships in the face of challenging circumstances.

2) Responsibilities of Parents

- a) To model appropriate standards in their speech, attitudes, values and behaviours that demonstrate respect for all types of people.
- b) To refrain from actions designed to frighten, intimidate or demean children even

under trying circumstances.

- c) To treat seriously any report of harassment, victimisation or bullying and investigate it even-handedly in establishing the facts of the incident.
- d) To promptly convey to the school the facts of any incident that has been reported at home.
- e) To actively teach your children the importance of speaking up against all forms of victimisation and of appropriately expressing what is unwelcome behaviour towards them.
- f) To actively affirm your children for qualities that they display.
- g) To take every opportunity to educate your children and to raise their awareness of unacceptable behaviours.
- h) To take every opportunity to teach your children appropriate skills of communication and relationship, especially in the face of challenging circumstances.

3) Responsibilities of Students

- a) To remember what you have been taught about inappropriate behaviours, attitudes and speech. To observe the effects of your behaviour, attitudes and speech on other people.
- b) To take action to actively discourage inappropriate behaviours and speech towards others.
- c) To appropriately express when certain behaviours and/or speech directed to you are unwelcome. To practise positive and encouraging behaviours towards your fellow-students.
- d) To refrain from actions designed to frighten, intimidate or demean other children even under trying circumstances.
- e) To promptly report to the staff the facts of any inappropriate incident that you have observed in the school or on the bus.

Identifying any Harassing, Victimising or Bullying Incident

- a) The relationship between the persons involved is not mutual, comfortable or equal in terms of power.
- b) The victim clearly demonstrated that certain behaviours or comments were unwanted and unwelcome.
- c) The effect of the behaviour or comment was to distress, confuse, humiliate, intimidate, exclude or physically hurt.
- d) The perpetrator is unrepentant, dismissive or insincere when confronted with the allegation.

Triggers for Harassment, Victimisation and Bullying

- a) Differences in style, personality, interests, visual appearance, race, language, ability. Humour - high risk sarcasm, put-downs, etc
- b) Secrets - keeping people out of the trust of the group
- c) Perceptions of power and influence - domination, manipulation, indifference, insensitivity Perceptions of inferiority and powerlessness - self-pity, dobbing, complaining, reactivity, being withdrawn, hypersensitivity, exclusiveness, unpredictability.

Processing a Complaint

Any complaint/report lodged to a member of staff, whether by a student, a parent or a staff member and whether it concerns a student, or a staff member, will be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity and care. The steps taken should include the following:

- a) What was actually said/done to the complainant?
- b) What was the context of the incident? (time, place, others present, what preceded the offending action/comment)
- c) What was the reaction/response of the complainant?
- d) Has this happened before? (from the same or different persons) Has anyone else had this treatment from this/these person(s)? Record the details of the complaint/report.
- e) Interview both victim and bully and identify the facts of the matter. Weigh the evidence for intent, frequency, power, impact, etc.
- f) Notify parents of victim and bully of the facts of the incident and the action taken. Establish monitoring mechanisms for both victim and bully. (peer leaders)
- g) Seek to educate both parties regarding strategies for preventing repeat incidents.
- h) Seek to establish reconciliation between the two parties and give them some skills for getting along more successfully.
- i) Warn the perpetrator of more significant consequences in the event of repeated occurrences of such actions/comments.
- j) Advise victims that they may take the matter further if not satisfied with the first steps taken.
- k) Parents of students may also take the matter further including legal action if the incident falls within the confines of the law.

This process is to be done in conjunction with the *Student Behaviour Matrix* and any evidence is recorded to be accessed in the future if required

School contact information:

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Community contact information:

Senior Constable Brett Ryan (Central West Police District Youth Officer)

3 Court Street, Parkes 2870

(02) 6862 9999

Headspace (Orange)

264 Peisley St, Orange NSW 2800

(02) 6369 9300

Parkes Community Mental Health Unit (CAMHS)

2 Morrissey Way, Parkes NSW 2870

(02) 6861 2570

Safe Haven

3/195-199 Clarinda Street, Parkes NSW 2870

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