Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Procedures

College Commitment

St Scholastica's College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, to acting in students' best interests and to keeping them safe from harm. St Scholastica's College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the College are respected and accepted. All members of the College community share the responsibility to take active steps to protect students from bullying and to contribute to a culture that supports child safeguarding.

Bullying Definition

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or using one's physical presence, or physical bodily acts, to hurt or intimidate someone or threaten violence. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Verbal/written bullying** examples include name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- **Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying)** examples include deliberate acts of exclusion, spreading rumours or sharing information to have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- **Cyberbullying** which is the misuse of power within a relationship to repeatedly threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyberbullying behaviour may include:
  - abusive texts and emails
  - hurtful messages, images or videos
  - imitating others online
  - excluding others online
  - humiliating others online
  - spreading nasty online gossip and chat
  - creating fake accounts or 'avatars' to trick someone or humiliate them.

Cyberbullying can occur on internet services, social media and electronic services that enable communication including, but not limited to, instant messaging, chat services, email communications, online games, SMS and MMS. It can be verbal or written and can include images, videos and/or audio. These behaviours can also be an indicator of child abuse and other harm. Bullying can be illegal if it involves intimidation, stalking, physical violence, threats of violence or damaging property.

Signs of Bullying or Cyberbullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- crying at night and having nightmares
- refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?"
- having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school, a school activity or reluctance to attend other social events
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of school work
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- appearing lonely or distressed
- beginning to bully siblings
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- acting unreasonably.

Students may also not disclose cyberbullying to adults through fear that the adults may overreact and make the situation worse. Signs of cyberbullying to watch out for may include one or more of the behavioural changes outlined above, and/or other signs, including a student:

- being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone
- being hesitant to go online, avoiding their phone or seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- spending unusually long hours online or on their mobile phone
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.

What Isn't Bullying?

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- **mutual conflict situations** which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into bullying.
- **one-off acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

Bullying Prevention Strategies

St Scholastica's College recognises that the implementation of whole-College prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising, incidents of bullying within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our 'whole-of-College community' bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no-bullying' culture within the College:

- a year-based strategy, that provides age-appropriate information and social and emotional competencies relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) and bullying prevention to students over the course of the academic year.
- promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students.
- statements supporting bullying prevention are included in student communications.
- promotion of student awareness and a 'no-bullying' environment by promoting events and initiatives such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.
- education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies.
- appropriate sharing among staff of information about bullying and cyberbullying incidents.
- appropriate provision of information to parents/guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a whole community issue, to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, and to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the College.
- promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/guardians.
- reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below).

- Students are supported by their teachers, pastoral care staff and the College leadership when they report a bullying incident and during the processes that follow the submission of the report.
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident.
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify students who persistently intimidate or bully and/or students who are persistently bullied and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- we establish procedures for reporting child safety concerns, including when the behaviour may be an indicator of child abuse and other harm.
- Anti-bullying posters are posted in strategic locations in the College to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

Reporting Bullying

A key part of the College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:
- bullying is not tolerated within the College;
- their concerns will be taken seriously;
- the College has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying allegations can be reported to the College verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:
- informing a trusted teacher;
- informing the College Counsellor;
- informing a student's Head of Year;
- informing the Head of Boarding;
- informing the Assistant Principal or the Principal.

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner About Cyberbullying Material Targeted at a Child

Making a Complaint

Where Cyberbullying Material is targeted at a child under the age of 18 years, a complaint can be made to:
- the provider of a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) -Please see The eSafety Guide for information about providers.
- the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner can be made through the online portal by the child, their parent or guardian, or an adult authorised by the child to make the complaint. The eSafety Commissioner has the power investigate the complaint and to issue a removal notice. For the eSafety Commissioner to investigate cyberbullying, the harmful content must have first been reported to the service or platform used to send, post or share – at least 48 hours before it is reported to eSafety.

Cyberbullying Material

Cyberbullying material that is provided on a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) that an ordinary person reasonable person would conclude is likely to:
- be intended to have an effect on a particular child; and
- have the direct or indirect effect on the child as seriously threatening, seriously intimidating, seriously harassing or seriously humiliating the child, can be the subject of complaint to the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act.

Responding to Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with all available evidence. This work is led and managed by the Head of Year in consultation with College leadership.

Any reports concerning bullying will be responded to and investigated in a timely manner, so that any relevant student is protected and supported. The process will also respect the dignity and privacy of those involved and observe due process and procedural fairness. Effective and professional record keeping is essential in managing incidents of bullying and the outcomes of investigations.

Notification and information gathering
- The College is notified by a student, parent, teacher, friends. Information and reports are directed to the Head of Year and Head of Boarding where relevant.
- The Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy is discussed with the family and/or student and reassurance given that the matter will be investigated.
- The College will seek to meet with the student when appropriate to hear from them and respond to their concerns and questions.
- The College will act to discretely and appropriately investigate the concerns raised.
  - If the family asks the College not to investigate, the College has a duty of care to ascertain student safety and will undertake this work with high levels of discretion.
- The College will implement a support and monitoring plan in consultation with the student regarding their immediate circumstances. This can include interventions with other students and families if required.

Consultation and investigation
- Throughout the investigation stage College staff are available for support, and appropriate updates will be communicated with the family and student. The Head of Year updates the Assistant Principal of initial findings and any emerging concerns.
- Where needed the Head Year will work in partnership with additional College staff including, if relevant, Head of Boarding and members of the Boarding School staff.
- The initial findings of the investigation are discussed where appropriate with the family and student.
- Interviews or meetings with other students and families will take place if appropriate to outline allegations, share results of investigations and review College policy.
- The situation is the subject of ongoing monitoring throughout the investigation, and any additional incidents can be included if necessary.
- Procedural fairness remains a foundation for all investigations.
- Records of meetings and the investigation are retained by the College.

Resolution
- The Head of Year works with the College staff including the Assistant Principal Wellbeing and Pastoral Care to finalise investigation.
- The Assistant Principal informs the Principal where the balance of evidence suggest that the allegation of bullying is confirmed.
- The Principal or delegate requests a meeting with the student and her parents to review and discuss the allegation, including any consequences as per College processes.
- Additional investigation may be required.
- The Head of Year (and Head of Boarding where relevant) will manage ongoing monitoring and communication.

Review
- Within a reasonable timeframe, the situation is re-assessed.
- If there is any repeat or continuation of behaviour, the Principal is informed, and appropriate action is then discussed with the parents.
- Parents have the right to contact their local Police Station and speak with the School Liaison Police Officer.
- Any concerns regarding the process or findings should be raised in writing with the College Principal.
- The College is required to retain documents pertaining to the investigation and outcome.

In all circumstances the College:
- takes bullying incidents seriously;
- takes seriously, and monitors single incidents of conflict or fights between students, that do not ordinarily

amount to bullying, for signs of ongoing behaviour, which may be an indicator of emerging bullying;
- provides assurance to the student being bullied that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;
- will escalate its response when dealing with students who persistently bully and/or for severe incidents, even if these are not necessarily repetitive;
- considers whether the behaviour gives rise to concerns that the student exhibiting the behaviour and/or the student subject to the behaviour may be experiencing child abuse or other harm;
- where appropriate offers counselling or implements additional interventions for persistent bullies/victims;
- implements effective follow up strategies;
- undertakes disciplinary action, at the Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of students who persistently bully, or in cases of severe incidents.

Responsibilities and Reporting
Staff
- be vigilant when in the classroom, when supervising around the grounds, in boarding houses and at cocurricular activities and be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying;
- educate students about bullying;
- empower students to act to stop bullying if they witness it occurring;
- model non-bullying behaviour at all times including tolerance and acceptance;
- offer support to students who are bullied;
- listen and respond to all complaints of bullying;
- record students' unacceptable behaviour; and
- report incidents of unacceptable behaviour to the Assistant Principal.

Parents
- take an active interest in their child's School life to be aware of any problems;
- take seriously any reports of bullying that their child makes to them;
- encourage their child to be verbally assertive rather than retaliate with action;
- report to the Head of year or School Counsellor incidents of bullying of which they become aware
- encourage their child to report bullying if they experience it or witness it happening; and
- work collaboratively with the College to resolve incidents of bullying when they may occur.

If the nature and seriousness of the bullying behaviour is such that it may be criminal or require consideration of mandatory reporting, staff or parents should report the matter to the Principal. This may include physical assault, threats of violence, problematic sexual behaviour or child-to-child sexual abuse. For more information, please refer to the College's Child Safety Reporting Policy.

Head of Year
- Conduct investigation into the alleged bullying in consultation with College leadership;
- Inform and collaborate with Assistant Principal Wellbeing and Pastoral Care and, where appropriate, Head of Boarding regarding the outcome of investigation;
- Implement actions to be taken;
- Complete bullying register.

Assistant Principal Wellbeing and Pastoral Care, Head of Boarding
- Engage with Head of Year regarding investigation and required interviews (students and parents)
- Report to Principal and escalate interviews if necessary;
- Determine the action to be taken;
- Ensure investigation is recorded in bullying register.

Principal
- Respond to investigation outcomes and liaise with staff and families and students as required
- Suspending or cancelling a student's enrolment.

Bullying Support Services

School Liaison Police

School Liaison Police are NSW Police officers who work with schools to reduce crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. Our School Liaison Police Officer/s are Glebe Police and can be contacted on (02) 9552 8099.

College Counselling Service

The College also provides access for all students to the Student Counselling Services. Students can contact the counsellors directly, through the front Office or through the Head of Year.

Office of the eSafety Commissioner

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner provides resources, advice and strategies for parents, schools and children on how to deal with cyberbullying for people under the age of 18.

Implementation

This Policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training;
- student and parent/carer communication;
- involvement of external bodies and authorities as and when appropriate;
- effective incident reporting and recording procedures;
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported;
- the creation of a 'no-bullying' culture within the College community;
- effective record keeping procedures;
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.