



ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE
TOWNSVILLE

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Purpose:	The purpose of this policy is to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur		
Scope:	Students, parents/guardians and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements		
Status:	Approved	Supersedes:	July 2018
Authorised by:	Principal St Patrick's College Townsville	Date of Authorisation:	February 2021
References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2017 (Qld)</i>• <i>Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)</i>• <i>Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)</i>• <i>St Patrick's College Townsville Enrolment Policy</i>• <i>St Patrick's College Townsville Child Protection Policy</i>• <i>St Patrick's College Townsville Student Code of Behaviour</i>• <i>St Patrick's College Townsville Complaints Handling Policy</i>• <i>St Patrick's College Townsville Complaint and Dispute Resolution Procedures</i>		
Review Date:	Every two years	Next Review Date:	February 2023
Policy Owner:	Principal St Patrick's College Townsville		

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POLICY STATEMENT

St Patrick's College Townsville and its wider community has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying.

St Patrick's College Townsville is committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur. Bullying behaviour seriously undermines the ethos of St Patrick's College Townsville, is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

In order to prevent bullying from occurring, St Patrick's College Townsville will implement the following actions:

- Raise awareness of the College community's shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at the College.
- Develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students. A designated age appropriate Personal Development Program at each Year level has been designed to address these issues and to teach students important skills.

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, St Patrick's College Townsville has and will continue to:

- Develop an appropriate mechanism for students, staff and parents/guardians to report bullying.
- Educate students, staff and parents/guardians on how to recognise bullying and respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying, and how to then report all incidences of bullying.
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying.
- Take appropriate action, which might include support for victims of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

St Patrick's College Townsville's Respectful Relationships: Anti-Bullying Policy, explains the bullying reporting mechanism for students, staff and parents/guardians, and how responses to reports will be managed. It is important to stress that all reports of bullying will be investigated and acted upon, with appropriate support and consequences implemented.

DEFINITIONS

Bullying: is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, intentionally upset or create risk to another person's health and safety – either psychologically or physically – or their property, reputation or social acceptance. There are three critical points associated with bullying:

- 1) **Power:** Children who bully may acquire power through various means; physical size and strength, status within a peer group, and recruitment within a peer group so as to exclude others.
- 2) **Frequency:** Bullying is not a random act. It is characterised by its repetitive nature. Because it is repetitive, the children who are bullied, not only have to survive the fear and humiliation of the attack itself, but live in constant fear of its reoccurrence.

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3) **Intent to harm:** Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be fully conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical or emotional harm, however, is usually a deliberate act. Bullying is 'recipient defined'. Saying it was 'only a joke, or 'she doesn't mind', is an unacceptable excuse. The intention of the bully is irrelevant. The important factor is the harm done to the other person. Bullying is a form of harassment and is exemplified in many ways, including the following:

- Name calling, teasing, ridiculing, sarcasm, spreading rumours
- Hitting, pushing, or threatening violence
- Putting down others and their achievements
- Damaging, removing or hiding belongings
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- Making disrespectful comments about family, birth origin, or religion
- Making disrespectful comments about another person's physical appearance, or clothes
- Hurtfully excluding another from a group
- Cyberbullying; i.e. harassment or offensive behaviour using electronic devices and online communications

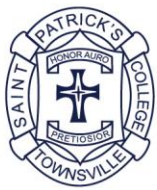
What Bullying is not:

- Mutual conflict; where an argument or disagreement occurs but both parties are upset and want resolution to the problem.
- Social rejection; this is not bullying unless directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- Single episode acts of meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation. These will not be ignored, but are not acts of bullying.
- Changes in peer group dynamics and composition. It is not unusual for a shift in friendship groups to occur as students move through adolescence and interests and personalities change and develop.

Relational Aggression

Social or relational aggression is a common form of bullying among adolescent girls and, as such, it is an area of particular focus at St Patrick's College Townsville. Relational aggression refers to deliberate acts which are "directed toward damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as verbal rejection, negative facial expression or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumours or social exclusion" (Galen and Underwood 1997, p. 589). Relational aggression can impact on a young person's self-esteem, self-worth and sense of self and identity. These behaviours can be difficult to detect and to differentiate from social rejection or changes to social dynamics. However, where it can be identified, this type of behaviour should be taken seriously with restorative practices used to help rebuild relationships and reduce hostility wherever possible and appropriate.

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Trauma-Informed Responses

St Patrick's College Townsville aspires to respond to student behaviour in a way that is not only respectful and fair, but is also trauma-informed. Being trauma-informed means that staff are aware of how traumatic experiences can impact on the behaviour of young people. According to the Australian Childhood Foundation (2010) the behaviour of traumatised children and young people "is an insight into the responses of their brain-body system to toxic stress and trauma. It represents a complex interplay of the experiences of their past, their reactions to the present and the cumulative impact of relational exchanges over time". Sometimes, young people who have been impacted by traumatic experiences may act out in aggressive, impulsive or inappropriate ways. In cases where a young person's bullying behaviour has been identified as being impacted upon by earlier traumatic experiences, St Patrick's College Townsville will aim to respond to that young person in a sensitive and responsive manner, whilst still taking all actions necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of other students at the College.

RESPONSIBILITIES

College Responsibilities

St Patrick's College Townsville acknowledges its responsibility to:

- Raise awareness of bullying and how the College will respond to it.
- Take action to help prevent bullying.
- Implement a reporting mechanism for students and parents.
- Educate students, staff and parents on how to respond to bullying and how to report it.
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support and consequences.

Employee Responsibilities

At St Patrick's College Townsville, employees have a responsibility to:

- Uphold and consistently apply this Policy.
- Respond appropriately to reports of bullying.
- All reported incidents will be managed on an individual basis and will be investigated and followed up in a timely manner. The relevant Head of House/Year in consultation with the Director of Students, will recommend the best pathway for further action. This may include mediation, notifying parents/guardians, student counselling or reporting to the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- Some wrongful behaviours of a serious nature are, by definition, criminal offences and consultation with the Police will occur.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

At St Patrick's College Townsville, parents/guardians have a responsibility to:

- Encourage their child to engage in positive behaviours and not to bully others.
- Encourage their child to report bullying to themselves or others.
- Encourage their child to take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Respectful Relationships-Anti-Bullying Policy.

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Student Responsibilities

At St Patrick's College Townsville, students have a responsibility to:

- Engage in respectful behaviours and not engage in bullying behaviours.
- Report bullying occurring to them or others (not engage in a bystander role)
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed under the Respectful Relationships-Anti-Bullying Policy

Action to be taken following reports of bullying:

1. Reported Concern

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to report concerns directly to the Director of Students.

Students may report concerns to any staff member and will then be referred immediately to their relevant Head of House/Year or Director of Students.

College Staff are to report any observations or suspected incidents of bullying to the relevant Head of House/Year or Director of Students.

2. Investigation

Each of the students who have been implicated as a direct participant in a bullying scenario will be interviewed by the relevant Head of House or Director of Students. These interviews will be documented and students informed accordingly.

Based on these informal interviews, contact will be made by telephone to parents/guardians of each of the students implicated to advise parents/guardians that concerns have been raised about relationships within the College. These phone calls will then be followed up with an email. These phone calls will be made by Head of House/Year, Director of Students or the Director of Boarding.

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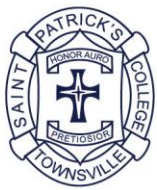
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3. Risk Assessment for Response and Intervention

Based on the information gathered during interviews with students and parents/guardians, a risk assessment will then assist to inform the level of intervention necessary (see below)

RISK ASSESSMENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR AND RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF INTERVENTION		
Level of Risk	Risky Behaviour	Level of Intervention
High Risk	Children assessed as being at the highest risk of engaging in bullying others report high levels of aggression, externalising problems and delinquency or are identified as experiencing early signs of or symptoms foreshadowing mental, emotional or behavioural disorders. Problems are consistent and relatively stable over time. Several family, individual or school risk factors associated with a higher likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour are present	Indicated intervention: These children require greater support for behaviour change and an intervention that includes their family, as many of the risk factors are beyond the scope of school-based programs. This level of intervention is best used for the more entrenched cases of bullying problems.
Moderate Risk	Children are involved in bullying infrequently or in a short-lived way. These children may exhibit early warning signs that indicate a risk of future involvement in bullying, and consequently the emotional, behavioural and social problems associated with bullying others.	Selective intervention: Children exhibiting non-severe bullying behaviour are likely to benefit from a selective program designed to address and prevent the developmental continuity of their peer relationship problems.
Low Risk	Children assessed as being at low risk do not engage in bullying others and have few, if any, family, individual or school risk factors	Universal intervention: These children are likely to benefit from school-based universal programs that aim to develop awareness of bullying and empower children to intervene on behalf of victims.

Table 1: Sourced from the Australian Institute of Family Studies



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3. Decision on Intervention

Staff involved in the investigation; the relevant Head of House/Year, Director of Students and/or Director of Boarding along with the College Counsellor, will meet with the Deputy Principal to discuss the risk assessment and determine a course of action based upon the outcome of this assessment. It is our combined job to teach our students the skills associated with respectful behaviour.

St Patrick's College Townsville is committed to providing a flexible and dynamic approach to student welfare, which includes demonstrating flexibility where possible and appropriate to managing allegations of bullying in a safe and respectful manner.

The following sections outline potential intervention for managing these concerns;

3.1 Method of Shared Concern

The *Method of Shared Concern*, as first suggested by Anatol Pikas (1989, 2002) which involves the perpetrators in a bullying situation being individually spoken to about the plight of the victim and working to brainstorm suggestions for how to support this person.

The victim is then interviewed and asked about their contributions to a bullying situation. The group meets, with a facilitator, to each offer their support and apologies to one another and discuss methods for sustaining the improvements to the relationship. The facilitator will also offer support and assistance to all parties if the situation deteriorates further. Finally, College staff will continue to monitor for any concerns.

This approach aligns with St Patrick's College Townsville preference for using conflict resolution strategies that follow a restorative model whereby students are encouraged to reflect upon their 'wrongdoing' and act so as to restore a damaged relationship.

This intervention is suitable for Moderate Risk cases of bullying allegations, and some cases of High Risk (with caution).

3.2 Mediation

Following individual interviews, students are brought together in a safe, neutral and confidential space to discuss issues raised and agree upon solutions to the issues. Written contracts to promote transparency and accountability between the parties will be developed during the meeting and copies of this agreement will be kept on file. The parties will be informed of various disciplinary options which may be taken as a result of failure to comply with the contract.

This approach is most suited to Moderate Risk or High-Risk cases of bullying where disciplinary action may need to occur if serious bullying does not immediately desist.

3.3 Personal Development and Community Approaches

The College Counsellor is an excellent resource for the provision and delivery of targeted whole group information sessions and discussions around bullying. Such sessions are age appropriate and provide relevant information to students as well as opportunities for discussion and reflection.

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St Patrick's College Townsville is committed to wider community and national awareness events such as the National Day against Bullying and R U OK? Day. Such awareness campaigns strengthen knowledge and understanding about the issues around bullying and the associated impact within the wider community. These types of interventions or approaches are suitable for Low Risk cases of bullying allegations, where some allegations may have been found to be isolated, not severe or unsubstantiated. In these cases, it is considered that the wider cohort may require more information and general strategies for dealing with interpersonal difficulties.

3.4 Circle Time Program

Circle Time for Emotional Literacy is a program developed by Sue Roffey (2006) which provides a structured framework for group interactions; where students regularly meet to 'think, talk and grow' together. The program does not seek to change behaviour, however, behaviour may change as a result.

This program involves regularly bringing together a group of students whose relationships with other members of the group may have been fractured or damaged as a result of bullying. Through activities designed to increase connectedness, positivity, self-awareness and compassion, the group will re-connect with each other to reduce animosity which may have contributed to incidents of bullying.

This approach is suitable for all levels of bullying risk, however, high risk cases may not be able to proceed until the bullying perpetrator has received individual support to encourage appropriate behaviour.

Monitoring, Review and Support

Through the College Counsellor, all parties are offered sessions to work on areas such as emotional regulation, effective and assertive communication and social skills.

In particular, students identified to fall within the High-Risk category of bullying perpetrators will be supported by the College Psychologist to develop more appropriate strategies for dealing with problems and to support the students with any additional difficulties or vulnerabilities they may be experiencing both at school and/or at home.

College staff will continue to monitor relationships between students and continue to maintain rapport with students so as to encourage confidence in reporting concerns.

The Director of Students will review the situation after two weeks with the student who initially reported the concern to determine whether the approach has been appropriate and effective.

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REPORTING, INTERVENTION AND FOLLOW-UP FLOW CHART

