1. **Introduction**

   In our community, each person is sacred and unique, and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Diversity is one of our strengths and we strive to live together in harmony, giving each other support, understanding, and a fair go. Together, we work to build a safe and welcoming school environment, which offers each person the freedom to learn. In living out these values, we will build strong positive relationships and show our true colours.

2. **Overview of the Relationships Policy**

   The conceptual framework for forming, expressing, and managing relationships within this school is based on the Health Promoting Schools Model. The model considers the interconnecting contexts of School (organization, ethos, environment), Curriculum (teaching, learning), and Community (links, partnerships). All aspects of relationship formation, expression, and management in the school are informed and underpinned by our seven core values: community, respect, support, understanding, equality, learning, and positive relationships (see section 4). Staff employ a participatory action research process when managing relationship issues. This means key personnel collaborate with students, staff, and family members, as appropriate, to identify issues, gather information, plan actions, evaluate outcomes, and reflect on further requirements. Conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation are our preferred techniques for restoring or transforming negative relationships. Our overall aim is to promote, develop, and support relationships that are consistent with our school motto, “Love one another as I have loved you”.

3. **Values underpinning the Relationships Policy**

   There are seven core values underpinning our Relationships Policy. These are:
   - **Positive relationships**: interacting in an honest and open manner
   - **Community**: providing a safe and welcoming environment where each person is at peace with one another
   - **Learning**: making the most of all opportunities and learning from our mistakes
   - **Equality**: being just and giving everybody a fair go
   - **Understanding**: listening and showing compassion to others
   - **Respect**: accepting every member of the school community and the guidelines by which we live
   - **Support**: caring for and nurturing our friends and others in our community
Positive relationships is the central, unifying value to which the other values contribute. Our relationships flag:

4. **Scope of our Relationships Policy**

The Relationships Policy is a whole school approach to promoting positive relationships between and among the students, staff, and family members of CRC-St Albans. It also applies to relationships with visitors to the College. The policy concerns relationships occurring within the context of CRC-St Albans.

The Relationships Policy is consistent with the principles and practices outlined in the National Safe Schools Framework ([www.dest.gov.au/schools/nssf](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/nssf)) and Mind Matters ([cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/](http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/)). It is to be read in conjunction with relevant CRC-St Albans documents:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Welfare and Discipline Policy
- Discrimination Free Workplace Policy
- Policy Privacy
- Complaints Handling Procedures
There are five key limits to the Relationships Policy. These are:

- if a person(s) has been seriously harmed
- if there is a clear, immediate threat of harm to another person(s)
- where a person(s) is unwilling or unable to participate in the processes for responding to negative relationships (see section 9)
- where there is a legal obligation to work within another policy
- when behaviours or interactions require responses not covered in this policy

The Principal or Deputy Principals determine when one or more of these limits apply. They advise on the appropriate policy to guide a course of action.

5. Objectives of our Relationships Policy

There are five main objectives of the Relationships Policy. For the students, staff, and family members of CRC-St Albans, these objectives are:

- to educate us on the nature of relationships
- to equip us with the skills required for building positive relationships
- to inform us of the procedures and processes for addressing negative relationships
- to equip key personnel with the skills required for transforming negative relationships
- to develop, utilize, and promote effective communication skills.

For students, the objectives are addressed through a range of curriculum, co-curriculum, and extra-curriculum activities. For staff and family members, the objectives are addressed through professional development and adult education opportunities respectively.

6. Positive relationships

‘Positive relationships’ between and among students, staff, and family members refer to interactions or behaviours characterized as friendliness, friendship, mutuality, and collaboration. Positive relationships:

- make people happier and at ease
- are realistic and flexible
- involve sharing, talking, accepting differences
- require responsible ownership of a problem
- include self-care
- use conflict resolution techniques.
7. **Negative relationships**

‘Negative relationships’ between or among students, staff, and family members refer to interactions or behaviours characterized as harassment, abuse, violence, bullying, racism, or discrimination.

Descriptors:

- **Harassment**: intentionally threatening or invading the privacy of others to cause distress
- **Abuse**: speaking, writing, or behaving to others in ways that are disrespectful, destructive, and harmful
- **Violence**: intentionally causing physical, mental, emotional, social, or psychological harm to others
- **Bullying**: acting as if you have more power than others by upsetting and treating them badly
- **Racism**: abusing, bullying, or discriminating against others because you are of different ethnicities or speak different languages
- **Discrimination**: not giving others a fair go because their abilities, language, backgrounds, friends, or interests are different from yours.

Features:

- antisocial acts which cause embarrassment, pain, or hurt to others
- an abuse of perceived power
- may be planned or unplanned
- may involve one or more people
- may be used directly or indirectly against others
- may occur once or be on-going

They may be demonstrated in many overt and covert forms, such as:

- verbal – written or spoken
- physical – threatening gestures, bodily contact
- relational – exclusion, isolation, silencing
- racial – ethnicity, language, or colour
- technological/electronic – telephone, cyberspace, digital

They may be evidenced by changes in:

- social, physical, emotional, psychological, physical, and behavioural patterns
- mental and/or physical health
- happiness and hopefulness

Negative relationships between or among students, staff, and family members are inconsistent with the core values of CRC-St Albans and are not acceptable.
8. **Promoting positive relationships**

In general, we promote positive relationships between and among students, staff, and family members using the Health Promoting Schools framework. To do this, we are committed to:

- providing a culture and environment that enhance a sense of belonging, connectedness and self-worth for all students, staff, and family members
- providing relationship education and skills training to all students, staff, and family members of CRC-St Albans
- working in collaboration with all students, staff, and family members and providing appropriate services.

More specifically, we promote positive relationships between and among students, staff, and family members in the following ways:

- staff encourage and structure positive, caring relationships between and among students, and with family members
- every student, staff, and family member has someone in the school (teaching staff or non-teaching staff) to go to for support
- Pastoral Care groups offer the opportunity for students and family members to experience a sense of belonging and connectedness
- staff use advanced listening, questioning skills when responding to issues regarding students, staff, and family members
- opportunities are available for students, staff, and/or family members to bond/share/live as a community, eg liturgies, community days, pastoral care days, information evenings, showcasing skills, celebrations, assemblies, and parent-teacher-student interviews.

9. **Responding to negative relationships**

All students, staff, and family members of CRC-St Albans are affected by negative relationships and share the responsibility for responding to them. The process we employ for responding to negative relationships comprises a range of steps and approaches.

The main steps in responding to negative relationships are as follows:

- Those aware of, or experiencing negative relationships, get connected and break the silence. This enables referral to a staff member most appropriate to coordinate the response. The referral takes into account the wishes of the informant(s) and the seriousness of the issue.
• The staff member *works together* in a team with the informant(s) and students, staff, and/or family members to identify any contextual interpersonal, and/or personal factors contributing to negative relationships.

• The team members develop and enact an *action plan*.

• The team members *evaluate* the effectiveness of the action plan and conclude the process when the relationships are positive again.

The types of *approaches* that we employ are indicated in the following diagram.

![Diagram](image)

1. **Get connected**
   - tell someone you trust
   - break the silence – tell a staff member (e.g., PC teacher, House Leader, Counsellor)
   - commit to making the relationship better

2. **Work together**
   - work out the whole story
   - work out a safety plan
   - work out a support plan

3. **Action plan (suggestions only)**
   - talk to the person or people involved
   - take part in conflict resolution
   - take part in mediation
   - take part in reconciliation
   - refer the situation to the Principal, Deputy Principal (Student Welfare or Curriculum), House Leader, Counsellor
   - take part in counselling
   - learn better relationship skills
   - notice and name behaviours or interactions that are not respectful
   - name and model respectful ways of behaving or interacting
   - communicate in a concerned, nonjudgemental, private manner
   - be even-handed in your talking, listening, and supporting
   - defuse heated situations – generate space and time to cool off
   - help those involved to generate ideas for improving the relationship
   - normalize relationship issues: stressors, changes, reactions, restoring harmony
   - explore ways of making restitution

4. **Evaluate the plan**
   - stay connected and work until the situation is better
   - check how the relationship is going a few weeks later
   - have a conclusion
10. **Transforming negative relationships**

Many negative relationships can also be transformed. At CRC-St Albans, we are committed to facilitating the transformation from negative to positive relationships. The three processes available for transforming negative relationships between or among students, staff, and family members are as follows.

- **Conflict resolution**: an informal process conducted by those involved in the matter themselves, friends, other students, or any staff member. Conflict resolution is for participants whose status may vary. It is for those who are willing and able to resolve a matter in a timely, balanced manner.

- **Mediation**: a formal, voluntary process conducted by a Member of the Leadership Team, Mediator, or School Counsellor. Mediation is for participants who are of relatively equal status.

- **Reconciliation**: a formal, voluntary process conducted by a Member of the Leadership Team, or School Counsellor. Reconciliation is for the most serious situations where there are multiple parties of varying status.

It can take time to restore a relationship to better health, or for transformation to occur. The appropriate staff member (see Section 9) accompanies those affected by negative relationships until the relationship is positive again or, indeed, transformed.

11. **Further information**

Additional information regarding relationship issues at CRC-St Albans follows.

*Privacy*

All students, staff, and family members have a right to privacy. This means that:

- sensitive issues are handled by students, staff, and family members in a respectful manner
- appropriate information is shared between and/or among students, staff, and family members on a needs-to-know basis as determined by the Principal or Deputy Principal (Student Welfare)
- information shared between and/or among students, staff, and family members is relevant to restoring positive relationships.

*Records*

At times, it is necessary to document information when formal reports of negative relationships are made. These records are archived within the College
and made available according to Freedom of Information provisions. The Principal or Deputy Principal (Student Welfare) determines which records are to be kept and who provides information for the records.

Policy information

For information regarding the College Relationships Policy:
- contact the Deputy Principal (Students) or the School Counsellor
- obtain a full copy from the College office or website, www.crcstalb.melb.catholic.edu.au.

Help organizations

These organizations can provide confidential, and useful advice regarding relationships.
- Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800
- Parents Line: 132289
- Access Programs: 9662 3929
- Centacare (Footscray): 9689 3888
- Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services (St Albans): 9364 3200
- Relationships Australia (Sunshine): 8311 9222

The School Counsellor can assist students, staff, and family members with finding and/or connecting to an appropriate agency or support group. This includes agencies that cater for cultural and/or linguistic diversity.

Review of the Relationships Policy

This policy is programmed for review in 2011.

12. Remember

As students, staff, and family members of CRC-St Albans, we share responsibility for the quality of relationships within the College. Positive relationships contribute to our happiness and well-being. Negative relationships detract from our happiness and well-being. Together, we are able to build positive relationships and transform negative relationships. In this way, we live out our College motto, “Love one another as I have loved you”.