

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY -(promoting positive Peer relations)

Rationale

Saint Mary MacKillop College Albury affirms that all members of its community have the right to enjoy a safe, positive environment. This environment encourages students of all ages and backgrounds to interact in a positive way with each other, so that all feel accepted as worthwhile members of the College.

Students, who are victimised in any way, whether by name-calling, put-downs, racial slurs, or being left out of group activities, may be negatively affected in the long term. In short term, their motivation for academic and social development and feeling of general well-being may be decreased, so that they will be less likely to develop to their full potential.

Because children and adolescents have a variety of coping styles, bullying affects them in different ways. It is our aim to increase students' capacity to cope with being bullied by helping them to develop resilience and making them aware that they must seek assistance if they are being victimised. We cannot help if we don't know. We are also aware that schools should stop students who victimise others in any way from believing they can use power over others rather than the more equal relation, where each person is respected for who they are. Students who change to a more positive manner of communication with their peers become more respected in the true sense of the word and gain much more out of their time at school.

Definition

"A student is being victimised when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students." (*D. Olweus, *Bullying at a School. What We Know and What We Can Do*, Blackell, Oxford 1993, P.9) "Negative actions may include being "picked on", being excluded or ignored, being gossiped about or teased, over a period of time. Bullying incidents can be isolated or repeated. They may occur directly(face to face) or indirectly (via mobiles or the internet). Negative actions that make reference to ethnicity and religious beliefs are also considered as a form of victimisation. Victimisation does not refer to a disagreement or a one-off fight with another person.

Principles

Our school will not tolerate the involvement of any student in the process of victimisation or harassment of another student in any way, including: -

- General bullying
- Racial or cultural prejudice.

Where instances of victimisation occur, the school will follow a series of procedures ranging from a "No Blame" approach to formal sanctions.

The School will seek to raise the awareness of all students to the issue, to challenge the view that victimisation/bullying is a natural part of life, and to develop an ethos which refuses to condone or omits to deal with the issue.

It is the right of all individuals in the school community to be free of bullying and (if bullied) to be provided with help and support.

- To avoid the bullying or victimisation of others
- To try to help students who are being victimised
- To attempt to include students who become easily left out.

Staff are to work closely with parents and teachers so that opportunities to build character in students is maximised. The aim is the character education of all students, including those who have behaved inappropriately.

The school has an obligation to have a pro-active approach.

This positive approach includes programmes across the school promoting good parenting skills, virtue and resilience. A note about bullying will be incorporated into the high school student welfare booklet.

Resources:

Restorative Practices resources:

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/methodrestorative.aspx>

Procedural Fairness: see Appendix 1

Anti-Bullying resources including fact sheets and parent resources:

<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Procedures

Step 1 Where an incidence of teasing or bullying has occurred the first point of contact is the classroom teacher. The principal should be notified also. The principal will maintain records of reports and actions taken. A note may be placed in the student file if of a serious nature. The “No Blame” approach as outlined by “Maines and Robinson” is adopted. Principles of procedural fairness are also to be maintained.

If the ‘No Blame’ approach is unsuccessful or where the bullying behaviours are of a more serious nature:

Step 2 Disciplinary interviews are conducted by the Principal. Confidentiality is to be maintained. Simultaneously, support for the “victim” is sought. Restorative practices techniques are recommended(see links above, also see Discipline Policy).

If victimisation continues:

Step 3 The school will contact parents of those involved (both “Bullies’ and victim’) and request an interview. In both cases, the intention will be to help the family deal appropriately with the problem.

If it appears necessary, there will be a recommendation that a referral be made to an appropriate agency for the family or the child concerned.

Suspension or expulsion may be the ultimate recourse if there is no willingness to address the behaviour. Counselling would be the preferred option in these extreme cases before any such move would be initiated. If required school may need to consult the School Liason Police officer.