

## SAFE SCHOOLS ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Mount Annan Christian College is to provide a Christ-centred learning environment that empowers each individual to enjoy a life of purpose.

### RATIONALE

Mount Annan Christian College desires to facilitate a unified and peaceful community that treats each other as we would like to be treated – with dignity, respect, honesty and grace. Bullying of students is not tolerated at any time. All students have the right to learn, and all teachers have the right to teach in a safe and caring environment that promotes self-worth and personal growth. It is the responsibility of all members of the College community to play an active part in ensuring that everyone is treated with respect.

### POLICY STATEMENT

The College has a zero tolerance approach to bullying at all levels in our community. We seek to implement intervention strategies and programs of instruction to minimise bullying at all levels of our community. All bullying incidents will be treated seriously with a response appropriate to the circumstance.

### AIMS

This policy aims to:

- promote a safe, supportive and positive environment free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behaviour.
- show commitment to overcoming bullying by practicing zero tolerance.
- inform students and parents of the College's expectations and to foster a productive partnership which helps to maintain a bully free environment.
- educate students, parents and staff about the causes, nature, effects and prevention of bullying.
- provide support for victims of bullying.
- ensure that the perpetrators of bullying behaviour understand and accept responsibility for their behaviour and receive appropriate discipline and rehabilitation in accordance with our Student Management policies.

### DEFINITION

**Bullying** is repeated intimidation over time of a physical, verbal or psychological nature of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. Three important points in this definition are:

1. **Power** – People who bully may acquire power through various means: physical size and strength, status within a peer group, and recruitment within the peer group so as to exclude others.
2. **Frequency** – Bullying is not a random act. It is characterised by its repetitive nature whereby the children who are bullied not only have to survive the humiliation of the attack, but live in constant fear of its re-occurrence.
3. **Intent to harm** – Bullies usually deny any intent to harm others and may not always be conscious of the harm they cause. Causing physical and emotional harm however, is a deliberate act. It puts the person who is bullied in a position of oppression by the person who bullies.

Some examples of bullying may include:

- Any form of physical violence towards others.
- Invasion of another's personal space with the intent to intimidate.
- Using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families or friends.
- Using put downs such as negative nicknames or belittling others' abilities, achievements or efforts.
- Ridiculing others because of their race, gender, religion, social grouping, physical appearance or dress sense.
- Writing offensive notes, e-mail or graffiti about others.
- Using a third person or group to influence others against someone.
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group, conversation or event.
- Using stand-over tactics or threats to intimidate others.
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it.
- Making sexually suggestive comments or gestures or telling sexually oriented jokes that cause discomfort, which could be classes as sexual harassment.

**Cyber-bullying** is a form of bullying involving the use of information and communication technologies (such as mobile phones, the internet and social media sites) to deliberately harm another person. Cyber-bullying may include:

- Sending unwelcome text messages to harm, shame, exclude, embarrass or intimidate another person.
- Circulating hurtful messages or images with the intention of humiliating someone or isolating them from their peer group.
- Posting messages, images and videos on social media.
- Sharing sexually explicit images via text messages, known as *sexting*.
- Using text messages and social media sites whilst using someone else's identity/personal details, known as *hacking*.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

*Our proactive response to bullying includes:*

- Facilitating an environment that ensures every student flourishes; free from the threat and fear of bullying.
- Not condoning or trivialising any bullying behaviours.

- Informing staff and students about how to recognise bullying behaviour. Individual classes and teachers will address important issues of bullying, inclusion, acceptance, servant-hood, fellowship, caring for others, and self-esteem in Devotions and Personal Development & Health KLA's. In this way students are receiving ongoing guidance and support from a teacher they see daily and have an existing relationship with.
- All College staff (including in the playground or on excursions) have a responsibility to report any incident of bullying to a student's classroom/homeroom teacher or Year Advisor. The teacher responsible will then follow up the incident in accordance with the Student Management Policy and record the incident.
- It is important that the communication lines between home and school be open. Parents will be informed of bullying and any incidents reported by parents will be investigated.
- Disciplinary action taken as a result of bullying by a student will be managed in accordance with the Primary and Secondary Student Management Policy.
- Inservicing of teaching staff on the ability to identify different forms of bullying and how to address bullying issues.
- Facilitating Student Wellbeing initiatives across K-12, including CARE Groups, Student leadership programs and an organised approach to delivering pastoral care.

*Victims of bullying behaviour at Mount Annan Christian College will be urged to consider using some of the following strategies:*

- confront the offending student and make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable;
- speak with the relevant teacher or parent/guardian to work out strategies for dealing with the problem and follow the appropriate guidelines for the management of bullying.
- Referral to external agencies such as counselling services if appropriate.
- Refrain from the use of ICT, mobile phone and social media technologies.

*Bystanders (other students) should:*

- inform an appropriate member of staff or responsible senior student immediately;
- make it clear to others in the peer group that such behaviour is wrong;
- understand that observing such behaviour without action can be seen as supporting the offending student.
- Responsibly use ICT, mobile phone and social media technologies.

*We encourage parents to:*

- be supportive of the College's efforts to deal with incidents of bullying and be willing to attend interviews or conferencing if required;
- be aware of signs of distress or changed behaviour that may indicate their child is a victim of bullying, for example, reluctance to attend School, a pattern of headaches or stomach pains, frequently missing equipment that is out of character, requests for extra money, damaged clothing or bruising;

- take an active interest in their child's social life and friendship groups;
- communicate openly and regularly with their child so the child is more inclined to tell them of problems before they become major problems;
- encourage their child to report the problem to a trusted teacher or do so themselves if the child is unable to do so;
- refrain from encouraging the child to retaliate or involving themselves directly with the child or their parents;
- trust the College's established procedures and desire to reach the best outcome for all parties concerned rather than seek revenge.
- Refer their child to external agencies such as counselling services if appropriate.
- Monitor their child's use of ICT, mobile phone and social media technologies.
- Attend College events which educate them about bullying and cyber-bullying.

## **MANAGEMENT OF A BULLYING INCIDENT**

### **Step 1**

All reports of bullying (including cyber-bullying) are to be investigated in the first instance by the relevant staff member in consultation with the Head of Primary/ Secondary to determine the nature and extent of the bullying.

### **Step 2**

If the bullying incident is a minor first offence, staff will follow up the incident as appropriate. This should involve bringing the parties together, with other relevant people as required, in student conferencing. This will allow both the offending party and the victim to talk through the situation and the offending student being given the opportunity to apologise and accordingly modify their behaviour. The offending student must be very clear on the fact that their behaviour is wrong and must not reoccur.

### **Step 3**

If the bullying is a serious first offence, the teacher will interview the offenders and the victim and the parents will be informed. The offending student will have discipline applied in an appropriate manner and counselled to assist them from re-offending. The victim will be provided with appropriate support. Staff will then appropriately monitor the students involved.

### **Step 4**

In the event of repeated offences of bullying by the same student, the Head of School will interview the offending student in the presence of their parents and the teacher. A more comprehensive conference would be arranged. Direct consequences for repeated incidents of bullying behaviour may include:

- detention;
- separation from peers;
- School or community service;

- professional assistance or counselling such as conflict resolution, anger management, referral to College Chaplain or Police Youth Liaison Officers (see contact details below);
  - suspension or expulsion at the direction of the Principal and in accordance with Primary and Secondary Student Management Policy.
  - being banned from bringing a mobile phone/device to school and/or from using the school's ICT resources.
- Details of all alleged and investigated but unconfirmed bullying incidents will be recorded within the normal record keeping methods of individual teachers.
  - Details of all confirmed and investigated cases of bullying and the related disciplinary outcomes for both the victim and offender will be recorded on the student files located in the Admin office as well as a soft copy of any documentation produced. All standard record keeping practices should be maintained by staff eg diary entries and/or staff emails.
  - The relevant teacher or Executive Leadership member will conduct a post bullying review with the victim and offending student to ensure that the situation has improved. The review should be shortly after the original incident and in the following days and/or weeks.

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**DOCUMENT CONTROL**

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