POLICY ELEMENTS

Parents/caregivers have an integral role to play in the prevention and resolution of bullying.

The Catholic Education Office (CEO) Sydney’s Anti-bullying Policy provides a framework for school communities to work together to prevent and address issues of student bullying, in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person.

All partners in Catholic education share a joint responsibility to identify and address bullying behaviour.

Parents and caregivers will receive regular advice on the existence of a school’s policy and procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying and details on how they can access assistance if they have concerns in relation to bullying.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

BULLYING is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful, and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

Bullying can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and all forms of harassment including that based on sex, race, disability, sexual orientation or practice of religion. Bullying of any form, or for any reason, can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Bullying can happen anywhere: at school, travelling to and from school, in sporting teams, between neighbours, or in the workplace.

Bullying behaviour can be:

- **verbal**, eg name-calling, teasing, abuse, putdowns, sarcasm, insults, threats
- **physical**, eg hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, spitting
- **social**, eg ignoring, excluding, ostracising, alienating, making inappropriate gestures
- **psychological**, eg spreading rumours, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions, malicious SMS and email messages, inappropriate use of camera phones.

Bullying can happen:

- face-to-face (eg pushing, tripping, name-calling)
- at a distance (eg spreading rumours, excluding someone)
- through Information and Communications Technologies (eg use of SMS, email, chat rooms).

Some conflicts between children are a normal part of growing up and are to be expected. These conflicts or fights between equals, and one-off incidents, are not considered to be bullying, even though they may be upsetting and need to be resolved.

Bullying behaviour is not:

- children not getting along well
- a situation of mutual conflict
- single episodes of nastiness or random acts of aggression or intimidation.

Identifying bullying can sometimes be difficult. Bullying is often conducted out of sight of teachers, and children may be reluctant to report it.

CYBER-BULLYING involves the use of any Information Communication Technology by an individual or group to carry out deliberate, isolated or repeatedly hostile behaviour that is intended to harm others, or is undertaken recklessly without concern for its impact on others.

Children who are cyber-bullied are also likely to be bullied face-to-face.

Examples of cyber-bullying can include:

- sending insulting or threatening text messages
- publishing someone’s personal or embarrassing information online
- repeatedly hanging-up on calls
- creating hate sites or starting social exclusion campaigns on social networking sites.
Parents and caregivers will receive regular advice on the existence of a school’s policy and procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying and details on how they can access assistance if they have concerns in relation to bullying.

**SIGNs AND TIPS**

**I suspect my child is being bullied**

Your child’s behaviour can change for a variety of reasons. However, the following signs could indicate your child is being bullied:

- not wanting to go to school or participate in school activities
- does not appear to have friends
- is missing belongings
- has torn clothing
- seems to have become fearful and anxious
- has more mood swings, and seems to be crying more
- seems to have a drop in academic performance
- has poorer physical health and changes in sleep habits
- has increased negative self-perception.

The signs of possible cyber-bullying can be the same as signs of other bullying, but include certain behaviour with phones and computers, for example:

- being hesitant about going online
- seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- being visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone, or suddenly avoiding it
- minimising the computer screen, or hiding the mobile phone when you enter the room
- spending unusually long hours online in a more tense, pensive tone
- receiving suspicious phone calls, emails or packages
- withdrawing from friends, falling behind in schoolwork, or avoiding school.

You need to consider what you know about your child and the details of the situation to make the best decision for your child.

Let your child know that you will take the bullying seriously and that you can help them to report it to the school.

- stay calm and positive
- talk with your child
- do not advise your child to fight with the other child
- report the bullying to the school
- seek help for your child to improve his/her social skills
- discuss cybersafety
- stay informed and supervise your child’s interactions online.

**I suspect my child is a bully**

You may see or hear from others that your child:

- repeatedly teases, imitates or makes fun of the same child
- appears to repeatedly dominate or control others
- shows no compassion for someone who is experiencing bullying
- repeatedly excludes or ignores the same child
- whispers about the same child behind their back on a frequent basis.

It can be upsetting to be told that your child has bullied others. Children who use bullying behaviours need support to learn better ways of relating to others. Stay calm and learn more about your child’s behaviour so that any bullying behaviours can be addressed.

- discuss with your child why they might be behaving this way
- discuss the behaviours with the school
- consider what is going on at home
- explain why bullying is unacceptable
- make clear rules and consequences for your child’s behaviour.

**TIPS**

- Stay calm and positive
- Work in partnership with the school
- Encourage reporting
- Respect, resilience, community

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT** Created using the National Safe Schools Framework Parent information and support strategies can be found at: http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au/
All partners in Catholic education are committed to ending bullying in our schools. Directing your concern to the most appropriate person will help you get the most effective resolution.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Please note: all incidents should follow these steps to get the most effective and efficient response. Reports which escalate the point of contact will be redirected to the most appropriate level for resolution.

Catholic Education Office Sydney
38 Renwick Street, PO Box 217, Leichhardt NSW 2040
Phone: (02) 9568 6400
Fax: (02) 9550 0952
www.ceosyd.catholic.edu.au