

Building Positive Relationships (Bullying Prevention Policy)

1. Guiding Principles

In our *community*, we try to live as people who love others as Jesus loves us. His life of unconditional love influences and shapes how we interact.

Each person is sacred and unique, and is therefore, 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, secure and welcoming school environment, which offers each person the freedom to *learn*. In living out these **values**, we will build strong *positive relationships*.

All aspects of relationships in our community are informed and underpinned by our school mission to ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ and our seven school **values**.

2. Policy Commitment

The College is committed to providing a safe, positive and inclusive learning environment for students, their families and staff. We believe that positive relationships, characterised by respect, acceptance of difference and diversity, and the ability to work through conflict, are at the heart of a positive school culture.

All students and staff have the right to learn and teach; and to feel comfortable, included and safe. We are, individually and collectively, responsible for building strong, positive relationships within our community and for addressing challenging relationships.

At CRC St Albans, bullying, harassment, racism, discrimination, abuse and violence, whether in person or online, are not tolerated.

3. Purpose

This policy seeks to:

- Build common understanding of the nature of relationships.
- Outline how the school will build positive relationships and restore difficult relationships.
- Raise the awareness of all in the community of the right to feel safe and secure.
- Provide an overview of how perceived and actual incidents of bullying will be addressed sensitively, fairly and in a timely manner.

4. Defining Relationships

Positive relationships refer to behaviours and interactions that are characterised by respect, inclusion, kindness, positivity, empathy, support and trust. These relationships:

- build belonging and connection
- ensure people are at ease
- are realistic and flexible
- involve listening, communicating effectively and accepting differences
- require responsible ownership of a problem
- appreciate different perspectives
- include self-care and self-regulation
- use conflict resolution techniques

Difficult relationships include behaviours and interactions such as harassment, abuse, violence, bullying, racism, or discrimination.

- **Bullying:** Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social (including online) behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.
- **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
- **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 of their abilities, language, gender, backgrounds, friends, or interests are different from yours.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual behaviour, which could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.

5. Implementation

5.1 Building Positive Relationships

To build positive relationships and a strong sense of belonging, connectedness and support, the College:

- has a pastoral structure that ensures that students and families have a strong network of support;
- teaches students about relationships, conflict resolution and resilience in the Pastoral Care program, Health Education, Trinity and across the curriculum;
- uses the school values as a framework for discussing positive relationships;
- provides ongoing professional learning for staff to support the social and emotional learning of students;
- provides time and space for students, staff and families to develop relationships through the Pastoral Care program, camps, year level based activities, and whole school activities like Feast Day;
- celebrates the cultural diversity of the community through activities like Harmony Day and Cultural Nights;

- offers a range of co-curricular activities, both at lunchtime and after school, for students and staff to bond through shared interests;
- provides support for students at all points of transition, including a Peer Support Program for Year 7 students;
- promotes awareness and ongoing conversation about social connectedness and the impact of bullying, conflict and violence through guest speakers, school based initiatives and participation in broader community campaigns such as the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence;
- monitors the relational climate of the school through a range of qualitative and quantitative feedback;
- has in place a range of celebrations, rites of passage and rituals that provide opportunities for students, staff and families to connect, share and live as community

5.2 Responding to difficult relationships

All students, staff and family members encounter challenging relationships at some point, and share responsibility for responding to them. The process we employ comprises the following steps:

a) **Let someone know**

Those aware of, or experiencing a difficult relationship, need to *let someone know*. Once they know, staff can assist and support the student, and coordinate the response.

b) **Work Together**

Staff will *work with* the student(s) experiencing the difficult relationship, other students, staff, and/or family members to identify factors contributing to the breakdown of the relationship.

c) **Action Plan**

The student works with the staff member and others, as needed, to develop and enact an *action plan*.

d) **Evaluation of the Plan**

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

The diagram at the end of this policy in Appendix 1 outlines these steps.

5.3 Rebuilding challenging relationships

With work and support, even the most challenging relationships can be restored. The College typically uses one of the following processes to facilitate this:

Conflict Resolution: An informal process conducted by those involved, 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: This is a formal, voluntary process conducted by a Member of the Leadership Team, a 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 accompanies those affected by negative relationships until the relationship is positive again or, indeed, restored.

5.4 Reporting and responding to Bullying

It is important that students who experience bullying tell someone as soon as possible. Concerns will always be taken seriously. Incidents of bullying (in person or online) can be reported to a trusted teacher, the College Counsellor, the Year Level Leader, a Deputy Principal or the Principal.

Bullying behaviours vary in their extent and intent and, therefore, the response to each incident is based on its unique set of facts. In all circumstances, the College will:

- take bullying incidents seriously;
- respect confidentiality;
- take time to investigate the facts and to discuss the incident with all concerned;
- take time to understand the perspective and concerns of all involved;
- maintain records of the incident, actions and outcomes, and
- escalate the response when dealing with ongoing or severe bullying incidents

Actions that may be taken include, but are not limited to,

- notifying and working with the parents / carers;
- offering counselling to students experiencing bullying and to those who have bullied;
- implementing agreed actions and follow up, and / or
- appropriate and proportional disciplinary action as per Behaviour Management policy

6. Further information

The following organizations can provide confidential and useful advice regarding relationships.

- Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800
- Parents Line: 132289
- Access Programs: 1800 818 728
- Centacare (Footscray): 9689 3888
- Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services (St Albans): 9364 3200
- Relationships Australia (Sunshine): 8311 9222
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- eHeadspace: 1800 650 890
- The MindSpot Clinic: 1800 61 4434
- Lifeline: 13 11 14

The School Counsellor can assist students, and family members with finding and/or connecting to an appropriate agency or support group.

7. Related policies

The policy is to be read in conjunction with the following Catholic Regional College St Albans policies:

- Pastoral Care policy
- Student Management policy
- Workplace Equal opportunity policy
- Privacy policy
- Grievances and complaints procedures
- The Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (Commonwealth Government)
- Horizons of Hope: Wellbeing within a Catholic School (CEM 2017)
- eXcel: Wellbeing for Learning (CEM 2018)

(Policy to be reviewed in 2023)

Responding to Difficult and Challenging Relationships

Appendix 1

(Dealing with bullying, harassment, abuse, violence, racism, discrimination)

1. Let someone know

- tell someone you trust
- break the silence – you are not alone
- tell a staff member, family member, friend
- use email, leave a note, see someone in the office
- your PC teacher, Year Level Leader, Deputy Principal or the School Counsellor are all people who can help.
- commit to making the relationship better

2. Work together

- work out the whole story
- work out an initial support plan
- develop an action 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 (Pastoral Care or Teaching and Learning), Year Level Leader, School Counsellor
- inform parents and families of the plan
- take part in counselling
- develop your 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, non-judgemental, private manner
- be even-handed in your talking, listening, and supporting
- develop de-escalation and self-regulation strategies.
- help those involved to generate ideas for improving the relationship
- normalize relationship issues: stressors, changes, reactions, restoring harmony
- explore ways of repairing the relationship

4. Evaluate the plan

- stay connected and work together until the situation is better
- check in a few weeks later to see how the relationship is going
- have a conclusion