



## Anti-Bullying Policy

### RATIONALE

St Benedict's school recognises the importance of demonstrating respect for the dignity of each person and of creating an environment where a sense of belonging for all is experienced. These aspirations are central to the wellbeing of individual staff and to a workplace where all staff feel safe and respected.

St Benedict's is therefore committed to building and nurturing a workplace that is free from bullying. It is important that all staff share a responsibility for upholding professional standards of conduct and for building and nurturing a workplace where bullying does not occur. It is therefore expected that staff will desist from engaging in or condoning such behaviours and practices.

It is also expected that staff who make a complaint, or who may be witnesses to circumstances giving rise to a complaint, will participate fully and confidentially in any investigation and resolution procedures.

This policy and its accompanying procedures are compliant with the legislative framework under which St Benedict's operates. St Benedict's is guided by the applicable legislation in determining its prevention and intervention measures.

### PRINCIPLES

St Benedict's is committed to building and nurturing a workplace that is free from bullying.

St Benedict's is committed to implementing awareness-raising programs and strategies that heighten staff members' understanding of the impact of their behaviour on others and awareness of their rights and responsibilities.

St Benedict's aims to achieve resolution of complaints of perceived or actual incidents of bullying promptly. St Benedict's will endeavour to ensure that the offending behaviour stops.

St Benedict's aims to respond to complaints or reports of bullying in a sensitive, fair and timely manner.

St Benedict's encourages the reporting of behaviour which is perceived to be in breach of this policy and will endeavour to ensure protection of the complainant(s) from any subsequent victimisation.

### Aims:

- To reinforce within the St Benedict's community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- That everyone within St Benedict's community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to have a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators
- To seek parental and peer-group support and cooperation at all times.

### Implementation:

- Parents, teachers, students and the community will be aware of St Benedict's position on bullying
- Teachers will be regularly reminded of their duty of care regarding protection of students from all forms of bullying
- St Benedict's will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying as follows.

## **FOUR PHASE APPROACH**

### **Primary Prevention**

St Benedict's School will:

- Implement professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment and proven countermeasures
- Promote community awareness and input relating to bullying (including cyber-bullying), its characteristics, its effects on victims and the school's programs and response
- Provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving
- Ensure education programs implemented across the school
- Ensure that each classroom teacher clarifies with students at the start of each year the school policy on bullying, including cyber-bullying
- Provide all students with individual and confidential computer and network logins and passwords. Processes will be put in place to ensure tracking of student activity on the school's computer equipment and network. Firewalls will be installed to eliminate outside traffic into the school's network and intranet
- Include anti-bullying messages and strategies in the curriculum
- Ensure Student Representative Council, staff and students promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'
- Provide clubs and structured activities to students at recess and lunch breaks.

### **Early Intervention**

St Benedict's School will:

- Promote children and staff reporting bullying incidents involving themselves or others remind students and staff to report incidents of bullying
- Regularly monitor student traffic on St Benedict's computer networks to identify potential problems
- Encourage parents to contact school if they become aware of a problem
- Publicly recognise and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems

### **Intervention**

St Benedict's School will:

- once identified, speak to the bully, victim and witnesses, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated
- inform students and staff identified by others as bullies of the allegations
- contact the parents
- offer counselling and support to both bullies and victims
- remove cyber-bullies from access to the school's network and computers for a period of time
- rescind the privilege to bring a mobile phone to school for students who bully via SMS or similar telephone functions
- contact parents if student bullying persists and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct
- commence formal disciplinary action if staff bullying persists

### **Post Violation:**

St Benedict's School will decide consequences for students individually and may involve

- Exclusion from class
- Exclusion from yard

- School suspension
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Ongoing counselling from appropriate agency for both victim and bully.

St Benedict's School will:

- reinforce positive behaviours
- conduct classroom meetings
- implement support structures
- monitor identified bullies over a period of time
- reward for positive behaviours

Consequences for staff will be individually based and may involve:

- counselling
- a period of monitoring
- a formal support group
- disciplinary actions

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Staff, Contractors and Volunteers – All persons who work on St Benedict's School grounds, including contractors, are required to comply with this policy in relation to the treatment afforded to other staff and contractors.

Contact Officers – A Contact Officer is a staff member who is trained in and responsible for being a contact point for staff with concerns about whether they may have been bullied. A Contact Officer is able to provide staff with information on bullying, clarify any questions or concerns a person may have and provide advice on the options that are available for dealing with bullying.

## **WORKPLACE BULLYING**

Workplace bullying is defined as being repeated unreasonable behaviour directed at a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety. Bullying can take the form of both direct and indirect bullying.

Examples of direct bullying include:

- Verbal abuse
- Putting someone down
- Spreading rumours or innuendo
- Interfering with a person's property
- Sending inappropriate emails or communications.

Examples of indirect bullying include:

- Unjustified criticism or complaints
- Deliberately excluding someone from meetings / workplace activities
- Setting timelines that are difficult to achieve
- Deliberately changing work arrangements e.g. rosters / leave to inconvenience

## **What is not bullying?**

Many things occur in the workplace that are not considered to be bullying. Reasonable management action carried out in a fair way is not bullying. For example:

- setting reasonable performance goals, standards and deadlines

- allocating work to a worker in a transparent and appropriate way
- fairly rostering and allocating working hours
- transferring a worker for reasonable and explained reasons
- deciding not to select a worker for promotion following a reasonable selection process
- informing a worker about unsatisfactory work performance

Note: Serious cases of bullying may constitute a criminal offence. Bullying is also against the School's OH&S policy as it can create an unsafe work environment.

### **Procedure for resolving complaints**

A complaint can be resolved using informal resolution processes and/or formal resolution processes. The approach taken should reflect the seriousness of the matter. For less serious matters, informal resolution processes should be explored prior to a formal resolution procedure. For more serious matters, or where informal approaches have been unsuccessful, a formal procedure may be appropriate.

The employer should endeavour to commence investigations into the complaint (whether informal or formal processes are being followed) within two working days of the receipt of the complaint.

For the purposes of complaint resolution processes:

- Person who makes a complaint is a Complainant; and
- Person about whose actions or behaviour a complaint relates is a Respondent.
- The outcome of the complaint will be communicated to both the Complainant and Respondent.

### **Informal resolution processes**

The informal options open to a Complainant to attempt to resolve a complaint include:

- speaking directly with the Respondent about their behaviour or actions
- consulting with a Contact Officer for advice, support and assistance; and/or
- reporting the matter to a member of the Leadership Team for assistance or to the Parish Priest if the complaint is about the Principal.

Informal resolution processes do not involve an investigation or making findings based on an investigation, but generally involve the parties coming to an understanding or agreement as to how the issues can be resolved.

### **Speaking directly with the Respondent**

In the first instance, if the Complainant feels comfortable about speaking directly with the Respondent, this may be the quickest and easiest way of resolving the matter. The Complainant should address the issue with the Respondent in unambiguous terms and in plain language.

### **Consulting with a Contact Officer**

If the Complainant does not feel comfortable about approaching the Respondent directly (this may be the case particularly where the Respondent is in a position of authority), the Complainant may prefer to seek the assistance of a Contact Officer. A Contact Officer can provide information and support to the Complainant and/or Respondent regarding bullying issues, including options for resolving the matter. Contact Officers do not take any action on behalf of the staff member such as approaching the Respondent or conducting mediation.

### **Reporting the matter to a member of the Leadership Team**

The Complainant may report the matter to a member of the Leadership Team who can assist with exploring resolution strategies. This may include suggesting that the Complainant speak directly with the Respondent. Where appropriate, and in consultation with the Complainant, the member of the Leadership Team may approach the Respondent and talk to them informally about the matter. Other informal resolution options which may also be considered at this stage include:

- Facilitated discussion

- Mediation
- Entering into mutual agreements on workplace practices.

### **Referral to formal investigation**

Note that at this stage, if a matter raised is sufficiently serious such that a formal investigation is warranted, then the School reserves its right to take appropriate action in the circumstances, including referring the matter to formal internal investigation (see below).

### **Formal resolution processes – Internal**

If a matter is not able to be resolved using informal resolution methods, or for more serious matters a formal process may be appropriate.

### **Lodging a formal complaint**

A formal complaint can be made by a Complainant to the Principal or to the Parish Priest if the complaint is about the Principal. The complaint should be in writing and set out the details of the specific allegations including dates, times, locations, what happened, what was said, witnesses (if any), and steps already taken to attempt to resolve the matter. Wherever possible, it should be supported by relevant documentation. Note that a complaint may not be pursued if it relates to events that occurred more than twelve months ago.

### **Initial response**

Following receipt of a formal complaint, the Principal (or Parish Priest or delegate if the complaint is about the Principal) will meet with the Complainant to discuss the complaint. This will involve canvassing options for resolution which may include informal resolution processes. In the event that the complaint is to be dealt with formally, the Complainant will be informed of:

- how the complaint will be investigated (e.g. interviews, viewing documents)
- the expected timeframe for any investigation
- who can be present at investigation interview
- what support is available for persons involved in the process
- the interim measures, if any, that will be implemented to ensure the health, safety and welfare of any person pending the resolution of the complaint
- if the complaint raises issues which place the School under a legal obligation to report the matter to law enforcement agencies

### **Formal internal investigation**

Where appropriate, a formal investigation may be conducted into a complaint. An Investigating Officer will be appointed to conduct the investigation. The Investigating Officer is someone who is independent and will conduct the investigation impartially. The Investigating Officer will:

- interview the parties involved, and witnesses if any
- review relevant evidence, such as emails and other documentary evidence
- report on whether or not the complaint is substantiated

### **Investigation outcomes and action to be taken**

If a complaint is substantiated, appropriate action, will be taken which may include:

- an apology
- changes to work practices
- disciplinary action, including dismissal
- an undertaking that the behaviour will not be repeated
- reversal of an action or decision or substitution of a different action or decision
- training

**Assistance may also be offered to a Complainant or other persons involved which may include:**

- counselling
- redressing any inequality resulting from the action or decision the subject of the complaint
- mentoring and support

If an investigation is inconclusive (i.e. a complaint cannot be proved due to a lack of evidence) further action may nevertheless be taken which may include counselling, mediation, changed working arrangements and/or conducting training for employees on relevant policies.

**Formal complaint – External**

A Complainant may choose to seek assistance or information at any time during the process from statutory support agencies in Victoria. Information and contact details for the support agencies are outlined in Appendix 2. Each agency will have specific requirements for lodging a complaint and will have varied investigation procedures.

In dealing with complaints, the School may seek external advice and assistance from professional mediators, investigators, external agencies and any other appropriate persons.

**Confidentiality**

Anyone involved in a complaint of bullying or its investigation, must ensure that the circumstances and facts of the complaint are disclosed only to those people who are directly involved in progressing its investigation and resolution. In particular, it is important that staff who either make a complaint, or who may be witnesses to the circumstances giving rise to the complaint, do not discuss the matter outside the investigation and resolution processes.

**Counselling support**

In confronting and/or resolving experiences of or allegations of bullying a staff member and his/her immediate family members may utilise the services of counselling support at any stage of the process.

**Vexatious claims**

The School will not deal with complaints under this policy that:

- are made anonymously, without sufficient detail being provided so as to allow investigation or resolution of the matter
- do not have sufficient detail so as to allow investigation or resolution of the matter
- taken at their highest, do not constitute bullying as defined by this policy

Where a Complainant makes frivolous, vexatious or malicious claims against a Respondent, for example, where false or misleading information is provided, relevant information is withheld, facts are distorted or there is no demonstrated commitment to resolution, then depending on the circumstances, disciplinary action may be taken against a Complainant.

**EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle.

**RATIFICATION**

Updated	2019
Responsible Person	Leadership Team
Date for Review	2022