



Our Lady of the Angels' School Anti-Bullying Policy

Our Lady of the Angels' School believes everybody in our school has the right to feel safe. This policy validates this belief and endorses that bullying behaviour in our school is unacceptable.

Anti-Bullying Policy

In the spirit of our school Mission and Vision Statements at Our Lady of the Angels' School and in partnership with parents, staff and students, we will strive to be a Catholic community who create a safe environment by:

- *Being welcoming, supportive and treating all others with dignity and respect*
- *Empowering and celebrating all as lifelong learners who lead by example*
- *Adopting a whole school, proactive approach to bullying*
- *Teaching and learning about positive relationships and social skills for students to deal with bullying*

Rationale

Our Catholic community, engaged in the educational ministry of the Church in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is called to:

Teach

We promote faith in Jesus Christ, teaching and learning about Jesus, the gospel and the faith of the Catholic Christian community. Learning is lifelong, life-giving and engages the whole person.

Challenge

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we challenge those we educate to live in communion with God, others and the whole of creation in prayerful, sacramental, just, peaceful, inclusive and reconciling communities.

Transform

We educate for a transformed world in communion, by nurturing the gifts and potential of each person, enacting shared leadership, and exercising a preferential option for the poor and the marginalised.

This policy document is aligned with the *Vision Statement for Catholic Education* above, in particular that in the event that student bullying does occur, appropriate steps are in place to handle the situation under the guiding principles of this Vision Statement.

A safe, supportive inclusive school environment is one that:

- Embraces and celebrates the diversity of its school community range
- Accepts that everyone is an individual and understands differences
- Promotes respect of others, values and compassion
- Applauds the efforts and achievements of all individuals in the school community

Definition of Bullying

At Our Lady of the Angels', bullying is the misuse of power, position and privilege. It is done to intimidate, coerce, and engender fear and to control.

There are three critical elements in this definition:

Power

Children who bully may acquire power through various means either directly or indirectly. This may take one or more but are not limited to misuse of physical size and strength, coercion, status within a peer group and recruitment within a peer group so as to exclude others.

Frequency

Bullying is not a random act; it is characterised by its repetitive nature. Because it is repetitive, the children who are bullied not only have to survive the humiliation of the incident itself but live in constant fear of its reoccurrence.

Intent to harm

Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be fully conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical and emotional harm is usually a deliberate act. It puts the child who is bullied in a position of oppression by the child who bullies.

Bullying is 'recipient defined', ie "It was only a joke" or "He doesn't mind" are unacceptable excuses. In many cases of bullying, there are elements of harassment and discrimination on the grounds of difference. The intention of the bully is irrelevant; the important factor is the harm done to the other person.

Bullying can be:

Physical

Kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, spitting, fighting, damaging or destroying other people's property, jostling, pinching, touching, or any unwelcome physical intimidation, such as gestures or staring.

Verbal

Offensive or abusive comments, sarcasm, crude jokes and comments, ridiculing appearance, actions or beliefs, obscene or threatening communications via any medium, teasing or putting other people down, verbal intimidation, whistling.

Social

Exclusion, spreading rumours, gossip, racial or sexual comments, graffiti and inappropriate notes/information about others, using emails, SMS and social networking sites.

Emotional

Victimisation, instilling fear in others, extortion (forcing other students to hand over money, food or other possessions), forcing other students to do their work.

This list is not exhaustive.

Signs your child may be the victim of bullying

- Loss of interest in schoolwork
- Reluctance to attend school
- Diminished academic performance
- Reluctance to talk about school and activities
- Limited social contact with peers
- Mood swings, anxiety, especially toward depression, irritability, unhappiness or outbursts of anger

- Reported headaches, stomach pains (frequently in the morning before leaving for school), poor appetite
- Loss of sleep
- Visible cuts, scratches, bruises
- Loss of personal property because of theft or extortion or damage to personal property

Other signs can include:

<i>Physical signs</i>	<i>Emotional signs</i>	<i>Other signs at home</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiredness • Loss of appetite • Unexplained bruises and injury • Torn clothing or personal property damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality changes such as loss of confidence, impulsive behaviour, and swearing • Sudden outbursts of temper • Being particularly negative or demonstrating bullying behaviour towards siblings at home • Lethargy, insomnia • Unhappiness, tearfulness or mood swings • Inappropriate answers to questions, avoiding issues • Anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health problems, vague headaches and stomach aches • Request to change mode of transport • Extra money • Lack of friends • Changes in eating or sleeping habits • School refusal

The National Safe Schools Framework states that the effects of bullying on school victims can be:

- Negative impacts on educational outcomes
- Long term stress and anxiety
- Depression and illness
- Increased tendency to self-harm

What behaviours are not bullying

While it is important to understand and define what bullying is, it is also important to be clear to the school community, what behaviours are NOT bullying. Dr Rigby (2010) identifies that for some people the term 'bullying' is a highly emotive term and its use may lead to an over-reaction. The *National Centre Against Bullying* acknowledges that while the following behaviours are often upsetting to those involved, they do not constitute bullying:

- Mutual arguments or disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- One-off act of meanness or spite
- Isolated acts of violence or aggression

Responsibilities and accountabilities

Being a safe school is everyone's responsibility. It requires a commitment from all members of the school community. The responsibility and accountability to address incidences of bullying lies with the school, children and parents.

<p><i>The Principal, APRE & APA create the best circumstances for a safe environment by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the expectations of children and teachers are clear and consistent • Monitoring the implementation of rules • Encouraging Positive Behaviour Awards for being Safe • Developing strong parent and community links • Effectively communicating and promoting the school's behaviour management policies • Ensuring all members of the school community are aware of the school policy and procedures • Responding to each incidence of bullying in accordance with the procedures set out in association with this policy. 	<p><i>Teaching and non-teaching staff actively create a safe environment by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being role models in words and actions at all times • Treating every complaint of bullying seriously no matter the perceived level • Discouraging any signs of bullying or anti-social behaviour • Being vigilant and observant for signs of bullying in the playground and classroom • Managing bullying issues in accordance with the anti-bullying policy • Where applicable ensure that incidences are reported to the principal • Teaching students how to stand up for others if they see bullying behaviours • Developing within the children non-violent alternatives to resolve conflict • Developing a sense of 'fair play' in children
<p><i>Children actively create a safe environment by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating all in our community with Respect. • Standing up for a student who may be experiencing bullying • Reporting to a teacher or the principal if they feel they are being bullied or if they witness any incidence of bullying either at school or on the way to and from school • Following the Hi-Five • Developing self-discipline and helping others • Being good role models for other children by displaying strong values as taught and expected of all children at Our Lady of the Angels' • Taking a level of responsibility for their behaviour appropriate to their stage of development 	<p><i>Parents create a safe environment by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being role models in words and actions at all times • Familiarising themselves with the school anti-bullying policy • Discouraging any sign of bullying behaviour which may become apparent in their child/children • Cooperating in full with the school if it is found that their child has been directly or indirectly involved in bullying behaviour and supporting any activity designed to change the child's behaviour • Encouraging their child/children to tell them and the teacher, if they feel they are being bullied • Watching for any indication of bullying and notify the child's class teacher immediately if they suspect their child may be the victim of bullying • Seeking understanding of all the facts of a bullying instance before reacting • Working in partnership with the school to assist the child to overcome the impact of identified bullying, including implementation of appropriate support and coping strategies which will empower the child to respond to emerging situations with confidence • Working in partnership with the school to assist the child to take responsibility for bullying behaviour and its impact on others and developing appropriate behavioural strategies to strengthen and improve their social interactions

At OLA the following procedures are implemented:

Procedures

Dealing with bullying is difficult in that many of the behaviours are not readily observed and hotly debated with much taking place 'out of sight' away from the attention of teachers or adults. One critical factor in the treatment of bullying is the disclosure of such treatment to an appropriate person. Without knowledge of these matters the school is unable to attend to addressing them.

Staff shall:

- Make efforts to remove opportunities for bullying through active supervision at all times
- Provide children with clear procedures in the event of bullying
- Take appropriate action by reporting suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member [Class Teacher, Assistant Principal-Religious Education; Assistant to the Principal Administration or Principal]
- Keep all parties 'in the loop'

The school expects parents to:

- Take an active interest in their child's whereabouts after school and their child's friends and acquaintances
- Inform their child's class teacher if bullying is suspected, if the child is reluctant to do so
- Discourage the child from retaliating
- Not approach the child or the parents of the child that has allegedly bullied your child or involve an older child to deal with the bully. Please inform the school immediately
- Be willing to attend meetings with staff at the school if their child is involved in bullying incidents
- Reassure their child that steps are being taken
- Keep listening to their child as 'the story unfolds'

This requires children to:

- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation
- Put in place strategies from 'Say No to Bullying' and 'Kids Matters'
- Immediately, if present when bullying occurs:
 - if appropriate, take some form of preventative action
 - refuse to condone or encourage or be a spectator to bullying
 - report the incident or suspected incident to a teacher

Bullying Prevention and Policy Implementation

The school shall adopt a four-phase approach to anti-bullying.

Primary Prevention

- Provide programs eg 'Kid Matters', 'Say No To Bullying', 'Peer Mentoring', that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- Regular highlighting articles and strategies relating to counteraction of bullying and harassment for Staff at Staff Meetings
- Peer mediation in conjunction with the Year 5/6 Leadership program
- Continue to educate children about prevention of bullying through the 'Say No to Bullying' from the Protective Behaviours and Personal and Social Development Programs
- Each classroom teacher shall clarify at the start of each term, the school anti-bullying policy and the Behaviour Support Plan, appropriate to the developmental level of the child with 'what it looks like' & 'what it doesn't look like'
- Expose children regularly and frequently to activities to educate about and reinforce positive social behaviours of being respectful and responsible

Early Intervention

- Children shall report bullying incidents involving themselves or others to an appropriate adult immediately
- All teachers on a regular basis, shall remind children to report incidents and reinforce that reporting is not dobbing

- Parents are encouraged to contact their child's class teacher as soon as they become aware of a problem
- There may be acknowledgement of positive behaviours through recognition and rewards at assembly

Intervention

- The Incident Register shall be closely monitored by the Administration Team and action plans followed up promptly
- All allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented and parents will be notified
- Once identified, a bully, victim and witnesses will be interviewed individually
- All parties involved will be offered support
- If bullying is ongoing, parents and child will meet with school staff to develop an action plan, including
- Consequences consistent with the school's Behaviour Management Program; Individual Behaviour Learning Plans will be developed as needed
- Counselling may be recommended if applicable

Consequences for children will be individually based and may involve:

- Teaching children social problem solving strategies, mending of relationships and offering opportunities for reconciliation between victim and bully
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Internal suspension
- External suspension
- Ongoing counselling and intervention from an appropriate agency for both victim and bully
- Ongoing monitoring of the identified bully, victim and other children involved
- Rewards for positive behaviours

This policy is related to and shall be read in conjunction with:

- ***National Safe Schools Framework***
- ***Brisbane Catholic Education Protective Behaviours Policy***
- ***Brisbane Catholic Education Behaviour Management Policy***
- ***Our Lady of the Angels' Education Behaviour Support Plan***

Acknowledgements

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