

Dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Aggression and Violence (Students)



Developed: 2002

Reviewed: 2008, 2011, 2013, 2017

1. RATIONALE

Our Lady of Lourdes School has a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to encourage the development of positive relationships between students to reduce all forms of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. The policies and practices that Our Lady of Lourdes School employs should enhance the dignity of the human person and reflect the Principles of Pastoral Care as espoused in the Pastoral Care Framework (2007).

Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment, aggression and violence. Students who are bullied, subject to aggression or harassed tend to have poorer health, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, depression, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety. They are also more likely to have a dislike of and want to avoid school, higher absenteeism and lower academic competence. The effects of bullying can begin early in life and, for some, last a lifetime.

Our Lady of Lourdes is a safe and supportive environment where the 6 guiding principles and 9 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practised.

The Guiding Principles of the National Safe Schools framework

This Framework is underpinned by the following guiding principles that represent fundamental beliefs about safe, supportive and respectful school communities. These guiding principles emphasise the importance of student safety and wellbeing as a pre-requisite for effective learning in all school settings.

Our school:

- affirms the rights of all members of the school community to feel safe and be safe at school
- acknowledges that being safe and supported at school is essential for student wellbeing and effective learning
- accepts responsibility for developing and sustaining safe and supportive learning and teaching communities that also fulfill the school's child protection responsibilities
- encourages the active participation of all school community members in developing and maintaining a safe school community where diversity is valued
- actively supports young people to develop understanding and skills to keep themselves and others safe
- commits to developing a safe school community through a whole-school and evidence-based approach

The nine key elements that our school has in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:

1. Leadership commitment to a safe school
2. A supportive and connected school culture
3. Policies and procedures
4. Professional learning
5. Positive behaviour management
6. Engagement, skill development and safe school curriculum
7. A focus on student wellbeing and student ownership
8. Early intervention and targeted support
9. Partnerships with families and community

Our Lady of Lourdes School strives to be a safe, supportive and respectful teaching and learning community that promotes student wellbeing.

2. DEFINITIONS

Bullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop this behaviour from continuing.

Additionally, bullying can be characterised as: causing distress, not only at the time of the attack but also by the threat of future attacks; and, an imbalance of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt).

Its nature may be:

- verbal - name-calling, put-downs, threats (spoken, written, electronic or cyber which may also apply to the following points)
- physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions²

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. (Adapted from Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia Policy, Harassment in School, 1998). Harassment can be seen as one form of bullying.

Bullying and harassment are often thought of separately, however, both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status. (Bullying. No Way! website cited in the National Safe Schools Framework, 2003).

Unlike bullying and harassment, violence is not necessarily associated with an imbalance of power. It can occur between people of equal power. It implies extreme forcefulness, usually (but not always) of a physical kind. (Rigby, cited in the NSSF, 2003).

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to Our Lady of Lourdes School.

4. PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 Our Lady of Lourdes School strives to be a safe and supportive environment where the 6 guiding principles and 9 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practiced.
- 4.2 Our Lady of Lourdes School owes a duty of care to their students.
- 4.3 Our Lady of Lourdes School provides supportive environments which:
 - act to prevent instances of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence
 - encourage socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management and direct teaching of curriculum in areas such as interpersonal and self-management skills
 - promote respect for self and other
 - develop physical/emotional well-being and resiliency
 - develop interpersonal skills and positive mental health
- 4.4 Responding to bullying, harassment, aggression and violence requires quality leadership and role modelling to facilitate strategy implementation and sustained change, together with a whole school community approach that is consistent with the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia's Pastoral Care Framework, the school's Pastoral Care practices and the school's Evangelisation Plan and which partners with parents and other agencies.
- 4.5 Bullying, harassment, aggression and violence may occur outside of the school. When these behaviours impact on a student's learning and behaviour in school, Our Lady of Lourdes School takes action to support the continued wellbeing of those involved.
- 4.6 All bullying, harassment, aggression and violence shall be responded to. When bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are ignored or overlooked, it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour. Bystanders, (those who observe bullying) can encourage or assist those who bully simply by doing nothing.

- 4.7 While the aim is to promote and encourage positive behaviour, school policy and procedures shall contain clear statements regarding the range of appropriate consequences that may be applicable for unacceptable behaviour. In looking at consequences relating to specific issues, consideration should be given to other circumstances which may have bearing such as family or mental health matters.
- 4.8 All parties to incidents of bullying, harassment, aggression and violence are entitled to appropriate support.

5. PROCEDURES

Our Lady of Lourdes School shall not tolerate bullying, harassment, aggression and violence and it encourages all members of the school community to take a pro-active stance that promotes safety and wellbeing.

All new parents to Our Lady of Lourdes will be given a handbook entitled "A Guide to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment" which has information of types of bullying, possible signs of bullying and what to do if your child reports bullying.

Incidents of bullying may become apparent once:

- a student/students notify a staff member, whether they be the victim or an observer
- we receive notification by a parent/adult observer, either verbally or in a written form
- staff/teacher observations in the playground and/or classroom

Once an incident of bullying or harassment has been identified, and the level of severity assessed, the appropriate procedure is initiated and any previously recorded incidents involving the same children are reviewed and followed up on.

Confidentiality is to be maintained through-out the process. Teachers run interviews and meetings with those concerned and do not apply 'blame' but demonstrate an approach of 'shared concern' for all involved.

Records of incidents, interviews and meetings are maintained and kept in a confidential file.

T= targeted child

K=bully/ies, bystanders

Procedure 1: Shared/Serious Concern

- a) Interview child **T** and keep notes
- b) Interview any witnesses
- c) Meet with other child/ren
- d) Follow up meetings one week later with child **T** and then child/ren **K**. Also check with witnesses for current status of interactions.
- e) Records are placed in a confidential file in the Principals office
- f) Principal must be informed of problem and suggested solutions

Procedure 2. Persistent Offenders

- a) Interview child **T** and keep notes
- b) Meeting with other child/ren **K** concerned in the incident/problem. Interview all witnesses.
- c) Principal and Parents are notified and meetings arranged
- d) An Action Plan is developed to include consequences and positive future solutions.
- e) Records are placed in a confidential file in the Principal's Office
- f) Interactions between the students involved are regularly reviewed by staff.

ROLES

Students:

Review the school's Values and assist in the establishment of a set of class rules that they agree to adhere to, assist with the planning and implementation of solutions and be involved in the processes and review outcomes.

Teachers/Staff:

Provide support and take affirmative action immediately, initiate the procedures upon notification or observation of an incident, conduct interviews, implement solutions and review the processes and outcomes, liaise between parties.

Principal:

Is informed about all incidents of bullying or harassment, becomes involved with incidents of persistent offenders via interviews and meetings with all parties, after a consultative process, the principal will implement the appropriate punitive measures and be involved in the review processes and outcomes. Clear communication with the parents of those involved will be a strong feature of the process.

Parents:

For serious and persistent offenders, parents are informed about the situation, involved in meetings to discuss the issues with the teacher (staff member), student and/or principal, be informed about the development and implementation of an "Individual Management Plan" and be involved in the review processes and outcomes.

School Leadership

Our Lady of Lourdes School shall provide professional development and appropriate resourcing to meet the needs of staff in implementing this school policy.

References:

Adapted from "Friendly Schools and Families Program"