

Anti-Bullying Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

Scope

This policy applies to students, parents 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.

References/Legislation

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2001 (Qld)
Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)
Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)

Definitions

Bullying is systematic and repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person and occurs when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, or their property, reputation or social acceptance. Bullying involves a desire to hurt plus

- hurtful action,
- a power imbalance,
- (typically) repetition,
- an unjust use of power,
- evident enjoyment by the aggressor and
- a sense of being oppressed/dominated on the part of the victim.

There are five broad categories of bullying.

Physical bullying e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property. Repeated and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying.

Verbal bullying e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.

Covert bullying - This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Covert bullying includes:

- lying and spreading rumours
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
- provoking a food-allergic reaction
- mimicking - tone of voice or a specific student's accent
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone
- damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
- being a bystander and not reporting a bullying incident

Psychological bullying - threatening, manipulating or stalking someone.

Cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages, social networking sites or chat rooms to bully verbally, socially or psychologically.

Cyber-bullying, or e-bullying, is a reasonably recent type of bullying which involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, (mobile) phone and text messages, instant messaging (SMS), chat rooms and video internet sites, e.g. YouTube.

It can be particularly harmful because it can happen anywhere and at any time. Thus young people who are the victims of cyber-bullying have no place where they feel safe.

If the bullying is of a threatening nature then obviously it becomes a legal issue. The College will assist parents and students in reporting this matter to the Police.

If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in the school's Child Protection Policy then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

What bullying is not:

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble or school yard fights. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is not.

Bullying is not:

Mutual conflict - Where there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

Social rejection or dislike - It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Not desiring to play with a particular child or not inviting someone to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation - A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students.

The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion**. However, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should not be ignored or condoned. Resolution of these issues are a matter of urgency and reportable by staff.

Policy

Freshwater Christian College is committed to taking action to prevent bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

In order to prevent bullying from occurring, Freshwater Christian College 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 school.
- Develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students.

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, Freshwater Christian College will:

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

Freshwater Christian College is implementing this policy to ensure that students, parents and staff feel safe from bullying in all its forms. The policy sets out the requirements for dealing with bullying.

The basic beliefs underlying the policy are:

1. Every individual has value in a community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
4. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.
5. Every conflict can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need help to solve conflict through:
 - a) Acknowledging inappropriate behaviour;
 - b) Taking responsibility for their behaviour;
 - c) The correction of any inappropriate behaviour;
 - d) An apology/forgiveness process.
6. Failure of offending bullies to modify and correct their inappropriate behaviour will result in their exclusion from the College.

Responsibilities

Freshwater Christian College acknowledges its responsibility to:

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

Employee Responsibilities

At Freshwater Christian College employees have a responsibility to:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others
- Report bullying occurring to them or others
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed
- Uphold and consistently apply this Policy
- Respond appropriately to reports of bullying, including by investigating and acting upon reports of bullying, and by providing appropriate support and consequences.

Parent Responsibilities

At Freshwater Christian College parents have a responsibility to:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others
- Encourage their child not to bully others
- Encourage their child to report bullying to themselves or others
- Encourage their child to take steps to stop bullying
- Report bullying occurring to them or others
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed

Student Responsibilities

At Freshwater Christian College students have a responsibility to:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others
- Report bullying occurring to them or others
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed

Compliance and Monitoring

The College will keep central records of all reported incidents of bullying. These are analysed on a regular basis to ascertain major areas where bullying occurs, sex and age of victims and bullies, and strategies which have been successful. A review of the College's policy is undertaken every 2 years, taking into account this annual data.

As our College attempts to minimise bullying situations appropriately, it is important that incidents are reported quickly. Minimisation of bullying is also assisted if students, parents and staff who observe bullying do not act according to a 'code of silence' or some sort of 'no dobbing' policy. It is important that all reported incidents are dealt with within 24 hours, if possible.

Related Policies and Documents

Child Protection Policy

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Behaviour Management Policy

Complaints (Students and Parents) Policy

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