Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the dignity and respect of the person and, therefore, aims to eliminate bullying, harassment and violence in all forms. Learning outcomes, physical health, emotional, psychological and spiritual well being can be adversely affected by bullying, harassment and violence. Students who are bullied 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.

**Vision: ‘All Australian schools are safe and supportive environments.’**

The aim of the Framework is to assist all school communities in building safe and supportive schools where:

- bullying, harassment and violence are minimised
- students receive support on issues related to child abuse and neglect

The framework is underpinned by a set of guiding principles and related key elements/approaches that schools can put in place to effectively provide a safe and supportive learning element.

**The guiding principles**

*These define how schools need to approach becoming safe and supportive environments. They make it clear that proactive, strategic leadership is critical, and that a whole school approach is needed. The ethos and environment of the school, the teaching and learning (for the whole school community), and partnerships with the community (families and other agencies) are complementary parts of the whole picture.*

Australian schools:

- affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
- promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
- implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment
- recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
- develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
- ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
- recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
- have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
- focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
- regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
- take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

The six key elements that schools need to have in place to implement the NSSF are described in the Framework as:
- school values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare
- establishment of agreed policies, programs and procedures
- provision of education and training to school staff, students and parents
- managing incidents of abuse and victimisation
- providing support for students
- working closely with parents

DEFINITIONS

Bullying involves:
- a desire to hurt
- hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational)
- an imbalance of power
- an unjust use of power
- typically repetition
- is experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable

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 or electronic)
- physical - hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
- social – ignoring, hiding, ostracizing
- psychological – stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging possessions
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 [NSSF], 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).

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**PRINCIPLES**

1. Catholic schools are safe and supportive environments where the 11 principles and 6 key elements of the National Safe Schools Framework are practiced.
2. Catholic schools owe a duty of care to their students.
3. Catholic schools provide supportive environments which:
   - encourage socially appropriate behaviour using positive behaviour management
   - promote respect for self and other
   - develop physical/emotional well-being and resiliency
   - develop interpersonal skills and positive mental health
4. Dealing with bullying, harassment 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.
5. Bullying, harassment and violence shall be dealt with. When bullying, harassment 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.
6. 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.
7. All parties to incidents of Bullying, Harassment and Violence are entitled to appropriate support.

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**PROCEDURES**

1. All schools shall develop a school-based policy on bullying harassment and violence, based on a comprehensive risk assessment, which includes:
   i. an expanded definition statement which states that the school does not tolerate bullying, harassment and violence and which encourages all members of the school community to take a pro-active stance
   ii. examples of behaviours that are considered to be bullying, harassment and violence
iii. statements defining and advising the responsibilities of each of the major parties to the policy, the Principal, staff, students and parents, and, encouraging help-seeking through designated staff members when bullying, harassment or violence is experienced or witnessed

iv. strategies and responses (including curricula, programs and pedagogy and, where school resources are limited, forming partnerships with the wider community) to address:

- the development of supportive environments and positive relationships
- problem-solving and empowerment of students
- skills in conflict resolution
- promotion of tolerance
- acceptance of difference, and, a culture of cooperation, empathy and respect
- the resolution of problems involving those who bully and those who are bullied (including in this resolution, the early and appropriate involvement of parents)
- the support and restoration to wellbeing of children who have been harmed by hurtful behaviour. This includes assisting in retaining a connectedness to school and facilitating reintegration in those whose attendance may have lapsed as a consequence of bullying, harassment or violence
- the amelioration of the behaviour and attitudes of students who bully
- the pro-active engagement of bystanders to discourage bullying behaviour
- the broader needs of the school community
- the prevailing attitudes within the school including the ‘culture’ of the school
- teaching and learning programs to support the strategies and promote good citizenship skills in students, staff and parents

v. school support systems that promote positive mental health

vi. reporting, recording and data collection procedures to be used when investigating incidents, as a basis to facilitate evaluation and justify any modification to approach, and to inform prevention and management activities

vii. a case management model to be used when bullying, harassment or violent behaviours persist

viii. a statement on appropriate confidentiality

2. The school-based policy shall be developed using a broad consultative and educative process involving students, staff and parents. The completed policy should refer to any other relevant policies or procedures and should be disseminated and promoted to the school community.

3. Schools shall provide professional development and appropriate resourcing to meet the needs of their staff in implementing the school policy.

4. The policy developed by schools shall be monitored and regularly reviewed. A recommended period is every 3 years or immediately following any incident that raises issues in respect to policy and practice.
NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE PROVISION OF A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Australian schools:
1. affirm the right of all school community members to feel safe at school
2. promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
3. implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school environment
4. recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive school environment
5. develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole school community
6. ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the school community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
7. recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment
8. have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
9. focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
10. regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
11. take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

6 KEY ELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL SAFE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

1. School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare
2. Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures
3. Provision of education/ training
   • School staff
   • Students
   • Parents
4. Managing incidents of abuse/victimisation
5. Providing support for students
6. Working closely with parents
ST JOSEPH’S SCHOOL SOUTHERN CROSS

POLICY STATEMENT ON BULLYING

The St Joseph’s School community respects the rights of its students to be free from all forms of bullying and is committed to providing a safe environment for all students.
Rationale
The St Joseph’s School community respects the rights of its students to be free from all forms of bullying and is committed to providing a safe environment for all students.

Principles
Through our shared vision and whole school policy we are committed to addressing all incidents of bullying. At St Joseph’s School, we aim to ensure that all students are valued and that engaging in ‘bullying behaviour’ is unacceptable. Disregarding bullying behaviours or participating as a ‘bystander’ is unacceptable. It is the responsibility of ALL community members to ensure the safety, security and respect of all individuals.

The process (action plan) is aimed at targeting individuals engaged in bullying and empower witnesses to be more proactive in addressing this behaviour.

At the classroom and playground level, teachers will endeavour to educate students about appropriate and acceptable social behaviour.

At the school community level, issues of bullying will be addressed by relevant students and staff, and where necessary, the school Leadership Team.

Resistance to behaviour change and repeated offending will require the school’s discipline procedures to be enforced.

WHAT IS BULLYING?
Bullying is seen as behaviour by one or more persons, which is used to intimidate, exclude, frighten or dominate others. An individual or a group can carry out bullying.

FORMS OF BULLYING
Bullying can take many forms including:

PHYSICAL
• Hitting, punching, tripping
• Kicking, biting
• Negative body language
• Damaging someone’s property
• Stealing someone’s property

VERBAL
• Making hurtful and racist comments/jokes about another person
• Name-calling
• Commenting on social and/or family backgrounds
• Picking on others
EMOTIONAL
- Spreading rumours, gossip
- Taking or damaging property
- Sending hurtful notes
- Attempting to intimidate, threaten or belittle
- Forcing an individual to do something he/she doesn’t want to do
- Manipulating others – setting others up to get in trouble

SOCIAL
- Deliberately ignoring or avoiding
- Excluding from the group

SIGNS OF BULLYING
Signs of being bullied may be:
- Feeling frightened, angry or embarrassed
- Finding it hard to concentrate on school work
- Not wanting to come to school
- Not getting along with others

STUDENT ACTION PLAN
If you think you are being bullied…..

Ask yourself –

Was it deliberate? Yes or No

If Yes follow these steps –

• Ignore the behaviour and show it doesn’t upset you.

If the bullying behaviour continues...

• Tell the individual/s engaging in bullying behaviour to stop it. Ask the bully to leave you alone

If the bullying behaviour continues…

• Move to a safe area

If the bullying behaviour continues…

• Tell a staff member.
WITNESS ACTION PLAN

Ask yourself –

Does this look or sound like a bullying situation? Yes or No

If Yes follow these steps –

• Tell the person who is bullying to “Stop it.”

• Offer friendly help to make the individual/s feel safe.

If the behaviour continues …

• Take the individual/s to a staff member and report what you saw or heard.

SCHOOL ACTION PLAN

• A staff member on playground duty will assess the situation and speak with the students involved.

If necessary

• The Class Teacher is notified by Duty Teacher regarding the Bullying behaviour. The Class Teacher will investigate the matter further if required.

• Class Discussion about bullying will be included in lessons across learning areas such as Religious Education and Health.

If necessary

• Refer to the Leadership Team who will take appropriate action and make contact with parents if necessary.

PARENT ROLE

Parents can help by –

• Discussing school expectations about behaviour and how best to deal with bullying

• Teaching children to respect differences and be tolerant of others

• Showing an interest in your child’s school, social, sporting and cultural life.

• Developing children’s self esteem by offering encouragement, saying and doing positive things, nurturing their positive qualities and valuing them for who they are.

• Setting a good example, as role models, when resolving their own conflicts.

• Informing the Class Teacher of any bullying incident so that it can be stopped

• Assisting their child to understand and practice the strategies stated here.
The Method of Shared Concern (SCm)

An Intervention Procedure for Tackling Cases of School Bullying

Experience has shown SCm to be a very powerful technique. Young people are responding positively to the opportunity SCm gives them to break negative cycles of behaviour and show more tolerance....a few serious cases where parents have kept their children away from school and threatened litigation have been resolved using SCm.

Alison Duncan


The Method of Shared Concern (SCm) was developed by Swedish Psychologist Anatol Pikas. It essentially involves a trained adult working with the students involved in an episode of bullying, to facilitate solutions to the problem situation. The process involves interviewing the individual students involved to elicit agreement on positive changes to their own behaviour and follow-up meetings with the adult facilitator. The Shared Concern Method would not be used in highly serious cases of bullying.

SCm Involves:

- Interviews with individual students
- Exploring the situation as viewed by the students
- Trying to understand the group dynamics and the behaviour of bystanders
- Developing empathy in students
- Non punitive processes (which can encourage students to seek help in the future)
- Follow-up with adult facilitators who reward positive behaviour change

SCm Does Not Involve:

- Interrogating students
- Accusations and blame
- Punishments
- Trying to break up a ‘group’
**Does it Work?**

No method of addressing bullying has been reported as 100% effective….

However…

Professor Ken Rigby (University of South Australia) has appraised a number of programs that have incorporated the method of shared concern and reports that it ‘appears to have played a part in achieving above average reductions in bullying’ (Rigby, 2005). These reductions in bullying were reported in schools in Finland (Salmivalli, 2004) and in a study in Scotland, where 34 out of 38 cases treated with the SCm reported ‘successful’ or ‘very successful’ outcomes (Duncan, 1996). In Sheffield in the United Kingdom, Smith et al. (2004) reported that interventions using SCm were successful in approximately two thirds of cases. In Western Australia, a high level of success has been reported in schools where shared concern has been applied (Coosje Griffiths, 2001). At the time of press, Professor Ken Rigby and Coosje Griffiths (Western Australia Department of Education) were conducting further Australian research to evaluate the SCm in tackling peer conflict and cases of school bullying.

**Conflict Resolution for Future Citizens**

Recent research at University College, London (Singleton, September 2009) reports that ‘teachers and victims of bullying hold positive views about the success of SCm’ which reflects Anatol Pikas’ references to the power of SCm in ‘improving the school atmosphere and introducing a model for conflict resolution for future citizens’ (Pikas, A. 2002).

**References**


“You have to make a choice between revenge, and security for your child behind the backs of teachers. I can provide the second and therefore I have to refrain from the first”

Non Government Schools Psychology Service (Southern Office) December 2009