



**JOHN TERRY CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL  
MAINTAINING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS POLICY**

**DEFINITION**

Bullying can be usefully defined as “repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful individual by a more powerful individual or group”. It is not the same thing as conflict, violence of disagreement - although it may, of course, involve all these things. With bullying there is always a power imbalance, which makes the ill-treatment of a victim possible.

The phenomena of bullying are often described using such terms as harassment, teasing and peer abuse. Bullying is the most general term available as it can include a wide range of hurtful behaviours, encompassing physically injurious actions, such as hitting and kicking as well as verbal forms of harassment, such as name-calling and indirect means of hurting others. Examples of the latter include deliberately excluding people from groups, hiding their belongings and spreading malicious rumours. In schools verbal harassment is the most commonly observed form of bullying; physical bullying the least. Although boys and girls may engage in all these behaviours, indirect bullying is more commonly found among girls; physical bullying among boys.

**LINKS**

- School Planner pages 21-23 (Action and Consequences Summary)
- School Planner pages 29-30 (Safe School Statement)

<b>Bullying</b>	Incident Report. Letter and after school detention Repeated or serious offences: letter, suspension and parent interview. <i>(Refer to Student Anti-bullying Policy).</i>
<b>Harassment including use of text messages and emails - Cyberbullying</b>	Incident Report. Letter and after school detention Repeated or serious offences: letter, suspension and parent interview. <i>(Refer to Student Anti-bullying Policy).</i>

**TEACHER INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS**

How teachers interact with students has important consequences for the level of bullying in a school. Teachers may have a significant impact in a number of ways:

1. By expressing disapproval of bullying whenever it occurs, not only in the classroom but also in the school playground.
2. By listening sympathetically to students who need support when they are victimised. Teachers may then initiate or take action, when requested to do so by victimised children, according to procedures approved by the school.





3. By encouraging cooperative learning in the classroom and by not setting a bad example by their own dominating behaviour.
4. By talking with groups of children about bullying and mobilising student support for action to reduce bullying, for example, by including victimised students in their activities. (Most students are in fact against bullying and given the chance, can provide not only active support for the school policy but also make positive proposals and undertake constructive actions to counter bullying).

### **RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS**

Use of Mindmatters Program to give students strategies to deal with bullying. See Year Coordinator.  
Guest speaker - Police Liaison Officer.

### **ROLES UNDERTAKEN BY STUDENTS**

Because students who are victimised are much more likely to seek help from students rather than teachers, there is much to be said for selecting and helping to train students to provide assistance to peers in need of help. Roles may be specially created for interested students to help with problems or peer relations, such as in orienting students prior to and when they start their new school; supporting students who are rejected or isolated by their peers; providing a peer counselling service; and resolving conflicts between peers through peer mediation.

Such work can have a transforming effect on the school ethos. It also provides students with the opportunity to experience success in helping relationships. The Peer Support Program operating at John Therry Catholic High School focuses on students providing support to other students in need of help, especially when making the transition from primary to secondary schooling. Also proactive planning in Pastoral Programs address the importance of Maintaining Right Relationships.

### **DEALING WITH CASES OF BULLYING**

#### **COUNSELLING**

It is generally agreed that some form of counselling or discussion with students involved in bully/victim incidents should occur before sanctions are even considered. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the bullying, changes in relationships between students involved in bullying can often be effected without the use of intensive interrogation, blame and punishment. Indeed, because subtle forms of bullying can often be practised without detection, it is extremely difficult to control bullying by strictly disciplinary means.





### THE METHOD OF SHARED CONCERN

This method involves preliminary talks, first with students who have engaged in bullying, then with their victims; subsequently if more than one person has participated in the bullying (which is frequently the case), the entire group is brought together for a Restorative Meeting and resolution with the person who has been victimised. This would be done at Year Coordinator level.

#### Procedure:

1. It is generally best to see the students who have engaged in bullying behaviours on their own, without their supporters. Alone, they are often prepared to share the teacher's or counsellor's expressed concern for the victim and accept some responsibility for the distress that has been reported, more especially if they are shown respect as persons and not interrogated as criminals and severely blamed.
2. The role of the teacher is largely to elicit suggestions and concrete proposals from the student engaged in bullying behaviours that will help the situation.
3. The implementation of the proposals and the outcome for the victim need to be carefully monitored and contact maintained with the bullies until the situation has definitely improved. In most, if not all cases, the problem can be resolved in this way.
4. The use of sanctions. Despite counselling and efforts to encourage the student engaged in bullying behaviours to feel concern for the victim and undertake responsible action to improve relationships, the problem may still remain unsolved - and the victims need protection. Serious talks with the bully and his or her parents will then be necessary, non-physical sanctions may be imposed, and in the most serious cases, suspension, exclusion or expulsion may be justified. Setting up a Bullying contract for a period of 2 weeks and then it is reviewed.
5. If no resolution comes about as a result of this process, the steps outlined in the following flowchart come into place. A parent interview will be required at each new level reached.

### CONCLUSION

Bullying is presently seen as a serious problem for all schools. We must think not simply and only of directly suppressing bullying but more positively of promoting among students cooperative and prosocial ways of thinking and behaving. In this way the school ethos which contains elements that often foster intimidatory behaviour can be changed.

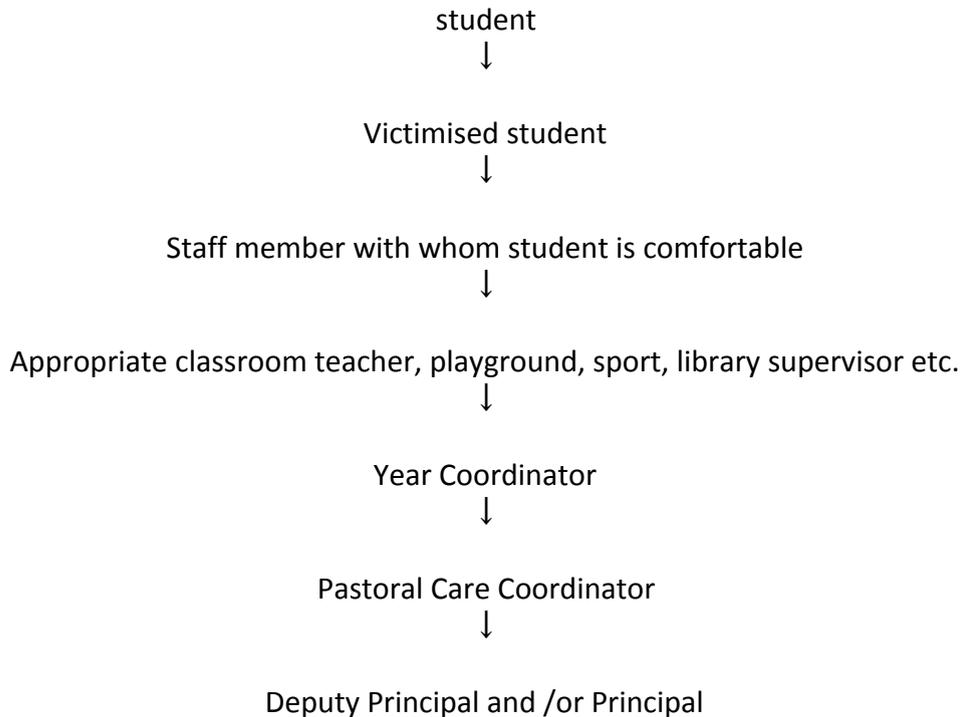
The gains are most notable for the wellbeing of students who are particularly vulnerable to bullying. But all students benefit in the process of bringing about a happier and more constructive school climate in which every student has the opportunity to achieve success, socially as well as academically. The changes that are needed are not beyond the resources of schools. They do, however, require concerted attention from members of the school community, both teachers and students.





**PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING**

To be initiated by a staff member when requested to do so by a victimised



**WHAT CAN WE DO AS A COMMUNITY IF WE ARE A WITNESS TO BULLYING?**

Witnesses can make a difference by:

- intervening as the bullying occurs
- letting the bully know that it is unacceptable
- reporting the incident to someone you trust as soon as you can
- making an anonymous report that will advise of the trouble spot, a bully or a victim
- offering support and friendship to the victim. Encourage the victim to get help through staff, family, a senior or another student.

The person you report to could be your parents, teacher, learning mentor, year coordinator, counsellor or executive.

**WHAT CAN YOU AS A PARENT DO IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?**

- listen to your child's side of the story, keeping in mind there are usually two side to every story
- contact your child's Learning Mentor or Year Coordinator.





### **HOW CAN PARENTS RECOGNISE SYMPTOMS IN THEIR CHILD?**

Our school enlists the support of parents in being vigilant for certain telltale signs, often seen in young people who are being bullied. These include:

- being frightened of walking to or from school or changing a normal route home because of fear
- not wanting to take public transport or begging you to drive him/her to school
- being unwilling to go to school
- feeling ill in the morning
- beginning to do poorly in school work
- coming home regularly with books or clothes destroyed
- coming home hungry
- becoming withdrawn
- becoming distressed and anxious
- crying himself/herself to sleep; having nightmares
- constantly 'losing' possessions or money
- having unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- becoming unreasonable and aggressive

### **WHAT CAN YOU AS A STUDENT DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED?**

Some issues are quite low grade and can be handled using some of the strategies suggested in Step 1. This may solve the problem and the matter stops here. However, if the problem is not solved to to Step 2.

Sometimes the issue is serious in which case students should go directly to Step 2 which is to report in an official way what is happening. Remember that the bully relies on your being silent!

#### **Step 1: Take direct personal action and talk about it with someone you can trust**

- remain calm
- make it clear, in as firm a manner as possible, to the person who is harassing you that you don't want him/her to continue
- try not to react in a defensive way as this can make you a more interesting target (sometimes this is very difficult)
- leave the area and avoid high-risk places
- check out how you feel by discussing with others. That person may be able to help you solve the situation. It could be your friends, your family, other students at school, a senior, a teacher you get on well with, your home room teacher, Year Coordinator or Executive.
- avoid high-risk places.

If you feel that there is a real problem that will not go away, you need then to go to Step 2.

#### **Step 2: Make an Official Complaint**

The appropriate channel to make an official complaint is your Learning Mentor, Year Coordinator, the Counsellor or the Executive.





The person to whom you report the harassment will listen carefully and give you advice about the further steps you can take. You can choose to stop the formal process of complaint at any stage and the whole matter will remain private and confidential.

If you continue your complaint, the following will happen:

- a) The person about whom you have complained will be interviewed by the appropriate Year Coordinator and this may involve you in meeting the person to see if the problem can be solved by counselling. Restorative meeting. The Year Coordinator **may** decide to telephone your home.
- b) If the problem is not solved, the matter will be referred to the appropriate Executive member.
- c) A member of the Executive will:
  - speak with you first; and then
  - interview the person about whom you have complained (the purpose of this interview is to establish the truth of the matter and to solve the problem).
  - inform your parents and the parents of the person about whom you have complained

The Executive member will take any disciplinary action needed to solve the problem and with your agreement, may refer the matter to outside bodies such as the Police or Department of Family Services. The possible consequences are listed below.

### CONSEQUENCES

There are consequences for bullying. If a student is found to be bullying then he or she will expect some of the following responses or sanctions depending on the severity of the incident:

- Incident Report
- Afternoon detention
- Letter home
- an interview with Year Coordinator and/or members of the Executive and written records being kept on the student's file
- warnings accompanied by a formal letter to the parents of the student concerned
- detentions
- counselling and behaviour modification programs
- exclusion from privileges
- suspension from school, resuming only on the condition that a formal contract is signed undertaking to cease all bullying behaviour.
- Referral to Community Services or Police (particularly in cases of cyberbullying)
- suspension contract
- case management
- expulsion