Anti–Bullying Policy

Rationale
At school everyone should be treated respectfully, every person needs to feel safe and secure and students need an environment that supports their learning, personal growth and positive self esteem.

Every person has the right to feel safe from verbal, physical and emotional abuse that takes the form of bullying. A situation where a student feels unsafe in school because of bullying is not tolerated at our school.

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is:

- To effectively prevent bullying, schools need to take a whole-school approach that focuses on safety and wellbeing throughout all school practices. It is important that school safety is not viewed as a separate policy but as a central component of an effective school. Our school strives to develop each of these characteristics.
- To encourage a culture that is firm about unacceptable behaviour and provides incentives for acceptable behaviour.
- To articulate how bullying is defined and addressed; including the means taken to prevent incidents and the response taken when an incident occurs.
- To ensure that:
  1. Each person in the school community knows about and is alert to the signs and evidence of bullying occurring
  2. Each person takes seriously his or her responsibility, whether as a victim or observer of bullying, to report all incidents
  3. A satisfactory response is given to all reported incidents of bullying
  4. Both the victim and perpetrator of bullying are supported and assisted to learn from the experience
  5. Relationships damaged as a result of bullying are, as much as is possible, restored within a reasonable time
  6. The school and parents work in partnership in responding to incidents of bullying

Definitions
Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person that creates a risk to their health and safety. It occurs when an individual or a group uses power to scare or hurt others. Forms of bullying include:

- Physical bullying: pushing, shoving, fighting, pinching and any other unwelcome physical contact used intentionally to intimidate or hurt someone.
- Verbal bullying: put downs, particularly those referring to physical characteristics, can result in loss of self esteem. Racial discrimination of any kind is a form of bullying
- Gesture bullying: non-verbal signals can be used by bullies to silence and intimidate their victims.
- Extortion bullying: physically stronger and more powerful students may bully other students into giving up their possessions, buying food and drink, or taking part in rule breaking activities.
- Exclusion bullying: being left out of activities on purpose is one of the most hurtful forms for children because it feeds their fear of not being accepted.
- Visual bullying: offensive notes or material, graffiti, or damaging other people’s possessions.
- Sexual bullying: touching, sexually orientated jokes, drawings of, or writing about someone’s body, using rude names or commenting about someone’s morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, asking questions about someone’s private life.
- **Cyber bullying**: the use of various forms of electronic media to spread text and visual messages to cause hurt, embarrassment, intimidation.

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

**Types of Bullying**
There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying**
   This form includes hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.

2. **Direct verbal bullying**
   This form includes name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.

3. **Indirect bullying**
   This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied person’s back. It is designed to harm someone’s social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
   - lying and spreading rumours;
   - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate;
   - mimicking;
   - encouraging others to socially exclude someone;
   - damaging someone’s social reputation and social acceptance; and
   - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress someone.

**What Bullying is Not**
Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

**Mutual conflict**
In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for ‘retaliation’ in a one-sided way.

**Social rejection or dislike**
Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

**Single-episode acts**
Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

**Some Common Reactions and Unhelpful Beliefs**

"I was just mucking around, can't they take a joke!"
This is the most common response to bullying. To put someone down, ridicule them, make them feel uncomfortable, push them around, or take their possessions is not a joke.

"I'll ignore it and it will go away."
If anything, ignoring it makes it worse. You will give the impression that it is okay with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.
“My parents told me to fight back.”
The problem with retaliating to bullying is that sometimes it escalates other forms of misbehaviour.

“I don’t want to cause trouble.”
Most cases of bullying are sorted out very simply, especially if it is reported straight away. You’re not causing trouble, you’re standing up for yourself.

“It’s just a natural part of growing up.”
There is nothing natural about being victimized or of bullying others. Kids have a right to feel safe at school, as well as at home.

Implementation
Anti-Bullying Strategy
There are two key elements to the anti-bullying strategy:

1) Primary Prevention & Early Intervention
   a) The implementation of learning programs aligned with the VELS strand of ‘Physical, Personal and Social Learning’. The essential knowledge, skills and behaviours students need are described in the four domains of Health and Physical Education, Interpersonal Development, Personal Learning, and Civics and Citizenship. These programs include:
      a. A Prep to Year 6 unit at the commencement of the year with an explicit focus on personal and social learning from the relevant VELS level
      b. Personal and social learning as integral to further Units of work throughout the year
      c. Teachers plan and implement targeted social skills programs to build resilience and develop conflict resolution, assertiveness and problem solving skills. Current programs include Bounce Back, Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms and Three Step Conflict Resolution.
   b) At the beginning of each year, and repeated as needed, each classroom teacher is to clarify with students their responsibilities with regard to preventing and reporting bullying, and the processes the school uses when bullying is reported.
   c) A Wellbeing Survey and Yard Survey are conducted at least twice annually. The outcomes of the survey are utilised to inform the school of the present situation as experienced by students, and to assist the school to revise and adjust its processes and procedures as needed
   d) Staff and students adhere to and actively promote the stance of ‘No Put Downs’
   e) Parents kept informed about all elements to the school’s approach and regularly reminded and encouraged to contact the school should they become aware of a problem. We want to develop a culture of being a ‘telling’ school.

2) Intervention on an Incident Being Reported
   a) We treat bullying the same way as Mandatory Reporting (i.e. all incidents of bullying must be reported to the Principal).
   b) Each incident is fully investigated and the actions taken are documented. These actions will include:
      a. Once identified, the victim, the perpetrator, and any witnesses are interviewed
      b. The parents of all students involved are contacted and meetings as needed are arranged
      c. An action plan, which takes the intent of restoring the relationship and that equally, addresses the needs of both the victim and the perpetrator is put in place.
      d. The action plan is monitored and adjusted as needed
   c) If the perpetrator persists in bullying, the above process will be repeated and will result in a revised action plan. Where necessary the specialist staff of the Catholic Education Office and/or other professionals may be asked to become involved. Students who continue to bully will be closely supervised.
d) Students who have bullied may:
   a. Be excluded from class for a period
   b. Be subject to an individual behaviour management plan
   c. Be excluded from the yard for a period
   d. Have privileges withdrawn (This would be at the Principal’s discretion and could include things like not attending camp, sports events, excursions, etc.)
   e. Be required to cooperate with attending counselling from an appropriate agency
   f. Be suspended, or in extreme cases have enrolment transfer to another school

**Evaluation**
This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's five-year review cycle or as required.

**Ratification**
This policy was last ratified by August 2009

**Appendix**

i. **Resources**
ii. **Restorative Practices**
iii. **Strategies to deal with bullying**
   - Strategies for Students
   - Strategies for Teachers
   - Strategies for Parents
iv. **Bullying Audit Survey**
Appendix i

Resources

- CECV policy 1.14: “Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools” incorporating the “Guidelines for Student Behaviour Management” February 2008.
- Safe Schools are Effective Schools – a resource for developing safe and supportive school environments. Dept of Education and Training 2006
- Guidelines for developing The Student Code of Conduct Directorate of School Education 1994
- Cybersmart offers information and resources for parents and carers and provides activities for use with children of all ages. School staff can find classroom activities, lesson plans and student handouts related to cyberbullying. Available at: http://www.cybersmart.gov.au
- Bullying.No Way! provides information about cyberbullying and strategies on how teachers and parents can work together to tackle the issue. Go to: http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/talkout/spotlight/cyberbullyingmain.shtml
- CyberSmart! provides a free cyber bullying package which may be useful for school staff wanting to begin a dialogue with students and build a sustained cyber bullying prevention campaign to continually remind the school community about safe, ethical online use. Go to: http://cybersmartcurriculum.org/cyberbullying/nsba/

Appendix ii

Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices are increasingly being used by Catholic and Victorian government schools to manage bullying incidents.

The term Restorative Practices refers to a range of processes which are underpinned by the following concepts:

• misconduct is viewed as a violation of people and relationships;
• these violations create obligations and liabilities; and
• problem-solving focuses on healing and making things right.

These practices, ranging from proactive to reactive, involve the development and enhancement of relationships in schools and teaching of conflict resolution and other problem-solving skills. They also involve classroom management that is participatory and democratic and focused on problem-solving.

These practices require a shift in philosophy from traditional punitive models of behaviour management to those relational models which, as well as holding wrongdoers accountable for their behaviour, provide support for the community affected by the wrongdoing.

Specific Restorative Practices include:

Community Conferences

A community conference brings together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the wrongdoer and the student being bullied, along with their families and appropriate school personnel. Conducted by a trained facilitator, a series of scripted questions is directed to participants in order to understand the incident and its antecedents and the effects of the incident on the community. An agreement is reached whereby all participants feel that there has been some restitution and that relationships have been repaired. The agreement also reflects plans to meet identified needs of the participants, such as counselling, and to implement necessary changes to school policy and practice. Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.
Small Group Individual Conferences
These are usually confined to a small group of students or an individual student and perhaps teacher(s) who have been involved in a less serious incident of harm. Typically small group conferences might be used to deal with low-level bullying before matters escalate. Parents, while not directly involved, are informed of the process and its outcomes. Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.

Classroom Conferences
These involve the whole-class group in addressing issues which have affected teaching and learning in the classroom and student wellbeing, such as classroom bullying and more generally, classroom disruption.

Appendix iii

Strategies to Deal with Bullying

Strategies for students to deal with bullying

- Don’t ignore it! Tell someone! If they don’t help you, tell someone else until it is dealt with. Bullying is too important not to report. This includes incidents which involve someone else as the victim, not just yourself.

- If the problem re occurs then tell someone again.

- Don’t be fooled by the bully’s threats to ‘get you’ if you tell. You have a much better chance of being protected if you can say, “I’ve already told Mrs.… and she knows that if I’m hurt she should come looking for you.”

- Avoid joining in to encourage bullying. Being part of a group which is bullying someone else is just as bad as bullying them yourself.

- Try to remain in sight of adults if you have been bullied.

- Walk tall with your head held high, don’t show that you are scared, even though you may be.

- Stay near friends or other children whenever possible. Being on your own makes you more vulnerable.

- If confronted, stay calm and confidently walk away from the bullying situation.

- If you are getting bullied before or after school then vary times and routes for traveling to and from school. Be aware of the location of safety houses on the varying routes.

- Leave expensive possessions and money at home. If you don’t have it with you, it can’t be taken away.

Strategies for teachers to deal with bullying

- Listen to the complaints and act upon them; empathy for the victim is vital.

- Avoid labeling students.

- Focus on what you want when there is no bullying – move behaviour towards tolerance and acceptance, model this behaviour.
• Encourage students to be active bystanders, to tell about bullying and to support the victim.

• In the classroom hold open discussion and explicitly teach about bullying and assertive skills.

• Provide feedback to all students involved in bullying incidents so that they are aware of the consequences that have been implemented.

**Strategies for parents to deal with bullying**

• Stay calm and accept that all of us have the capacity to be involved in either the giving or receiving end of bullying.

• Listen calmly, note specifically what your child is saying.

• Let the school know what is happening straight away.

• Maintain communication with the school and with your child.

• Persist if you feel nothing has changed and the bullying is still occurring.

• If the victim, let your child know that it is not their fault.

• Try not to model bullying behaviour at home.
ST MICHAEL’S PRIMARY SCHOOL
BULLYING AUDIT FOR YEARS 1 - 6

The information collected in this audit will be used to create a safer school environment for all students. Although there is space to record your name, you may choose not to, the choice is yours. You must stay seated until your teacher collects your sheet. This is so that other people cannot see what you have written.

REMEMBER: Bullying is when someone does or says mean things to someone else more than once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Girl/ Boy</th>
<th>Class Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who has bullied you? Name</th>
<th>What does the bully usually do?</th>
<th>Where does the bullying usually occur?</th>
<th>When does the bullying occur?</th>
<th>How often does the bullying occur?</th>
<th>What have you tried to do to stop the bullying?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call names</td>
<td>Kick/Clock</td>
<td>Tease</td>
<td>Threaten</td>
<td>Put-downs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other bullying</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 - 3 times | 4 - 5 times | Most days | Every day | Ignored them | Bullied them back | Kept away from them | Told an adult at school | Told an adult at home | Asked them to stop | Used the 3 steps |

Other comments:

St Michael’s Catholic Primary School, Heyfield
**ST MICHAEL’S PRIMARY SCHOOL**
**BULLYING AUDIT FOR YEAR PREP**

**NAME (optional):**

*Students will work through this audit with their classroom teacher.*

Do you feel safe when you are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>☺️</th>
<th>☹️</th>
<th>☢️</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playing on the play equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing on the oval</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing around the buildings</td>
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<td>In the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>At the outside toilets</td>
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<tr>
<td>At the inside toilets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other places</td>
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Anything else you would like to tell us *(your teacher will write this in for you)*: