Countering Bullying Procedure Policy

Preamble

Biblical context:

Matt 22:37-40 'Jesus said to him. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second in like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the law and all the prophets."

Micah 6:8 'He has shown you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.'

Bullying prevention plays a role in ensuring that all schools build a safe, positive and supportive school culture that fosters caring, positive and respectful relationships between all involved in the school community.

The majority of this document focuses on bullying behaviour exhibited by students towards other students. Claims of adults bullying students are treated as child abuse and fall under the SCEA staff Code of Conduct Policy and SCEA Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy.

The College explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedures is to ensure that students and staff in SCEA schools are safe. Research demonstrates the strong association between safety, wellbeing, and learning. The wellbeing of children and young people is enhanced, and their learning outcomes optimised, when they feel connected to others and experience safe and trusting relationships.

Countering bullying relies on effective school policies relating to student wellbeing and safety.

This policy aims to:
- provide information for teachers to understand and recognise bullying in a range of forms, and the effects of bullying between students
- provide information for teachers on how to prevent bullying and ensure that students understand the expectations for their behaviour in SCEA schools and programs
- provide information to teachers on how to respond to bullying and how to restore relationships following bullying situations
- provide information to teachers

Related Policies
- Student Code of Conduct Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Complaints Management Policy
- Staff Duty of Care Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Child Protection and Mandatory Reporting Policy

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at SCEA schools, and all employees whether full time, part time or casual at any level of seniority, including contractors as well as service providers.

Definitions

Bullying *is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person, that involves an imbalance of power.* It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation, and harassment. In any bullying incident, there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Bullying can take many forms including:
- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Psychological bullying** occurs when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of somebody because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **Indirect bullying** is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **Cyber bullying** is ongoing abuse of power to threaten, harm or hurt another person socially psychologically or even physically, via technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chatrooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

Parent bullying takes the form of shouting, rage and anger, public reprimanding, humiliation and verbal threats of physical violence towards a staff member when they demand things for their child or when they feel that the staff member is not acting in their child's best interest. This type of bullying also includes making abusive phone calls, sending threatening emails or text messages, and posting inappropriate messages on social media websites. If this type of behaviour is on-going, staff should seek intervention from the Principal.

Student bullying of a teacher

SCEA recognises that educators are in a student-teacher relationship with the students whom they teach. This relationship is damaged significantly if a student bullies a school staff member as it involves disrespect for the staff member. The Principal will seek to restore the relationship. This may involve an apology; face to face, written or in a public forum if the bullying has taken place in a public forum. In view of the seriousness of this behaviour breach, the consequences for the student may be a suspension for a period of days or even withdrawal of their studentship at the school in significant instances.

What isn't Bullying

- *Mutual Conflict Situations* which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation.
- *One-Off Acts* (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not constitute bullying.

Policy Statement

The College recognises its duty to students in providing a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity are accepted and respected.

Swan Christian College has zero-tolerance of Bullying

The College will:

1. Manage bullying between students through a whole-school approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians

2. Implement bullying-prevention strategies on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower students to recognize bullying and respond appropriately

3. Tailor responses to bullying to the circumstances of each incident and/or pattern of student behavior

4. Review bullying prevention, occurrence and intervention data, and strategies annually.

Procedures

Education

In schools, it is important that all community members have a common understanding of what bullying is and can identify it when it occurs.

Many **students** believe that bullying is occurring when another student is being mean to them, teasing them or calling them names. They should be taught that bullying is not conflict or meanness. As stated above in the definition, bullying must include an element of power difference and be on-going or repetitive.

It is important that **parents** are made aware of these definitions so as not to use the word 'bullying' inappropriately, inadvertently resulting in the child believing they are being bullied when in fact they are not.

Bullying Prevention Strategies

The College runs the following programs to assist in the prevention of bullying:
Friendly Schools Plus
Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum
Kindness on Purpose
Stymie (Years 5-12)
Buddy Bench (Junior School)
Aussie Optimism
Alannah and Madeline Foundation (Cybersafety)
National Day of Action Against Bulling and Violence
Peer Support Program

Reporting Bullying

All members of the Swan Christian College Community have a responsibility to report bullying to a member of staff or a trusted adult, whether it happens to them or somebody else. Student sin Years 5-12 can also use the Stymie website to report bullying www.stymie.com.au . All reports are taken seriously.

Signs of Bullying

Some students do not report bullying for a variety of reasons the main one being that they fear reprisal or escalation of the bullying behaviour should it be learned that they have reported it.

College staff should be alert to signs that bullying may be occurring for their students.

Behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such changes include:
- Crying at night and nightmares
- Refusing to talk when asked, "what's wrong?'
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- An unwillingness or refusal to go to school; higher levels of absenteeism
- A decline in the quality of school work
- Changes in demeanor/becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- Unexpected changes in student's friendship groups
- Beginning to bully siblings
- Acting unreasonably or aggressively
- Suicidal thoughts

Signs can be less obvious, including:
- The student is often alone or excluded from friendship groups at school
- The student is a frequent target for teasing and/or mimicking at school
- Change in the student's ability or willingness to speak up in class and appears insecure of frightened

Parents/guardians are also encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and immediately notify a trusted staff member at the school if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

Some changes at home might include:
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Frequent tears, anger and mood swings
- Missing of damaged belongings or clothes
- Doesn't want to go to school/feeling ill
- Changes method or route to school; afraid of walking to school, travelling on the bus

What can you do if you are a witness to bullying?
- Don't become involved in any kind of bullying
- Stand up for the victim if it is safe to do so
- Invite the victim to sit with you and join your group
- Talk to a member of staff, friend or parent

What can you do if you are being bullied?
- Do not retaliate with physical or verbal aggression
- Ignore if possible, people who bully like to see that they can upset you
- Calmly tell them to stop, or say nothing and walk away
- Use humour, if this is easy for you to do
- Try to avoid situations in which bullying is likely to happen
- Talk to an adult that you trust
- Make a report using Stymie www.stymie.com.au

Responding to Bullying

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its merits.

College staff should:
- Provide assurance to the victim that they are not at fault
- Investigate the facts discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders
- Take time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- Maintain records of reposted bullying incidents, including entering into SEQTA
- Notify the parents of the victim and bully of the alleged incident, investigation and outcome

College Approach to Dealing with Bullying Reports

When dealing with reported cases of bullying the College initially uses an approach that is based upon the support group method. This approach addresses bullying by forming a support group of 'bullies' and/or bystanders. Without apportioning blame, it uses a problem solving approach, giving responsibility to the group to solve the problem and report back at a subsequent review meeting. This method, developed by Barbara Maines and George Robinson, has proven to be highly successful in preventing bullying from continuing. All bullying reports will be assessed by either the Deputy Head of Junior School, Deputy Head of Middle School or the Head of Senior School.

Consequences

If a student has been found to be bullying and does not change their behaviour after the Bullying Resolution Process has been undertaken or if the incident is deemed to be severe, then one or more of the following consequences may be applied:
- Detention
- Formal written apology
- Community service
- ICT ban
- In-school suspension
- Out of school suspension
- Provisional enrolment
- Withdrawal form a particular class or classes
- Exclusion from a particular area of the college grounds
- Expulsion
- Referral of the matter to the WA Police

Bullying Resolution Process

Bullying Incident

Report to a friend or parent

Reported to Staff Member

Not Reported

Bullying May Continue

Minor Incident

Deputy Head of Junior School
Deputy Head of Middle School
Head of Senior School

Serious Incident

Intervention

Deputy Head of Junior School
Deputy Head of Middle School
Head of Senior School
Dean of Year
Chaplain
Psychologist

Support Group Meeting

Support Group Meeting with Victim

Negotiated Behaviour Change

Review

Continued Bullying

Change in Behaviour

Consequences

Congratulate and Celebrate

Continue to Monitor