



St. Mary's School Altona

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

At St Mary's Primary School Altona we do not tolerate bullying in any form.

All members of our school community are committed to ensuring a caring and safe environment which promotes personal growth and a positive self esteem.

We believe all members of our school community have the right to a safe environment and to be treated fairly with respect and courtesy. We believe these rights have concurrent responsibilities which include accepting others and treating them with dignity and respect.

St. Mary's School maintains a 'culture of child safety' by actively implementing strategies in accordance with its moral & legal obligations and Victorian Government Ministerial Order 870.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when someone is subjected to ongoing behaviour which is hurtful, threatening, frightening. It is a conscious, planned and repeated act. It can cause distress at the time or has the potential to be a threat in the future. It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal gesture, telephone, extortion and exclusion.

FORMS OF BULLYING:

Physical Bullying:

Includes fighting, pushing, spitting, shoving, pinching, threatening gestures, invasion of personal space or any other unwelcome physical contact.

Verbal Bullying:

Includes name calling, teasing, offensive language, spreading rumours about others, putting people down or belittling them, their abilities or achievements (behind their backs), picking on people or making degrading or ridiculing comments about their culture, race, physical appearance, gender, other family members and religious or social background.

Gesture Bullying:

Includes offensive notes or material, graffiti or damaging other people's property by interfering, stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it.

Social Media (Email, Internet, etc):

Involves offensive posts/pictures with the intention to harass or cause discomfort

Telephone Bullying:

Involves students who repeatedly phone/text others' with the intention to harass or cause discomfort.

Extortion Bullying:

Includes standover tactics, bullying others into giving up possessions, picking on others, threats to 'get people', forcing others to act against their will, making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse.

Exclusion:

Includes being left out of activities on purpose.

WHAT DO WE DO TO PREVENT BULLYING AT ST MARY'S SCHOOL ALTONA?

When staff, students and parents work together, we create a more caring, tolerant and Christian environment at St Mary's Altona.

As a school community we endeavour, through a variety of approaches and in collaboration with all the parties concerned (staff, students and parents), to prevent bullying.

This requires staff to:

- be role models in word and action; model assertive rather than aggressive approaches to interpersonal interactions.
- be observant to signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying.
- make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by patrolling the playground carefully during yard duty.
- arrive at class, to yard duty and to class line punctually.
- take steps to help victims, listen to concerns, offer support and, if necessary, assistance.
- follow designated procedures (Refer to 'Intervention Procedures' - further steps section).
- take heed of parental concerns.

This requires students to:

- refuse to be involved in any bullying incidents. Don't stand by and watch - seek help. If you know of serious bullying, tell a staff member you trust. The victim may be too scared to tell.
- if bullying occurs where and when you are present, if appropriate, take some form of preventative action. Show that you and your friends disapprove.
- report the incident or suspected incident, even if you are not directly involved (see "Intervention Procedures" below).

The school recommends that parents:

- watch for signs of distress in their children eg. unwillingness to attend school, damaged clothes, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, toys, money.
- advise their child to tell his/her teacher or other trusted staff member about the incident.
- if possible allow their child to report and deal with the problem him or herself.
- inform the school if bullying is suspected.
- do not encourage their child to retaliate. This may compound the problem.
- parents and the offending students are required to attend interviews at school if a continuance of the offence occurs.

OTHER PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES:

Ensure that once a year an awareness raising campaign is carried out by:

- students (through the JSC) to other students.
- staff to students (in classroom and curriculum).
- school to parents (via Newsletter, Information Nights, Assemblies).
- staff to staff (through staff meetings and other communication).
- reviewing this Policy.

INTERVENTION PROCEDURES:

If you feel you have been or are being bullied begin with:

- Ignoring it
- Showing outwardly that it doesn't upset you
- Confronting the bully and as calmly as possible, state that their behaviour or action is unwanted and that you want them to stop and to leave you alone eg. "I don't like it when ..." Be assertive, look and sound confident
- Talking it over with others, such as friends and parents, who may help to make constructive plans
- Taking the matter to your class teacher, a trusted teacher or other significant adult, where the issue will be dealt with effectively and confidentially. Bullies will not stop if they think they can get away with it. This is not dobbing. You have the right to talk it over in confidence and ask that it not be reported further

FURTHER STEPS:

If the matter has been taken to the class teacher, a trusted or other significant adult, the following is a recommended procedure to follow (this is the No Blame Approach to countering bullying):

- Step One: Interview the victim.
Interview between the victim and the teacher or other significant adult.
- Step Two: Convene a meeting with persons involved.
A meeting is convened with the persons involved. This includes the main perpetrators, colluders, bystanders or witnesses. This will allow all to be heard. At this stage the emphasis is on corrective change rather than punishment eg. if a student's bag is damaged in the bullying incident, the offender takes action to repair or replace the bag.
- Step Three: Explain the problem.
The problem is explained to the group and the teachers or significant adult clearly state that bullying will not be tolerated. Relevant sections of this Policy may be read and reiterated to make expectations clear.
- Step Four: Share the responsibility.
Don't attribute blame, but it is stated that the group is responsible and can do something about it.
- Step Five: Ask the group for their ideas.
Teacher asks about ways the victim may be made to feel better and what action/s are not acceptable now and in future. A further meeting is arranged to see how things are going.
- Step Six: Meet them again.
Reconvene the meeting a week later to discuss progress of the process.
- Step Seven: Follow up.
If the bullying has continued, the next step will be for the principal or his or her proxy to deal with the incident. The parent/s of the student displaying bullying behaviour are invited to the school and informed of the situation and the school's concern with it.

All matters will be dealt with in a confidential manner.