



# Student Anti-Bullying Policy



This Student Anti-Bullying Policy has been developed within the context of *Path to Life: A Framework for Pastoral Care and Wellbeing for Systemic Schools in the Diocese of Wollongong*. *Path to Life* fosters a cohesive approach to leadership, professional learning, policies and procedures. It also supports the implementation of specific initiatives, which are designed to promote Pastoral Care, wellbeing and safe school communities.

This policy is also contextualized to the Diocesan Learning and Teaching Framework (DLTF). The DLTF acknowledges the importance of the nature of the learner and the learning process within the evangelising mission of the Catholic Church. It identifies the interconnectedness of the characteristics of quality Catholic learning and teaching and has been designed to value, respect and promote the self-esteem and dignity of each learner. This policy underpins the DLTF in challenging and supporting learning and teaching founded on a Catholic world-view that integrates faith, life and culture. The Student Anti-Bullying policy has also been developed with reference to Managing Student Pastoral and Educational Concerns (MSPEC), the Diocesan process designed to support schools in case managing pastoral issues, including incidents of bullying.

### 1.0 Philosophical Basis

The dignity of the human person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching and inherent to our education ministry. Consequently, the principle that the person is made in the image and likeness of God, is central to the mission of all our school communities. Essential to this is the creation and maintenance of a respectful, safe and supportive learning environment that promotes student wellbeing and enables school communities to engage an inclusive and diverse range of learners. In particular, it is vital that learning technologies are used ethically and responsibly in the school environment, so that communication is respectful and human dignity valued.

The prevention of and responses to incidents of bullying, inappropriate use of technology and disrespectful behaviour in schools is more readily achieved in a caring and supportive school culture that promotes positive relationships and reflects Gospel values. Bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, aggression and violence disregard core values of our faith including dignity, respect, justice, equity, compassion, trust and courage. Importantly, such actions can adversely affect the wellbeing of students and are therefore unacceptable. All members of our school communities are expected to prevent and challenge such actions in order to build respectful relationships that respond effectively and sensitively to the needs of each person.

### 2.0 Context

#### 2.1 Definition of Bullying

2.1.1 The *National Safe Schools Framework* (2011) defines bullying as repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons.

By contrast, conflict between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying although, of course, such incidents may require intervention by the school.

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term physical and psychological effects on those involved, including bystanders.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/nationalsafeschoolsframework.aspx>

2.1.2 Cyber-bullying involves the use of any information and communication technology involving deliberate, isolated or repeatedly hostile behaviour by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others or is undertaken recklessly, without concern for its impact on others. By virtue of its nature, technology facilitates repeated access to harmful content.

## 2.2 Relevant National and State requirements and recommendations

2.2.1 The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008)*

[http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/)

National\_Declaration\_on\_the\_Educational\_Goals\_for\_Young\_Australians.pdf

2.2.2 The *National Safe Schools Framework (2011)* adopts a whole school approach to safety and wellbeing.

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/NationalSafeSchools/Pages/nationalsafeschoolsframework.aspx>

2.2.3 The *Board of Studies Registration Systems and Member Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual* includes Requirement 5.6 describing conditions for a Safe and Supportive (School) Environment.

<http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/manuals/#regaccredsystemsmanuals>

2.2.4 *Children and Young Persons Act 1998 (Care and Protection)* with reference to Chapter 16A Exchange of Risk of Harm information

[www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/caypapa1998442/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/caypapa1998442/)

2.2.5 *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing*, with reference to the Mandatory Reporting Guide, specifically, physical abuse and psychological harm.

[www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/home](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au/home)

2.2.6 *Education Act Part VA* i.e. Exchange of history of student violence information.

[www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/ea1990104/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104/)

2.2.7 Catholic Education Commission New South Wales Anti-bullying Policies: Action Requirements Memorandum ref: 249/10.

## 2.3 A Focus on Cyber-bullying

Bishop Peter Ingham's *Pastoral Letter on Internet Safety (2008)* states:

“Together with the mobile phone, the Internet has transformed the way that conversations are held, friendships are maintained, entertainment is sought and information is gained. ....In identifying some of the dangers of the Internet, and bringing some of the wisdom of our faith tradition to bear upon them, it is our hope that we can all be alert to those aspects of the Internet which can be a danger to our safety, to our human dignity, and to our relationships with each other and with God.”

According to the *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (2009)* “Being bullied every few weeks or more often ....overtly and/or covertly..... is a fairly common experience, affecting approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%)”

Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS). Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

Digital technologies are very much a part of life and learning, offering a wide range of tools and platforms for social and educational engagement. However, the risks of the digital environment must be acknowledged and addressed. Being cybersafe and acting ethically is the responsibility of all members of each school community. Cybersafe schools require a multi-layered ethical, educational, legal and technological response.

### 2.4 A School's Duty of Care

If bullying occurs which is foreseeable (a teacher or other school staff member knew of, or ought to have known of, a bullying incident) this could give rise to a breach of the school's duty of care towards students.

Schools must take reasonable action to develop plans and implement programs aimed at deterring bullying activities. Schools need to have procedures in place to respond effectively to bullying incidents. There must be a system in place in the school so that this Student Anti-Bullying Policy and the school-based response procedures are disseminated as appropriate to members of the school community.

Principals must report conduct to the police where a serious criminal offence has been identified. Such circumstances can include (but are not limited to) stalking, destruction of property, threats to inflict serious injury and/or kill, physical and sexual assault, offensive behaviour, discrimination, cyberstalking, defamation, breach of privacy, hacking, sexting and creating or possessing and/or disseminating child pornography.

In many instances, cyber-bullying can constitute criminal conduct, especially when the behaviour is seriously threatening, harassing or intimidating. According to *The National Safe Schools Framework* (2011) "E-crimes are illegal actions that are carried out through the use of internet or mobile phone technology. They include: child pornography, fraud, impersonation, or sending words or images that cause offence, distress, menace or threaten. Most of these are crimes under Australian federal law but some are also (or only) crimes under some Australian state laws."

If unacceptable behaviour occurs that has a close nexus with the school or with the wellbeing of a child educated at the school but occurs outside school hours, off-site or through the use of a student's personal mobile devices and/or computer, school leadership personnel may still have an obligation to respond. School leaders may have limited obligations to respond to bullying, threatening behaviour, cyber-bullying and inappropriate use of digital technologies when this occurs on devices or networks not actually managed by the school, and there is no close nexus with the school.

### **3.0 Responsibilities: The Catholic Education Office (CEO)**

**The CEO will aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and:**

- 3.1 Support and resource schools to implement anti-bullying initiatives and procedures consistent with MSPEC.
- 3.2 Provide anti-bullying and cybersafety information for students, staff and parent/carers on the CEO website.
- 3.3 Manage the Enrolment Application document and statutory obligations (such as Part 5A of the Education Act) so that schools are able to obtain relevant student history that may involve violent behaviour, including bullying, harassment, intimidation and/or threatening behaviour.  
[www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/ea1990104](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104)
- 3.4 Provide opportunities for training staff in appropriate anti-bullying responses including cybersafety, restorative justice practices, mediation and developing social skills in students.

### **4.0 Responsibilities: Diocesan Systemic Schools**

**Schools will aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and:**

- 4.1 Provide documentation that includes plans and procedures for implementing anti-bullying practices.
- 4.2 Inform and make available to students, staff and parent/carers copies of the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures.
- 4.3 Provide education to students, staff and parent/carers about anti-bullying strategies and the responsible use of technology.
- 4.4 Incorporate student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures within each school's Pastoral Care and/or Positive Behaviour policies, which include specific reference to anti-bullying contact information for School Liaison Police and/or other support services available to the school's community.
- 4.5 Implement a sequential management plan for minimising bullying and cyber-bullying, involving graduated sanctions and appropriate support for all students involved in bullying situations.
- 4.6 Provide documented advice for students, staff and parent/carers on ways to report bullying and cyber-bullying to the school executive.
- 4.7 Investigate complaints of bullying and cyber-bullying in a manner that respects the dignity and privacy of those involved.
- 4.8 Appoint a Case Manager to co-ordinate strategies for the resolution of bullying incidents as per Guidelines for Case Management (MSPEC) documents.
- 4.9 Notify parent/carers of bullying incidents involving their children.
- 4.10 Notify the Police Youth Liaison Officer if the bullying situation has involved violence, threat of harm or alleged criminal conduct.
- 4.11 Notify *NSW Community Services* (formerly DoCS) when an incident involving manufacturing, possessing or distribution of child pornography has occurred.
- 4.12 Maintain records of bullying incidents and related interventions in accordance with Managing Student and Pastoral Concerns (MSPEC) documents.
- 4.13 Regularly review and evaluate student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures to ensure they are contemporary and sustainable.

### **5.0 Responsibilities: Staff**

**Staff will aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and:**

- 5.1 Implement the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures by responding promptly and appropriately to reported incidents of bullying.
- 5.2 Support the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures through positive modelling and the promotion of appropriate behaviour.
- 5.3 Access professional learning to support appropriate anti-bullying responses which could include cybersafety, restorative justice practices, mediation and developing social skills in students.
- 5.4 Implement all relevant aspects of the school's Positive Behaviour policy.

**Teachers will aim to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and:**

- 5.5 Provide opportunities to students in the positive use of technology.
- 5.6 Embed critical thinking, values clarification, respectful relationships and developing empathy into learning and teaching practice.
- 5.7 Respond to bullying and cyber-bullying concerns by providing age appropriate guidance and boundaries so that students can learn to self-regulate.
- 5.8 Implement all relevant aspects of the school's Positive Behaviour policy.

### **6.0 Responsibilities: Students**

**Students will aim to treat all members of the school and wider community with dignity and respect and:**

- 6.1 Follow the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures regarding student-student, student-staff and student-community member relationships. In addition, students from Years 5 to 12 will read and sign the relevant school documents.
- 6.2 Immediately seek help from a trusted adult if aware of or involved in a bullying or cyber-bullying incident.
- 6.3 Seek support if bullied and refrain from retaliating in any bullying incident.
- 6.4 Participate in learning experiences that address understandings, values and skills relating to anti-bullying and responsible use of technology.
- 6.5 Agree that any social networking site that identifies the school by name or image or implication is part of the school environment and may be dealt with according to the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and anti-bullying procedures.

## 7.0 Responsibilities: Parent/Carers

**Parent/carers have a responsibility to treat all members of the school community with dignity and respect and:**

- 7.1 Read, abide by and sign Section 18 - Guidelines for parents in the Primary and/or Secondary School Enrolment Application Form.
- 7.2 Read, abide by and sign the student anti-bullying and responsible use of technology procedures as part of the application for enrolment at the Diocesan school.
- 7.3 Work collaboratively with the school in providing opportunities for education on issues related to student safety and wellbeing.
- 7.4 Notify the school promptly of all bullying situations involving their children.
- 7.5 Follow the student anti-bullying procedures to report bullying or cyber-bullying, whether actual or suspected.
- 7.6 Model prudent use of technology.
- 7.7 Supervise and discuss internet content and time spent using technology to help children grow into ethical and responsible digital citizens.
- 7.8 Discuss appropriate responses to bullying and cyber-bullying including encouraging children to always disclose to a trusted adult if this occurs.
- 7.9 Provide expectations of responsible online behaviour including:
  - skills that will enable children to identify the need to leave online situations which place them at risk
  - how to report inappropriate material or conduct
  - consequences for inappropriate behaviour, including possible sanctions as outlined in the school's Positive Behaviour Policy.
- 7.10 Provide appropriate protection and safety such as filtering devices for their children when using various technologies.
- 7.11 Report serious matters of out-of-school hours bullying and cyber-bullying to the Police or other appropriate authority (such as the Internet Service Provider) and, as relevant, to the school.
- 7.12 Follow due process and use relevant procedures when bringing complaints and grievances to the notice of a school and/or the Catholic Education Office.

**Date reviewed: 09/02/2012**

### **Supporting Documents:**

1. Catholic Education Office Diocese of Wollongong Acceptable Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) by Employees.  
[www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/employees/Acceptable%20Use%20of%20Information%20and%20Communication%20Technology.pdf](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/employees/Acceptable%20Use%20of%20Information%20and%20Communication%20Technology.pdf)
2. Catholic Education Office Diocese of Wollongong Complaints Handling Procedures  
[www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/SafeWorkEnvironment/Complaints\\_Handling\\_Proc.pdf](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/SafeWorkEnvironment/Complaints_Handling_Proc.pdf)
3. Catholic Education Office Diocese of Wollongong Complaints Handling Flowcharts.  
[www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/SafeWorkEnvironment/Complaints\\_Flowcharts.pdf](http://www.dow.catholic.edu.au/policies/SafeWorkEnvironment/Complaints_Flowcharts.pdf)
4. A Guide for NSW Non-Government Schools on Reporting, Disclosing or Exchanging Personal Information for the purposes of Child Wellbeing  
[www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au/images/Privacy\\_CEC\\_A%20Guide%20to%20Reporting%20or%20Exchanging%20Personal%20Information.pdf](http://www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au/images/Privacy_CEC_A%20Guide%20to%20Reporting%20or%20Exchanging%20Personal%20Information.pdf)