



POSITIVE PEER RELATIONS (ANTI-BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT)

Related Merici Policies

Behaviour Management

Suspension and Exclusion of Students

Technology

Rationale/Purpose

Merici College is a Catholic school which is committed to promoting Christian values where all members of our community are to be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

We believe that all members of the school community have the right to a learning and work environment free from intolerance, harassment and humiliation.

We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring. This ideal is embedded in our ethos and is fostered by our Pastoral Care Policy and Practices.

Definitions

Bullying behaviours are a social problem involving an imbalance of power, where there is a deliberate intent to cause harm or distress. These behaviours are sustained over a long period of time are aggressive, repetitive and malicious causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to others.

Bullying behaviours diminish the life of our community and are NOT tolerated in any form. These behaviours include:

Verbal:

Using offensive names, making threats, teasing, spreading rumours, telling secrets (personal information), using put-downs, persuading another person to unfairly criticise or insult someone, making abusive phone calls.

Non-verbal:

Rude gestures, 'greasies'/menacing looks, staring, following or stalking, refusing to sit with someone, negative body language, text messaging.

Physical:

Deliberate or intimidating physical contact (eg: shoving/pushing, hitting, punching, and tripping). Stealing, hiding, or damaging property or threatening to do so.

Relational:

Hurtfully excluding others from a group, manipulating friends, rejecting, dismissing or deliberately ignoring others.

Social (bullying based on difference):

Targeting students because of appearance and possessions; background; racial, cultural and religious traditions; physical and intellectual differences.

Electronic:

Offensive use of social network sites, email, chat rooms, blogs and mobile phones(text or speak) and misuse of any part of the Merici Technology Policy

Please note: Normal adolescent development can include periods of social conflict, friendship difficulties and peer group change. It is important to remember that these do not necessarily constitute bullying behaviours.

Policy

It is the policy of the College that all students act positively towards each other at all times. It is our responsibility to act and respond should situations occur which are counter cultural to the aims and philosophy of the College. Through this policy and our actions we aim to:

- Assist adults and students to actively contribute to positive peer relations,
- Enable all members of the college community to understand their responsibilities and rights,
- Ensure support for persons affected by harassment or bullying,
- Intervene to implement strategies towards resolution.

Procedures

If information comes to the School about harassment and or bullying behaviours occurring either at school or outside of school via social networking sites the following steps will occur:

1. An initial written summary is received by the relevant Coordinator.
2. An assessment is then made as to the level of severity of the incident and an appropriate response is set in place. This along with outcomes is to be recorded and placed on file.
3. Aspects of this response may include:
 - interview all parties and mediate
 - negotiate a commitment for change and resolution
 - inform all relevant staff of agreed behaviour now expected
 - evaluate effectiveness of resolution processes
 - contact parents
 - refer to the School Counsellor and possibly outside agencies
4. In cases of peer relationship breakdown, a restorative session coordinated by a House Coordinator or Deputy Principal Wellbeing will be encouraged and be a required part of the process.

5. Should behaviour continue, consequences could include detention, behaviour contract, removal of privileges, exclusion from excursions, adjustments to individual timetables, isolation during breaks and suspension.
6. If a student(s) continues to engage in bullying behaviour she/they will be required to attend a formal interview in the presence of her/their parents with the Deputy Principal Wellbeing, House Coordinator and the Principal. At this stage major sanctions can be imposed if applicable.

Further strategies to support the student who has been bullied will be implemented to provide ongoing assistance. This process often involves the School Counsellor and parents.

Follow-up procedures will usually require observations and informal conversations in order to ensure that the bullying behaviour has stopped and that no retaliations have occurred.

Skills of conflict resolution, negotiation and teamwork, as well as the development of empathy for others, and assertive behaviours, are integrated across the curriculum.

Students, parents and staff play a key role in anti-bullying and harassment and should work in partnership with the College in all aspects of this process.

Students:

All students are encouraged to:

- Take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident,
- Remember that doing nothing to stop known bullying implies involvement in the bullying behaviour,
- Discuss the problem with friends and parents, who may be able to assist with strategies to deal with the problem,
- Provide support by reporting the bullying incident to an appropriate staff member,
- Participate in school activities designed to promote positive peer relations.

Parents:

All parents are encouraged to:

- Listen to your daughter and take her feelings seriously,
- Avoid advice such as "not to worry", "forget it" or "toughen up",
- Liaise with the relevant college staff,
- Help your daughter develop strategies to deal with the bullying behaviours (including communication skills and assertiveness),
- Help your daughter find ways to change the situation,
- Be aware of your own reactions to avoid conveying mixed messages,
- Avoid the urge to personally intervene in the situation unless absolutely necessary, as this will make your child feel less in control,
- Help your daughter feel good about the other things in her life. Build her self-esteem,
- When it is clear that your own child is the bully, recognise the seriousness of the issue and support the school in implementing this policy.

Staff:

All staff should support our culture of caring for each other, acknowledge the worth and contribution of all members of the community and model appropriate positive behaviours at all times. Staff should treat any report seriously, listen to the student and reassure her that she has acted correctly in reporting the bullying behaviour.

All staff should:

- First ensure that all students involved are safe,
- Make a brief written summary of the incident, pass it onto a coordinator and this process should be discussed with the student,
- Ensure that the incident has been followed up by the coordinator,
- Informally check with the student a week or so later that appropriate action has been taken and that resolution procedures have commenced. Continue to provide support for the student
- Develop a common understanding of unacceptable bullying behaviours and the effect these have on students,
- Participate in ongoing professional development in this area.

Forms

Nil

References

Nil

Approved by: Merici Executive
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Merici Contact Officer: Deputy Principal Wellbeing