

Student Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

1. Rationale

Chevalier College (the College) exists to proclaim and witness to the love of God, and to make the Gospel values real in the lives of young people and their families. Each person at the College, made in 'the image and likeness of God', has real worth and dignity.

The College is responsible for supporting the young people in its care and, in particular, those who are experiencing difficulties and those who require additional assistance and encouragement to behave appropriately.

This policy provides a general guide on:

- providing a safe, secure and accepting environment for all students
- supporting the rights of students to feel safe at school
- providing students and staff with information to assist them in dealing with incidents of bullying and harassment
- assisting parents by offering strategies to support their child if they are being bullied or harassed.

2. Aims

To provide direction to College staff in the development of response and management strategies relating to student bullying and harassment that reflect the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart ethos and adhere to any applicable legislation.

To provide the best possible outcomes for the students in the care of Chevalier College and for the College community as a whole.

To support the maintenance of a safe environment where everyone is treated with fairness, respect, and dignity in line with College values.

The principles of this policy reflect a respect for the dignity and value of each person.

3. Scope

This policy applies to students and provides the principles to protect their rights. This policy informs and guides the practice and development of all procedures to ensure the college is a safe environment in which to grow and learn.

4. Key Legislation

Education Act 1990 (NSW)

5. Definitions

5.1. Bullying

Bullying is the repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a person or persons less powerful than the perpetrator. Bullying behaviour causes the victim to feel degradation, a loss of self-worth, intimidation, grief, fear and/or pain.

The imbalance of power in situations of bullying may be obvious or subtle, physical or psychological. It may involve a bully grasping an opportunity and a victim accepting a situation.

Bullying can be done through a number of different actions and behaviours, it can be overt or covert, and it can occur in both individual and group situations. Some bullying can be quite subtle or involve words known only by the students, making it difficult for adults to recognise. These complexities can make bullying more difficult to identify if a person or group is being bullied.

Bullying usually takes the form of less favourable treatment of a person by another or others in the form of repeated conduct or a pattern that:

- insults
- intimidates
- threatens
- undermines
- offends
- degrades
- or
- humiliates.

The following types of behaviour, where repeated or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour, would be considered bullying:

- Repeated hurtful remarks or making fun of them as a person (including family, sex, sexuality, gender identity, race or culture, or economic background)
- Constant criticism or criticising people in front of others
- Excluding or stopping a student from taking part in activities
- Intimidation including verbal abuse, swearing, or shouting
- Physically pushing, shoving, tripping, grabbing, or threatening a person with any type of object
- Initiation practices, where a person is made to do humiliating or inappropriate things to be accepted as part of a group
- Abusive or intimidating social media posts, emails, or other forms of electronic communication
- Unwelcome touching
- Unwelcome comments about a person's physical appearance, activities, relationships, culture, abilities and race
- Exclusion or isolation
- Spreading rumours / putting people down / speaking about people behind their backs

5.2. Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying can involve:

- online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- posting gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

5.3. Examples of what is not bullying

Disagreements where students might have a difference of opinion or an argument is not necessarily bullying. Conflict situations do need to be closely monitored in case they do evolve into bullying. However, disagreements are a part of life and it is important for students to develop skills to deal with such situations in a safe and caring environment.

Behaviour, such as loss of temper, shouting, swearing or mean behaviour, including behaviour associated with the breakdown of friendships, does not normally constitute bullying, unless it forms a pattern of repeat behaviour. However, while this behaviour may not be bullying, students should feel free to seek support and advice if such situations cause them distress.

6. What is harassment

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) based on a ground of discrimination, and is:

- unwelcome, uninvited or unreciprocated
- offensive, humiliating and/or intimidating.

Harassment can include verbal comments or abuse, physical contact, threats, displaying inappropriate and offensive images or documents, stalking, offensive communication, jokes and ridicule, propositions, and inappropriate initiation rites.

Harassment is not always deliberate and can consist of just one act where this act is of a serious nature. Harassment usually consists of a pattern of unwelcome behaviour. The basis of harassment is often discriminatory and may relate to:

- sex or gender
- sexual preference, sexuality or gender identity
- race, colour, national or ethno-religious origin, nationality, ethnicity, descent or ancestry
- socio-economic status
- disability, impairment or handicap
- religious beliefs or customs.

Harassment can include sexual harassment, which is a form of harassment on the grounds of sex or conduct of a sexual nature, such as unwanted sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favours or physical contact, derogatory sexual comments, taunts, intrusive questions and rumours.

7. Student rights

Students have a right to:

- have their individual human worth, dignity and privacy respected
- feel proud of their culture, religion and heritage
- feel safe and live life free from abuse, neglect and/or exploitation
- experience a sense of hope for the future
- participate fully in the life of the College
- have access to quality services, support, guidance and collegiality
- religious freedom and practice.

8. Student Expectations

All College students have an obligation not to discriminate against, or harass or bully for any reason. Students should be mindful that their behaviour, while not intentional, may be misunderstood and as a result be the subject of a report.

Students are encouraged to:

- behave in a manner that reflects the heart-centred spirit of the College
- take some positive action to stop bullying or harassment, such as immediately reporting incidents to a member of college staff
- behave in accordance with this policy and other relevant College policies, including the
 - Student Behaviour Code, as published in the Student Information Booklet
 - Student ICT Usage Policy
 - Student Behaviour Management Policy

9. Staff Expectations

Chevalier College staff are expected to:

- take all reports of bullying and harassment seriously
- promote a culture that reflects the values and ethos of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart
- promote professionalism, respect and care within the College community
- relate to students with compassion and availability, and create a sense of family which permeates their attitude as professional teachers and caring adults
- take appropriate action to stop observed incidents of bullying or harassment
- pass on information about any reported or observed bullying or harassment behaviours to relevant staff for further action, including (where necessary) disciplinary actions and actions relating to investigations of incidents
- endeavour to provide the best possible outcomes for the students in their care.

10. Prevention strategies

Based on research, prevention strategies through education that involve the whole school community (students, staff and parents) are more likely to reduce bullying and harassment. Therefore, the College community recognises that we all share the responsibility of preventing bullying and harassment.

10.1. Environment

The college believes it has a responsibility to foster and maintain a school environment in which students from all backgrounds and circumstances can feel safe and supported.

As an MSC school, the focus of the College environment will be heart-centred, compassionate and respectful, and will encourage the development and maintenance of meaningful relationships.

All staff are expected to model appropriate behaviour and conduct themselves in accordance with the MSC ethos and the Code of Conduct.

College staff are to ensure students are appropriately supervised and aware of the College's expectations in relation to behaviour.

10.2. Strategies

The College will establish strategies and mechanisms to aid in the prevention of bullying and harassment within the student body, which may include bullying surveys and visual displays around the school grounds.

The College will develop and maintain incident management systems to respond to bullying and harassing behaviour by students, and will develop and maintain programs to support all students involved in incidents, encourage improved behaviour, develop resilience and assist in the restoration of damaged relationships.

All allegations of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously.

All incidents of bullying and harassment will be dealt with in accordance with student wellbeing processes and Student Behaviour Management policy and procedures.

10.3. Awareness and Support Programs

The College will provide awareness and support programs that assist staff and students to identify and deal with incidents of bullying and harassment.

The Assistant Principal – Wellbeing and Growth will ensure that:

- wellbeing staff engage, where necessary, in appropriate training and have access to information regarding the identification and management of student bullying and harassment behaviours
- students are provided with opportunities to participate in programs that assist in building a harmonious school community to mitigate incidents of bullying and harassment.

11. Reporting bullying or harassment

Students are encouraged to seek support from a trusted adult, their home room tutor, a classroom teacher, Leader of House, member of the College Leadership Team or a friend to report incidents they interpret as bullying or harassment.

Students are encouraged to report bullying through the College 'Report Bullying at Chevalier' email address.

12. Responding to reports of bullying or harassment

Bullying and harassment are viewed as major breaches of the College rules and behavioural expectations. Therefore, follow up action will align with the College Student Behaviour Management Policy. When a bullying or harassment report has been made, the following processes will be implemented.

Leaders of House and the Assistant Principal – Wellbeing and Growth will:

- investigate the incident
- provide guidance and other support for the recipient of the bullying (e.g. re-skilling and re-teaching of strategies, resilience and social skills, counselling, conflict management skills, social networking etc.)
- provide guidance and support for 'bystanders', 'supporters' and witnesses of the bullying (e.g. intervention strategies etc.)
- implement appropriate and consistent sanctions for the student who bullied (within the context of the College Student Behaviour Management Policy)
- establish interventions and support for the student who bullied (e.g. a bullying prevention plan with specific interventions developed to reduce the bullying behaviour, teaching of replacement behaviours, reinforcers etc.)
- where appropriate, involve parents.

13. Investigations

Investigations will be conducted under the principles of procedural fairness.

All processes must be conducted in a manner ensuring fair practice and equity, respect to all parties and due observance of confidentiality.

Where an investigation identifies the bullying or harassment incident may include criminal behaviour, the investigator must inform the Principal as soon as possible, who will refer the incident to the police.

14. Related documents

Student Bullying and Harassment Management Procedures

Student Behaviour Management Policy

Student ICT Usage Policy

Student Behaviour Code

End of Policy