BAIRNSDALE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL INC.

Bullying Policy

INTRODUCTION

The following statement aims to outline how the school will handle and manage bullying, cyber-bullying and related issues.

Bullying is defined as repeated verbal and/or physical intimidation, exclusion or threats over a period of time by one or more students. It is a clear form of harassment.
This includes intimidation, exclusion, threatening and/or hurtful behaviour carried out via the internet, email, mobile phones (SMS) and other similar technologies. Of prime concern is the potential for this type of bullying to occur via social networking websites. Bullying carried out in this way is called 'cyber-bullying.'

RATIONALE

Jesus' mandate to love God and love our neighbour sets the tone for our school culture. In all our dealings throughout the school community our guiding principle is to love and show love, first for God and then for each other. Indeed by loving each other we are also loving God as we obey His instruction and as we value and treasure those whom He has created.
To that end we must ensure that we provide an environment and a school culture where this nurturing can best occur.
In all our dealings relationally we must remember that each member of the School community is a unique and highly valued creation, created by God, loved by God and endowed by God with a unique purpose and calling.
Bullying and Cyber-bullying then, obviously, have **no** place in our school and are **always** seen as unacceptable.
Everyone within the School community must be able to feel safe and secure, must be able learn or teach safely and must be respected as a valued individual, a creature of God.
Bullying is completely contrary to the Bible. God calls us to love one another, (Matt. 22: 37 – 40) to be concerned for the wellbeing of others, (Phil.2: 3-4) to act in such a way that reflects love, kindness, patience and gentleness. (Gal. 5:22-23)
Any acts of hatred, jealousy, discord, provocation and intimidation are not acceptable. (Gal. 5: 20,21,26.)

AIMS

- To foster community support and cooperation at all times in the School and especially in relation to bullying and cyber-bullying.
- To identify and reinforce what bullying and cyber-bullying are and the fact that these behaviours are unacceptable.
- To ensure that all reports of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators.
- To encourage everyone in the School community to be alert to any signs and/or evidence of bullying and to have a responsibility to report it to staff whether as an observer or as a victim.
- To constantly reinforce the key values of the School, in particular Love, and to reinforce the fact that we are all uniquely created people loved by God and created for a purpose in God.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Parents, teachers, students and the community will be aware of the school's position on bullying and cyber-bullying.
- Teachers will regularly be reminded of their *duty of care* regarding protection of students from all sorts of bullying.
- The school will adopt a three-phase approach to bullying; Primary Prevention, Intervention and Post Violation. While these phases provide a general approach there is a need to be flexible and recognition that each case is different and will need to be handled appropriately. In order to maintain an effective plan and approach the following areas need to also be addressed:
  - Understanding and talking about bullying and cyber-bullying.
  - Review existing policies and practices regularly.
  - Make it easier for students to report cases of bullying and cyber-bullying.
  - Promote the positive use of technology and social media.
  - Evaluate the impact of prevention and intervention activities.

Primary Prevention:

These are actions to be implemented throughout the year and not linked with a specific case of bullying:

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying and proven counter measures.
- School community education and input about the seriousness of bullying, their characteristics, impact on those being bullied, how and why it is unacceptable and the school's programs and response.
- Provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- A bullying survey and yard survey will be administered and acted upon as deemed necessary.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify at the start of each year the school policy on bullying and cyber-bullying.
- The curriculum to include anti-bullying messages and strategies incl. cyber-bullying, messages and strategies.
- Staff, students and the wider School community to promote the philosophy of 'No Put Downs'.
- Structured activities available to students at recess and lunch breaks as needed.
- Staff on duty to encourage students to become engaged in profitable activities during recess and lunch breaks.
- Proxy settings and firewalls maintained and updated to eliminate outside activity into the school's network.
- Students to be constantly supervised when using the school's computers. Accessing mobile phones is referred to and covered under the School's Mobile Phone policy.
- Encourage staff and students to report bullying and cyber-bullying incidents quickly and promptly.
- Encourage parents to contact the school early if they become aware of a problem.
- Encourage children and/or staff to report bullying incidents involving themselves or others early on.
- Parents encouraged to contact school if they become aware of a problem.
- Have a designated safe and quiet place for children to access at recess and lunch times if required and/or as decided on by teachers.
- Public recognition and reward for positive behaviour and resolution of problems.

Intervention:

What steps to take when you become aware of a bullying episode(s) or a bullying episode is taking place:

- **First instance**: the students involved along with any witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying and/or cyber-bullying will be fully investigated, verified and documented on the School's Bullying Register.
- The student identified as the perpetrator will then have to follow consequences in accordance with the School's Student Welfare Policy and/or Social Media Policy and/or Mobile Phone Policy. All action here is to be documented on the School's Bullying Register.
- At all times restorative practices involving apologies and forgiveness must be pursued as this is the only way to bring true healing. Praying with students is also imperative in this process.
- Parents/Guardians of both students and/or groups of students involved are to be contacted and kept informed of progress as to the incident(s).
- Students involved will receive ongoing counselling, encouragement and support following the first instance.
- **Second instance**: If the bullying behaviour persists parents will be contacted and called in for a meeting with the teacher and/or the principal. Consequences will again be implemented as per point 2 above. This will include removal of access to the school's computers and network for a period of time, confiscation of electronic devices such as mobile phones, 'DSs', laptops to be redeemed only by parent(s).
- Again throughout the process the School's Bullying Register is to be kept up to date along with any further documentation deemed necessary.
- As for point 3 above restorative practices should be a natural part of the whole process.
- **Third and subsequent instances**: In the unlikely event that the same students are involved in further bullying behaviour steps 6 – 8 should be followed with consequences moved further along the hierarchy (cf BCCS Student Welfare Policy) culminating ultimately in expulsion if there is no willingness to change and for relationships to be restored.
- In the case of a staff member being bullied, the principal or a board member delegate will commence formal disciplinary action and due process according to the School's employment policy and the Independent Schools Award – Teachers.

Post Violation:

What to do to address behaviour in following days, weeks and months:

- Reinforcement of positive behaviours.
- Classroom Meetings.
- Support Structures.
- Ongoing monitoring of students identified as instigators of bullying/cyberbullying.
- Rewards for positive behaviour.
- Consequences for staff will be individually based and may involve:-
  - counselling
  - a period of monitoring
  - a formal support group
  - disciplinary actions

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed with whole staff, student, parent and community input as part of the school's three-year review cycle.

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bullyingnoway.com.au   www.cybersmart.gov.au   www.mindmatters.edu.au