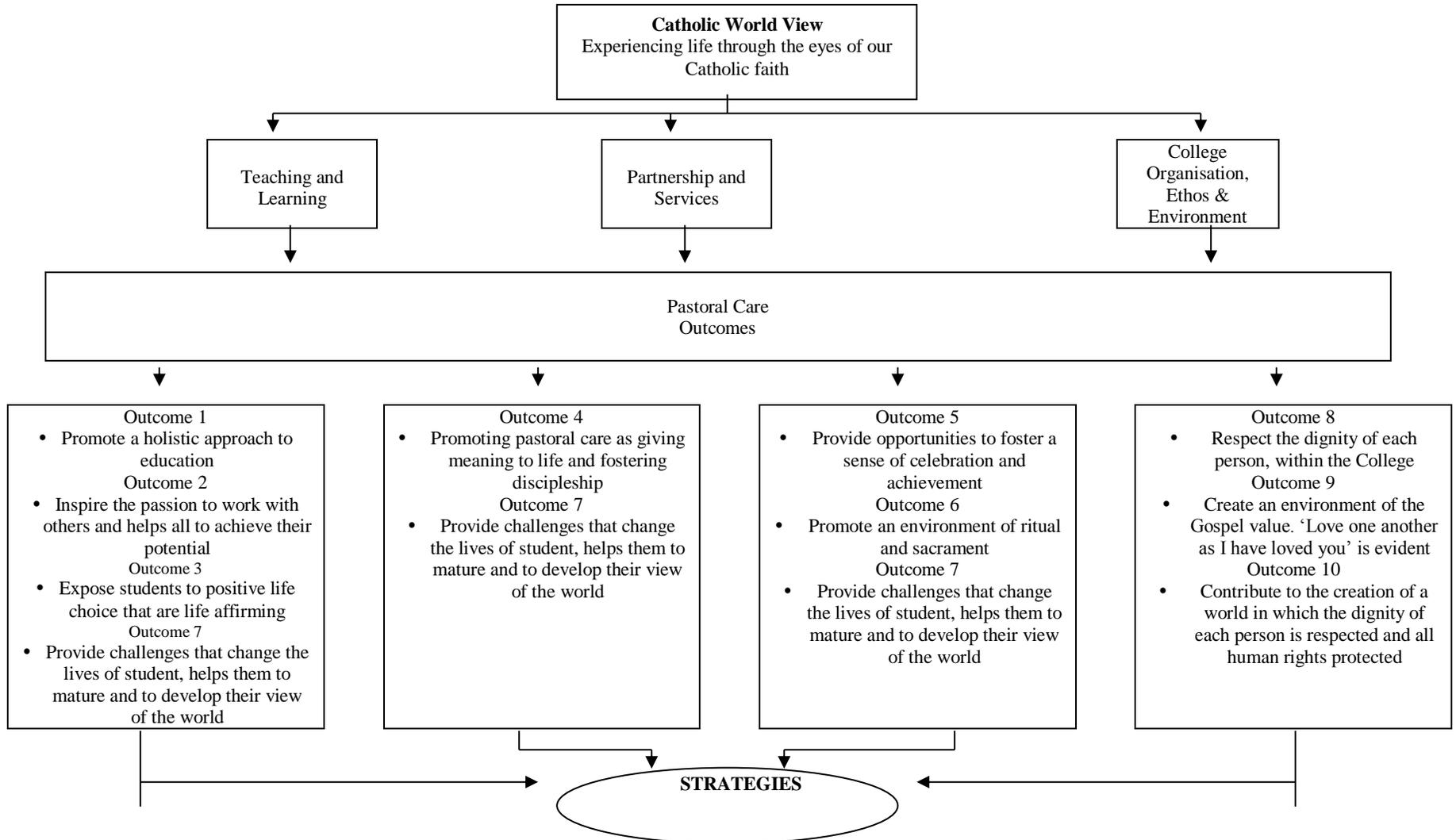


St Peter's Catholic College Anti-Bullying Policy

The St. Peter's Catholic College Anti-Bullying Policy has been formulated using the principles of the Catholic World View.



Anti- Bullying Policy

Purpose

At St. Peter's Catholic College we believe that all members of the community have the right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring which will not tolerate bullying. This policy builds on the school's pastoral care policy to provide clear and agreed procedures and strategies for combating bullying in the school, responding to bullying behaviours and protecting and supporting all parties involved.

Policy Framework

Based on the Christian vision expressed in the Diocesan Pastoral Care Policy, schools are called to establish relationships which are grounded in love, compassion, reconciliation and justice. In witnessing Christian values we reject ideas, beliefs and behaviours which marginalise or victimise people.

Definition

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, there is general consensus that bullying behaviour has the following elements:

A desire to hurt; the perpetration of hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational) in a situation in which there is an imbalance of power; the action being regarded as unjustified, typically repeated and experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive and by the perpetrator as enjoyable. (*Ken Rigby, 2002*)

Bullying is different from:

- A one-off incident of aggression/nastiness
- Mutual conflict

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress. Examples of bullying include:

Physical: hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others

Verbal: teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours

Non-Verbal: writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using email or text messaging to hurt others, rude gestures

Exclusion: deliberately excluding others from a group, refusing to sit next to someone

Property: stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property

The Potential Impact of Bullying

Bullying has the potential to affect both the individual whether a child or adult, and the entire school community. Students who are bullied may:

- Develop feelings of negative self-worth, possibly leading to feelings of isolation and abnormal absenteeism
- Develop feelings of helplessness, feeling they ought to be able to do something about it but lack the confidence to take any remedial action
- Feel frightened for their safety
- Feel embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- Disconnect socially from peers
- Project anger onto others
- Suffer problems in concentration or in sleep
- Develop health problems associated with the emotional/psychological distress created by bullying
- Experience difficulty in learning
- Exhibit 'at-risk' behaviours, such as anxiety or depression
- Have long-term problems in maintaining interpersonal relationships and in sustaining self-esteem

The Potential Impact of Bullying on the School Community

Although the effects of bullying may be most painful for the individual, bullying can affect the entire school community. It may be responsible for some of the following:

- Feelings of anger, tension or disharmony amongst student or staff
- An atmosphere which seems unsafe or uncaring
- A perceived lack of trust and cohesion between members of the school community
- A lack of faith amongst the student body in the ability of staff to maintain a controlled, peaceful environment
- An abnormally high number of aggressive actions
- Tension and frustration within the parent body as a result of their fears for the safety, happiness and well-being of their children
- Feelings of guilt, shame or helplessness as the result of knowing about or witnessing bullying
- A reluctance by a section of the community to participate in activities, especially those which are non-compulsory
- Links between bullying behaviour and legal issues
- A reduction in community confidence in the school

How do we prevent bullying at St. Peter's Catholic College?

Ultimately, strategies to minimise and prevent bullying will only be effective when placed within the context of a culture in which respect for others is consistently taught and demonstrated across all facets of school life and supported in the home. The College recognises the importance of parental support in the prevention of bullying in our school.

Strategies to prevent bullying will fall within the following broad categories:

- Catholic values must be continually affirmed in words and actions
- 'Moral education' in the context of religious education, liturgies and assemblies where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, reconciliation, tolerance, respect and justice are encouraged
- 'Across the curriculum' values teaching (e.g. looking at the problem of prejudice within the context of a novel or a history lesson)
- Clear statements from staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying
- Teaching specifically related to bullying in the PDHPE curriculum
- Teaching more positive ways of resolving conflict, such as working cooperatively within the classroom and playground
- Staff and students as role models, particularly those in leadership roles
- Measures for vigilant classroom and playground supervision, especially of 'high risk' areas
- Provision of safe and structured playground spaces and occasional structured activities, at break times throughout the school year
- Provision of activities which develop a culture of caring for one another
- Acknowledging the worth and contribution of others
- Appropriate provision of an access to counselling or other support services
- Provision of information for parents relating to bullying

How do we respond to bullying at St. Peter's Catholic College?

Bullying is viewed as a breach of basic human rights. Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be based on the College philosophy of Restorative Justice. The response to bullying will provide:

- Guidance and other support for the recipient
- Appropriate and consistent action and support for the student who has bullied

Staff will be encouraged to report suspected incidents of bullying to the Home Room Teacher, Year Coordinator, Assistant Year Coordinator, Stage Coordinator, Assistant Principal or Principal for further action.

The College seeks to promote a culture in which students will be encouraged to:

- Take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident
- Report the bullying incident to a teacher as soon as possible

- Make it clear to their peers that bullying is not accepted

What students can do

Recipients of bullying will be encouraged to:

- Initially ignore the bullying and not show that it is upsetting. Many bullies will stop if they do not elicit a response
- Explain to the bully that his/her behaviour is unwanted and unjustified. This step should be taken if the initial tactic is unsuccessful
- Discuss the problem with parents who may be able to assist with appropriate strategies to deal with the problem
- Notify a member of staff

Witnesses of bullying will be encouraged to:

- Support students being bullied
- Ask for teacher support
- Discuss problem with their parents

What Parents can do

Parents play a key role in the support of their child if he/she is involved in a bullying incident. Parents can assist in the following ways.

When your child has been the recipient of bullying:

- Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable.
- Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously
- Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault
- Contact the student's Year Coordinator and report the incident
- Avoid bullying tactics around your child so they don't get mixed messages
- If the bullying is verbal, help your child develop the skills to ignore it so that the student who bullies does not get the satisfaction of a reaction
- Enhance their self esteem by helping your child feel good about the other things in his/her life.
- The recipient and witness/es of the bullying may need further support to develop strategies to overcome the situation

When it is clear that your child is the student who bullies:

- Recognise the seriousness of the issue and cooperate with the school in implementing the appropriate procedures and graduated responses for dealing with bullying
- Stay calm and avoid becoming angry and defensive
- Reassure your child that you still love them – it's their behaviour you don't like and work with them to help change this

Procedures to deal with Bullying

Once a bullying issue has been reported by either a student or a parent, the following steps will be taken:

- Initial case of bullying will be investigated.
- If warranted, an interview(s) will be conducted with both parties to ascertain the specific nature of the bullying and its effect on the recipient, in an attempt to develop *mutual empathy*. Decisions will be made concerning the incident and whether the parents (of those involved) need to be informed. The interview will focus on appropriate strategies to assist all involved. Further support may be offered, if required.
- The initial interview will also include a clear statement of the consequences if the bullying continues, or if there are any reprisals concerning the incident.
- A record of the interview will be filed.
- An informal post-interview follow-up of both parties will be conducted separately after the initial incident to ensure that there have been no continuing problems.
- If the student continues to engage in bullying behaviour, a plan of action to manage the student behaviour will be implemented. The plan will be underpinned by the principles of Restorative Justice and may include conflict resolution and anger management.
- Once the action plan has been implemented, it will be evaluated at regular intervals.

Any recurrence of bullying will result in further consequences which may include suspension.