



STUARTHOLME SCHOOL

PEER RELATIONS POLICY

It is the policy of Stuartholme School to live out the values that reflect its Sacred Heart tradition. These values are embodied in the Goals of Sacred Heart Education and we educate to:

1. A personal and active faith in God;
2. A deep respect for intellectual values;
3. The building of community as a Christian value;
4. A social awareness that impels to action;
5. Personal growth in an atmosphere of wise freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Stuartholme School aims to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students entrusted to our care.

Stuartholme School promotes positive peer relationships and endorses difference within the community. In the spirit of the Goals of the Sacred Heart Education, the School strives to build a community of mutual respect, freedom, optimism and responsibility. No form of harassment or bullying, whether it be physical, verbal, sexual or cyber based is acceptable.

RATIONALE

- a) In line with our tradition, *'we learn from Jesus' attitudes and responses how, in all our relationships, to witness to the liberating power of His love. In faith and simplicity we meet the other as a unique person, having respect and affection for each, and a humility which enables us to be receptive.'* (Constitutions of the Society of the Sacred Heart s.15);
- b) Bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment (specific types of bullying) strike at the basis of the Five Goals and values and prevent students reaching for excellence in every dimension of life. Students are entitled to receive their education in an *atmosphere of wise freedom* that enhances positive peer relationships;
- c) Discrimination and bullying effect everyone, not just the **respondent** (the person displaying negative behaviours). It also effects the **complainant** (the person affected

by the negative behaviours) and those other girls who may witness exclusion, intimidation and distress. It can damage the atmosphere and the climate of a school.

This policy seeks to raise consciousness about the negative outcomes of all forms of bullying and also seeks to be proactive in encouraging our young women to adopt a positive, respectful and caring attitude which is reflected in their relationships.

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

- The Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (QLD);
- The Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act and Regulation 2001;
- The Education (General Provision Act 2006).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all forms of discriminatory or bullying behaviours and to all students at Stuartholme School including the Boarding House. This policy is to be read with other School policies including, the Student Protection Policy and the School Social Media Policy. Where there is any inconsistency, the Student Protection Policy will prevail.

POLICY STATEMENT

- (a) Stuartholme acknowledges its duty care of to its students under the Goals of Sacred Heart Education and the law. Discrimination and Bullying have no place at the School or in the Boarding House;
- (b) All issues of Bullying brought to the attention of the School or Boarding House will be addressed;
- (c) Restorative justice will be sought, but consequences will follow where a student has been found to be bullying;
- (d) All matters will be addressed in a timely manner and confidentiality will be respected;
- (e) The School or Boarding House will work with parents and state authorities as necessary in its efforts to address Bullying;
- (f) Substantiated Bullying will have School or Boarding House disciplinary consequences in addition to those applied at law.

PRINCIPLES

- (a) The best interest of the student or boarder is paramount;
- (b) The School and Boarding House adopts an holistic approach to address issues of bullying;
- (c) Partnership between staff, day and boarding students and parents is the basis of maintaining healthy relationships;
- (d) 'Due Process' will be followed when dealing with allegations of bullying within the school or Boarding House environment;
- (e) Problems related to bullying will be addressed;
- (f) Day and boarding students will be encouraged to develop connectedness, resilience, personal growth and positive self-esteem;
- (g) A supportive environment breaks down the code of secrecy re bullying behaviour;
- (h) Suitable counselling services will be provided for the respondent and the complainant;
- (i) The principles of Natural Justice and confidentiality will be respected in all issues.

THE LAW

DEFINITIONS

Discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying often involve the misuse of power, position and privilege.

Unlawful discrimination	Unfair or discriminatory treatment or practice based on attributes as described in the <i>Anti-Discrimination Act (1991)</i> .
Bullying	Repeated behaviour or treatment that is intimidating, degrading, humiliating or threatening, which a reasonable person would consider to be inappropriate and harmful behaviour.
Sexual harassment	Unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature that offends, humiliates or degrades. Sexual harassment is a form of sexual discrimination and is unlawful under the <i>Anti-Discrimination Act (1991)</i> . The objective test is would a reasonable person in the circumstance agree the behaviour was offensive, degrading or humiliating. .
Harm	Harm caused to a student under 18 years, is any detrimental effect of a significant nature on the student's physical, psychological or emotional wellbeing. It is immaterial how the harm is caused. Harm can be caused by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) physical, psychological or emotional abuse or neglect; orb) sexual abuse or exploitation.

School Protection Contact Officers	Delegated employees who have specific responsibilities under the policy in the areas of receiving and responding to protective concerns (Reg. 10 in Education Accreditation Non-State Schools) Regulation 2001
Unacceptable Risk	Risk that in the reasonable opinion of the Principal in consultation requires a person not to be in contact with children, during or outside school hours
Natural Justice	The legal requirement of allowing a person about whom a complaint or allegation has been made, to know the full particulars of the complaint and have the full opportunity to tell his/her side of the story. That person also has a right to be heard in an unbiased forum.
Confidentiality	In situations where a person's or the School's good name is at stake, every effort must be made to ensure information is shared only with delegated leadership and that where possible anyone with information signs a Confidentiality Declaration. Students must never be assured their disclosures will be kept secret but everybody can be assured that confidentiality and privacy is a high priority.

EXAMPLES OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR UNDER THIS POLICY

Physical

- Hitting, kicking, punching;
- Pushing, tripping, spilling;
- Throwing objects;
- Hiding/damaging or destroying property belonging to someone else;
- Making someone give money/food/property against their will;
- Making faces or rude gestures.

Non Physical

- Threatening any of the behaviours mentioned in physical;
- Name-calling, offensive language (verbal, written, cyber based, mobile phone or emailed);
- Teasing, ridiculing;
- Spreading rumours (verbal or written/note writing, cyber based, offensive email, graffiti);
- Deliberately excluding someone from a group;
- Racially/sexually harassing;
- Misuse of mobile phones ;
- Misuse of technology.

NB The excuse "It was only a joke" or unintentional is unacceptable.

CYBER BULLYING

This behaviour falls under various areas of the Criminal Law Act.

Cyber bullying, or e-bullying, is a reasonably recent type of bullying which involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, (mobile) phone and text messages, instant messaging (SMS), chat rooms and video internet sites eg YouTube. It can be particularly harmful because it can happen anywhere and at any time. Thus young people who are the victims of cyber bullying have no place where they feel safe. If the bullying is of a serious and threatening nature then obviously it becomes a legal issue and students and parents should seek advice by reporting the matter to the police.

Cyber Bullying includes, but may not be contained to:

- Texts, abusive, derogatory or threatening SMS messages on a mobile phone;
- Sending abusive, derogatory or threatening emails to the person and/or a wider audience;
- Creating a derogatory or threatening website, often using photographs possibly taken by mobile phone;
- Spreading of harmful rumours via email, SMS text or online chat;
- Dissemination of harmful rumours, pornography, or other such harmful or illegal material via emails, SMS text or online chat;
- Theft and/or misuse of passwords and logon IDs;
- Use of alias screen names to disguise abusive behaviour, and to deliberately distort communication;
- Defamatory websites or weblogs/blogs;
- Hacking with intent to alter recorded information or cause disruption to services;
- Posting of "hit lists" on websites, bulletin boards etc;
- Use of chat rooms to abuse or exclude the person or
- Other uses of technology to bully.

CYBER BULLYING CAN BE A CRIMINAL OFFENCE

How is cyber bullying the same as face-to-face bullying?

Cyber bullying is the same as face-to-face bullying because such actions:

- Are reckless and take no care whether the person is hurt, threatened, intimidated or humiliated;
- Involve an imbalance of power;
- Are often repeated;
- Leave the victim feeling defenceless and vulnerable.

How is cyber bullying different from face-to-face bullying?

Cyber bullying is different from face-to-face bullying because such actions:

- Often reach a much wider audience;

- Are written and so have a greater impact;
- Can occur and be accessed 24 hours a day and 7 days a week;
- Can be stored;
- Can have their transmission point anywhere;
- Can be anonymous;
- Are less often detected by adults.

PROACTIVE EDUCATION

- (a) All day and boarding students upon entry to the School will be alerted to the Peer Relations Policy;
- (b) Students will be taken through activities and discuss, during Teacher Mentor classes, the issue of discrimination and bullying;
- (c) Education for all other year levels will occur through the wellbeing program (where the psychology of the inappropriate behaviours are explored as well as the motivation for 'telling') and formal assemblies at appropriate times during the year;
- (d) Up to date information about the quality of peer relations will be maintained by Leaders of Student Wellbeing. Cyber bullying gleaned through Reporting forms and student teacher and parents' information will be sought;
- (e) Attempts will be made to include parents in the education process re bullying and its likely consequences to both the Respondent and the alleged 'victim';
- (f) All teaching and boarding staff will engage in professional learning with regard to discrimination and bullying and their reporting responsibilities.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF, STUDENT, PARENTS

As a school community, Stuartholme takes all forms of bullying very seriously. Staff, students and parents all have a role to play in preventing/dealing with incidents of known or suspected bullying.

a) Staff have the responsibility to:

- Be positive role models in word and action at all times;
- Take time to go over this Policy and discuss the implications of the policy with students;
- Engage in professional learning in this area;
- Be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying;
- Make efforts to minimise opportunities for bullying by active playground, bus duty and other supervision;
- Arrive at class on time and move promptly between lessons;
- Report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member, Leader of Student Wellbeing, Counsellor, Student Protection Contact Officer, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding or Boarding Supervisor;
- Use Bullying Incident Form.

b) Students have the responsibility to:

- Students are encouraged and requested to report all incidents of discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying to a teacher, Leader of Student Wellbeing, Senior Boarding Supervisor or Student Protection Contact Officer;
- Students will be asked to record the events in writing using the Bullying Incident Form;
- The Respondent and the Complainant will be required to discuss the incidents separately. These interviews will not occur at the same time. A written record as to the substance of the alleged behaviours will be formulated;
- Day Students who are found to be discriminating, sexually harassing or bullying will be required to attend an interview with the Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing to discuss outcomes and consequences. Boarding students who are found to be discriminating, sexually harassing or bullying will be required to attend an interview with the Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding to discuss outcomes and consequences;
- The parents of the students involved will be informed of the matter and the outcome;
- If further incidents of discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying by the same student occur, her parents will be required to attend an interview to discuss further assistance and consequences.

c) Parents have the responsibility to:

Parents of the students involved in bullying will be contacted by the School.

Under the Contract of Enrolment parents accept they are in partnership with the school to promote the best interests of students. As part of this commitment parents are requested to:

- Watch for signs of distress: eg wanting to miss school, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, becoming withdrawn (decline in motivation towards school), change in academic performance, nightmares, tension or unhappiness, bruising, disappearance of property damaged clothing, etc.;
- Inform the School if bullying is suspected, asking for an interview with Teacher Mentor, Leader of Student Wellbeing, School Counsellor, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding;
- Keep a written record of any such incidents: Who, what, where and when to assist the School;
- Suggest their daughter tell a staff member about the problem so that it can be addressed;
- Follow this up with discussion at home regarding how the incident is being resolved;
- Discourage retaliation – communicate to their daughter that together the problem can be resolved and that parental involvement at the school level is acceptable and necessary to deal with the situation;
- Support their daughter, encourage development of friendships and work on improving self-esteem and confidence;
- Support attempts by the School and Boarding House to address bullying;
- Take an active interest in their child’s social life;
- Allow the School or Boarding House to enact the response to allegations so that objectivity is assured;
- Seek assistance from the Counsellor, Leader of Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding to devise strategies that will help their daughter.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years, or as required by legislation.

Ratification Date: _____ **Review Date:** _____

School Response Procedures

The procedures followed to protect the rights of all individuals may include some or all of the following:

Resolution of Disputes

1. Any student who has a concern about her relationship with one or more students in the School or Boarding House, or any person (student/parent) having knowledge of any person experiencing bullying is encouraged to inform:
 - Teacher Mentor;
 - Leader of Student Wellbeing;
 - School Counsellor;
 - Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing;
 - Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding;
 - Director of Boarding;
 - Student Protection Contact Officer.
2. Staff are directed under this policy to report instances of bullying, as above.
3. Serious or urgent concerns may be referred directly to the Deputy Principal, Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding and Director of Boarding or Principal
 - a) The person informed will document the concern (Bullying Incident Form) and refer the incident on to one of the above, if necessary;
 - b) An attempt will be made to resolve the concern in one or more of the following ways:
 - Interview/discussion with alleged offending students;
 - Contacting and interviewing parents;
 - Mediation;
 - Conflict Resolution/Family Conference;
 - Investigation;
 - Counselling.
 - c) Any concerns or dispute that is not resolved at this stage is forwarded to the Deputy Principal, Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding or the Principal;
 - d) If it is established that bullying has occurred, consequences will be enacted;
 - e) Retaliation by students questioned about incidents of suspected bullying against the student who reports the bullying will be treated seriously and consequences will be enacted.
4. Investigation

If an investigation is necessary to find the facts, the Principal will delegate such responsibility to an appropriate person.

- a) The Complainant will be asked for particularised details of the behaviours;
- b) The alleged offender will be given the details of the incidents and every opportunity to respond;
- c) The relevant student will be interviewed;
- d) Where relevant, witnesses will be interviewed;
- e) Where appropriate, the School Counsellor may be present in the interviews;
- f) The delegated investigator will make written notes on whether each allegation is substantiated or not and provide the Deputy Principal, Student Wellbeing or Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/Director of Boarding with the notes;
- g) The Principal will be informed and provided with the findings;
- h) Parents will be updated;
- i) Consequences will be put in place;
- j) The matter will be monitored for a specific time.

Stages of Response

Stage 1: Incident is Reported

- Initial information gathering (Leader of Student Wellbeing or Senior Supervisor);
- No Blame approach – mediation meetings (Leader of Student Wellbeing with the assistance of the School Counsellor);
- Parents will be informed of the matter;
- Education – empathy training (School Counsellor involved);
- An appropriate consequence put in place.

Stage 2: Second/Repeated Incident

- information gathering by the Leader of Student Wellbeing or Senior Supervisor;
- Interviews with students;
- Interview with parents;
- Education – negotiation skills and anger management (School Counsellor involved);
- Interview with Deputy Principal Student Wellbeing, Deputy Principal Mission and Boarding/ Director of Boarding;
- Notation in student's file;
- An appropriate consequence is put in place.

Stage 3: Repeated/Persistent Incidents

- Suspension of student pending investigation of incident;
- The initial investigation will take place;
- Parents may be interviewed;
- Meeting with the parents and Principal/Delegate regarding the future of student at the School;
- Notation in student's file;
- Consequences include exclusion.

NB. Nothing in the policy detracts from the right of the Principal to exclude a student permanently if in the reasonable opinion of the Principal a situation exists where members of the School community are put at unacceptable risk.

Should in the reasonable opinion of the Principal, HARM has been caused or suspected to have been caused by one student to another the Student Protection Policy reporting requirements will be followed.

d) Consequences

There are a range of consequences which will be utilised to combat bullying including:

- Spoken apology;
- Written apology;
- Apology to Student and her family;
- Restorative Justice Conference;
- Loss of privileges;
- Demotion from leadership position;
- Suspension;
- Expulsion.

