

ANTI-BULLYING AND BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Heyfield (the School) *Anti-bullying and Bullying Prevention Policy* (Policy) establishes the rights of all students to an environment free from fear, intimidation and harassment. All students have the right to feel safe at school and to be treated with dignity and respect.

A whole-school approach to positive behaviour support provides a framework for establishing and maintaining safe and inclusive environments. Focussing on creating and maintaining a culture that promotes positive relationships and respect for the dignity of the human person reflects Catholic Social Teaching and meets regulatory and legal obligations. Bullying in all forms is unacceptable.

2.0 PURPOSE

This Policy supports the delivery of a sustainable and inclusive education that nurtures each student's potential, equips them to thrive in a dynamic world and is enriched by Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited's (DOSCEL) flourishing Catholic culture. This Policy is underpinned by the DOSCEL values of Integrity, Excellence and Inclusion.

This Policy informs the *Anti-Bullying and Bullying Prevention Procedures*, and ensures the School creates a safe and respectful school climate, and addresses all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying.

3.0 CATHOLIC MISSION

The School brings to life the mission of the Catholic Church by engaging and aligning all efforts toward the achievement of DOSCEL's vision for education: *faith-inspired educational excellence for a hope filled future*.

4.0 COMMITMENT TO CHILD SAFETY

The School holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and young people as a central and fundamental responsibility of Catholic education. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

5.0 SCOPE

This Policy fulfills the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority's (VRQA) Minimum Standard for School Registration obligations, requiring the School to have policies and procedures to provide students with a safe environment where the risk of harm is minimised, students feel safe and all staff are aware of their legal obligations.

This Policy applies to all staff, children and parents of the School and informs the School's *Anti-Bullying and Bullying Prevention Procedures*. The following principles inform the School's approach to addressing and preventing bullying:

- 5.1 Staff have a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent students from foreseeable harm.
- 5.2 The School articulates how bullying is defined and addressed, including the means taken to prevent incidents and the response taken when bullying occurs (*see Appendix 1*).
- 5.3 All anti-bullying efforts are guided by and support the School's Mission and Vision Statements, reflecting its core values and educational purpose.
- 5.4 The School actively fosters respect and positive relationships among all members of the community to prevent bullying and create a supportive environment.

6.0 POLICY OUTCOMES

- 6.1. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated.
- 6.2. All individuals within the School community are treated with respect and feel safe from verbal, physical, and emotional bullying.
- 6.3. The School community actively embraces and promotes diversity, fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all.
- 6.4. Parents/Guardians/Carers are recognised and supported as the primary educators of their children, and their role is respected and encouraged in the learning community.
- 6.5. Complainants are safeguarded from victimisation throughout and after the complaint process.
- 6.6. All communication within the School community is conducted respectfully, upholding and affirming the dignity of every individual.
- 6.7. A consistent, whole-school approach is implemented to prevent and effectively address all forms of bullying.

7.0 COMMUNICATION

This Policy is available on the School website and provided to parents upon request.

This Policy is available to staff through the staff portal and staff are annually upskilled on this Policy.

8.0 POLICY INFORMATION

Policy owner	Catholic Identity Leadership Learning and Teaching
Approving authority	DOSCEL Board
Assigned Board Committee	Catholic Identity Leadership Learning and Teaching
Board Approval	December 2025
Risk Rating	Medium
Implementation	January 2026
Review Date	2028

POLICY DATABASE INFORMATION

Supporting documents	Anti-Bullying and Bullying Prevention Procedures
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APPENDIX 1 – DESCRIPTION OF BULLYING

The following descriptors outline what bullying is and support staff and parents to identify all forms of bullying:

- **Bullying:** is repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person, causing fear, distress or harm that involves an imbalance of power. It creates a risk to the mental and physical health and safety of others. It occurs when an individual or a group deliberately upsets or hurts another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.
- **Cyberbullying:** is the use of technology to bully someone - to deliberately and repeatedly engage in hostile behaviour to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically. It is generally used to refer to the online abuse of children and young people. Groups and individuals can be both the perpetrators and targets of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can take place on social media, through online chat and messaging services, text messages, emails, on message boards and in online forums that allow people to comment publicly.
- **Cyber abuse:** is behaviour that uses technology to threaten, intimidate, harass or humiliate someone — with the intent to hurt them socially, psychologically or even physically. Cyber abuse can take place on social media, through online chat and messaging services, text messages, emails, on message boards and in online forums that allow people to comment publicly.
- **Image-based abuse:** is when intimate photos or videos are shared online without the consent of the person in the photo or video. Even threatening to share intimate images in this way is image-based abuse. It is a criminal offence under State laws. Alternative terms for image-based abuse include 'non-consensual sharing of intimate images', 'revenge porn' or 'intimate image abuse'. Image-based abuse can also arise when a photo or video is digitally altered (for example, photoshopped), or when a person is depicted without religious or cultural attire which they would usually wear in public.
- **Direct bullying:** is behaviour that hurts, harms or humiliates and is overt, obvious, and apparent to anyone witnessing it. The actions and words are easy to identify, the identity of the person bullying is usually known, and the acts are focused toward the person being bullied – they know about the bullying as it is happening.
- **Exclusion bullying:** is deliberately and continuously being left out of activities.
- **Extortion bullying:** is 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.
- **Gesture bullying:** is non-verbal signals used to silence and intimidate a victim.
- **Indirect bullying:** is behaviour that hurts, harms or humiliates, which is often covert, subtle, and not always immediately acknowledged as bullying. The words and actions can be harder to identify, can be done anonymously and discreetly, and the target might not find out about the bullying until long after it has happened.

- **Physical bullying:** is pushing, shoving, fighting, pinching, damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings and any other unwelcome physical contact used intentionally to intimidate or hurt someone.
- **Psychological bullying:** is words or actions used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name-calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **Harassment:** is when a person is treated less favourably on the basis of certain protected attributes, such as race, religion, sex, age, disability, medical conditions, sexuality, gender identity or intersex status. Treating a person less favourably can include harassing or bullying a person.
- **Sexual harassment:** is 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 or continuously asking questions about someone's private life.
- **Verbal bullying:** is put downs, particularly those referring to physical characteristics, can result in loss of self-esteem. Racial discrimination or any kind of discrimination based on age, sex, gender, disability, belief or culture is a form of bullying.
- **Visual bullying:** is offensive notes or material, graffiti or damaging other people's possessions.

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. The following descriptors identify what is not bullying:

- **Mutual conflict:** In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between two or more people but not an imbalance of power. 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:** It is not bullying when, say, people make new friends and distance themselves from old friends. That old friend may feel as though they are being 'socially excluded' but if there is no aggressive intention to cause harm, they are not being bullied. Social rejection is bullying when someone feels alone or left out because of the manipulation of their peer relationships and social status.
- **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.