Safe School Policy

This policy applies to the community of St Mary MacKillop College, most specifically, the students and the manner in which they communicate with each other.

Policy Statement

St Mary MacKillop College does not tolerate bullying (including cyber bullying) and/or harassment in any of its forms.

To provide a safe school environment we believe:
- Each person has the right to learn, play and be in a safe environment.
- Each person must show respect for themselves, for others and for their property.
- In taking action to provide strategies for students who are experiencing bullying or harassment and strategies to learn more positive behaviours, for those who are bullying or harassing others.
- We all have a responsibility to take action where we see bullying or harassment occurring. Bystanders can choose to be a part of the resolution of bullying or harassment, or a part of the problem.

What is Bullying

Bullying is the repeated oppression over time of a psychological, physical or verbal nature of a less powerful person or persons by a more powerful person or group of persons. (Rigby & Slee 1994). It is an imbalance of power, which causes stress not only at the time of attack but also at the threat of future attacks. (Besag, 1989).

Types of Bullying include:
- Verbal Includes use of abusive language, name –calling, spreading rumours, put downs.
- Written includes writing about, graffiti or sending notes (including email and electronic forums) that are derogatory.
- Physical Includes kicking, biting, hitting and other forms of violence, destruction of property, and damaging or hiding of others' belongings.
- Social Includes exclusion and isolation.
- Psychological Includes extortion, threats, blackmail, phone bullying and cyber bullying,
- Cyberbullying is bullying that employs the use of technology such as the Internet, a mobile phone or a camera to hurt or embarrass someone.

Cyberbullying is when one person or a group of people, repeatedly try to hurt, embarrass or exert power over another person, using their computer or mobile device. The person bullying usually has some advantage over the person targeted, and it is done on purpose with the intent to hurt them. It is not an accident or teasing between friends.

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Forms of cyberbullying can include:
- Harassing and threatening messages.
- Sending unwarranted messages, pictures or prank phone calls.
- Using a person's screen name or password to pretend to be them.
- Forwarding others' private emails, messages, pictures or videos.
- Posting negative comments or compromising pictures.
- Sending sexually explicit images – 'sexting'.
- Intentionally excluding others from an online group.

What is Harassment

Harassment is repeated intimidation, over time, of a physical, verbal, virtual or psychological nature of a less powerful person by a more powerful person, or a group of persons. It can be overt or covert. This power can be physical or social and may shift over time, from one person to another. It is any behaviour which is unwelcome and makes you feel uncomfortable or fearful. It could be sexual or target people because of their race, religion, gender, disability, culture. Such behaviour could be verbal, non-verbal, or physical and may include physical aggression, offensive jokes, comments or notes, or unwanted touching

It is not harassment when two students of a similar age and physical and emotional development have a disagreement or conflict.

Examples of harassment include deliberate and repeated behaviour such as:
- A hit, punch, slap or trip.
- Bumping or pushing.
- Chasing someone with the intent to hurt them.
- Interfering with other people's property.
- Offensive name calling.
- Spreading rumours about individuals or their families.
- Put downs, belittling others' poor, or good abilities and achievements.
- Making derogatory remarks about a person's physical, cultural, religious or social background.
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual harassment.
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others.

Bullying and Harassment can lead to:
- A loss of desire to attend school.
- Difficulty concentrating on school work.
- Feelings of powerlessness, fear, embarrassment, discomfort and isolation.
- Social exclusion.
- Stress, anxiety and depression.

How do I know if my child is being bullied or harassed?

Generally young children will tell a teacher or parent if they are experiencing bullying or harassment. Students in Years 7 to 9 may not tell parents, but they may confide in friends or teachers. Senior students will generally talk to their friends about bullying or harassment, rather than parents or teachers. Nevertheless, parents should look for any unexplained changes in behaviour, attitude or routine and be open to discussing these changes calmly with their child.

- If concerned about the possibility of bullying or harassment occurring, talk this over calmly with your child to gather as much information as you can.
- Encourage your child to seek help through key College personnel including their Class or Homeroom Teacher, a College Counsellor or House Leader.
- If the bullying or harassment continues, contact the Homeroom Teacher or House Leader to discuss the information you have gathered, which will be treated confidentially.
- The Homeroom Teacher or House Leader will follow up contact with key people and arrange an action plan to support the student.

Cyber bullying is a specific form of harassment which can be addressed in the following ways:
- Save and store (screenshot if appropriate) the emails, chat logs or social media messages/images in case of Police investigation.
- Block and delete the bully from all contact lists.
- Do not respond to unwarranted emails, chats, SMS or comments – this is what the bully wants, so ignore them.
- Use the 'report abuse' button which all websites/applications have. Report the problems you are having and they are obligated to investigate.
- Encourage some 'down time' without using the computer or mobile device.
- If unwanted contact continues, consider deleting email, msn, Hotmail etc. and start a new account. Only give your new details to a small list of trusted friends.
- Consider getting a new phone number if harassment is occurring via mobile phone. Report the problem to the carrier and insist on a new number for free.
- Inform the College. It is important that we know what is going on so that we can follow up issues of concern.
- If ongoing, report to Victoria Police. Victoria has laws that prohibit online bullying and stalking. This is not to be tolerated.

Preventative Actions
In an attempt to be proactive, rather than reactive, the school implements a number of preventative actions:
- Wellbeing Program at Year 7 & 8 - part of this program is centred on communication and relationships with others. We utilise the e-smart schools resources as well as others.
- Guest speakers, motivational speakers and educational shows.
- Wellbeing Pastoral Care activities.
- Teacher Advisor interviews.
- Vertical Homerooms.

Grievance Procedure
If you are not satisfied with the action that has been taken in response to your concerns, if the bullying or harassment has not stopped, or if you feel let down by the process at any time, you are empowered to see the Principal to discuss alternative action.

What if my child is bullying or harassing other students?
In the event that your child has participated in the bullying or harassment of another student, they will be interviewed by the House Leader, Deputy Principal or Wellbeing team member, depending upon the nature of the bullying or harassment and prior reports.

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They will be offered strategies to modify this behaviour and a consequence may be given. You will be notified of this action and offered further assistance by the House Leader, Deputy Principal or member of the Wellbeing Team if appropriate.

Reports of bullying or harassment incidents will be tracked in the school Learning Management System, SIMON.

Associated Documents
Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedures
St Mary MacKillop College Vision and Mission Statement
St Mary MacKillop College Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Ratified Date: October 2019

Next Review: October 2021