ANTI-BULLYING / CYBER-BULLYING

POLICY

Definition:
A person is bullied when one or more other people intentionally expose them regularly and over time to negative or harmful actions. Bullies are people who deliberately set out to intimidate, exclude, threaten, verbally harass, damage belongings and/or hurt others repeatedly. Bullying is a clear form of harassment.

Rationale:
St. Peter Apostle Primary School is committed to promoting positive relationships and encouraging tolerance between all members of the school community and will not tolerate bullying or any forms of harassment, whether it be physical, verbal or cyber bullying.

- St. Peter Apostle Primary School will endeavour to ensure students and staff can exercise their right to learn or to teach, and have a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment and in cyber space.

- Young students have embraced the use of information and communication technologies to maintain contact with friends and make new ones. They send e-mails, create their own websites, post intimate personal news in blogs (online interactive diaries), send text messages and images via cell phones, message each other through IMs (instant messages), chat in chatrooms, post to discussion boards, and seek out new friends in community sites. While most interactions are positive, there are increasing reports of these technologies being used to harass and intimidate others. This is known as cyber bullying.

Aims:
- To reinforce within the school community what bullying is, and the fact that it is unacceptable.

- To identify bullying in the school, where and when it is occurring and who are the victims and the offenders.

- To encourage everyone within the school community to be alert to signs and evidence of bullying and to take on the responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.

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To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately and that support is given to both victims and offenders.

To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

To reinforce with students safe behaviour with regard to preventing cyber bullying e.g. privacy with regard to log-in, passwords and phone numbers and receipt of unsolicited messages. This will include teachers' duty of care when using the Internet/Intranet.

To reinforce the necessity to save the evidence of any kind of unsolicited or concerning contacts using the internet/intranet.

**Implementation:**

- Parents, teachers and community will be made aware of the school's position on bullying, including cyber bullying.

- All parents will have access to a copy of the Anti-Bullying Policy including cyber- bullying via the School website / intranet.

- The school will promote positive attitudes and behaviour such as mutual respect, caring for others, developing self esteem, confidence and self help skills to contribute to the eradication of bullying.

- Students, staff and parents of the school all have roles and responsibilities in the prevention of bullying at St Peter Apostle Primary School.

**Roles and responsibilities of students**

Students can counter the effects of bullying and cyber bullying by:

- Being actively involved in the variety of programs that the school offers.

- Developing a sense of respect and understanding of the needs of others.

- Not taking part in any form of bullying.

- Reporting incidents of bullying including cyber bullying involving themselves or others to his or her parents and a member of staff.

- Supporting students who are being bullied.

- Developing strategies to deal with bullies i.e. "I don't like what you're doing.", "You don't have the right to do that to me."

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• Not using mobile phones, cameras or other digital devices to record audio and visual material that is not authorized as part of the school curriculum program

• Not breaching the privacy of other students, staff and members of the school community through any unauthorized recording or filming.

• Not disseminating inappropriate information through digital media or other means.

Roles and responsibilities of Staff
Staff interaction with students has important consequences for the level of bullying in a school. Staff example can have a significant impact by:

• Promoting anti-bullying programs in the classroom and school.

• Listening sympathetically to students who need support and initiating action.

• Expressing disapproval of all forms of bullying including cyber-bullying whenever it occurs and following up appropriately.

• Providing strategies for both students and parents to deal with bullying issues.

• Intervening in general incidents of bullying they may witness in the classroom and playground

• Supporting the school anti-bullying policy.

• Adhering to St. Peter Apostle Behaviour Management procedures and guidelines with regard to appropriate use of the school technology, internet etc.

• Taking responsibility to act as a positive role model for their children in their care.
Role of Parents
Parents have an active role to play in countering bullying by:

- Addressing unacceptable behaviour of their children both at home and at school.
- Taking responsibility to act as a positive role model for their children.
- Informing the school of any concerns and allowing the school to follow up those concerns.
- Seeking understanding of bullying instances before reacting.
- Supporting the school anti-bullying policy.

St Peter Apostle Primary school will continue with existing structures and introduce others as seen to be appropriate.

The school will follow a four-phase approach to bullying.

A. Primary Prevention:
- Professional development for staff relating to bullying, harassment, cyber-bullying proven counter measures.
- Staff are aware of cyber bullying and are able to identify and look for signs of occurrence among the students.
- Social Skills and Life Education Programs to develop and promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution, problem solving and protective factors.
- Each classroom teacher to clarify at the start of each year the school policy on bullying and students are aware of the consequences for bullying and cyber bullying.
- All members of the school community students, staff and parents are encouraged to promote the philosophy of "No Put Downs".
- Provide programs that promote safe use of technology e.g. email, instant messaging etc.
• Advise students on how they can protect themselves in the first instance from cyber bullies:
  - Do not give anyone access to your passwords or personal information.
  - Only post personal information online with parental/adult consent.
  - Do not open e-mails or read text messages from unidentified names or phone numbers.

• A code of conduct is in use for technology, including computers and mobile phones, whilst on the school premises.

• Students are supervised and/or monitored at school when using technology for any inappropriate use.

B. Early Intervention:
• Encouraging children to report bullying incidents, including cyber bullying, upon themselves or which they may have witnessed.

• Ongoing community input via a range of methods including interviews, forums and an annual student survey.

• Parents encouraged to contact the school if they become aware of a problem.

• What students are to do if they feel they are a victim of cyber bullying
  - Do NOT respond
  - Tell a parent, teacher or Principal right away
  - First and foremost, save original evidence (e-mails, instant messages, etc) with dates and times.

C. Intervention:
• Once identified each bully, victim and witness(es) will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented.

• Students identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations.

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• Both bullies and victims will be offered counseling and support when required.

• Parents will be contacted if their child has been a victim of bullying and consequences implemented consistent with the School Wellbeing Policy. Parents of the offender will also be contacted.

• In the instance of continuous and extreme bullying behavior the Police may be contacted, especially when there is suspicion or evidence of a criminal offence being committed by or upon students or teachers upon school grounds or the immediate vicinity of school.

• If student bullying persists parents will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school Rules and Classroom Codes of Conduct.

• Ongoing monitoring of the students social skills and school climate.

D. Post Incident:
• Positive behaviour will be acknowledged and rewarded.

• There will be ongoing monitoring and support of identified bullies and victims.

• Consequences for students will be individually based and may involve:

  exclusion from class
  exclusion from yard
  school suspension
  withdrawal of privileges
  counselling from appropriate agencies
  restriction of the use of school based technology
Evaluation:

This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the school's Student Wellbeing Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and guidelines for the appropriate use of school technology and internet.

This policy will be reviewed with input from the whole staff, students, parents and community as part of the school's review cycle.

Policy has been ratified by the St. Peter Apostle School Education Board and St. Peter Apostle Staff, March 2012.