

## 1. Summary

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- 1.1 This policy outlines the obligations and processes for Catholic Archdiocese Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) schools, Early Learning Centres and school-aged care to prevent and respond to bullying and sexual harassment involving children and students. It applies to all workers, children and young people in CECG schools, early learning centres (ELCs) and school-age care (SACs).
- 1.2 Workplace bullying between or against staff is dealt with separately in the CECG Anti-Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying Policy and the CECG Occupational Violence Policy.

## 2. School, ELC and SAC Bullying and Harassment Policy

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- 2.1 CECG recognises its duty to children and young people to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity is respected and accepted.
- 2.2 Bullying and harassment are not tolerated at CECG Schools, Early Learning Centres, or school-age care centres.
- 2.3 Bullying and harassment are best managed through a ‘whole of community’ approach involving students, staff and parents/carers.
- 2.4 CECG schools, ELCs and SACs should implement bullying and harassment prevention and response strategies on a continuous basis, with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and respond appropriately. They should tailor bullying response strategies to the circumstances of each incident and review them regularly, at least once every three years.

## 3. Staff Responsibilities

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- 3.1 CECG workers must:
  - Model appropriate behaviour at all times;
  - Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy and the School’s or ELC’s anti-bullying strategies;
  - Ensure that any incident of bullying they observe or that is reported is recorded;
  - Monitor students that have been identified as either persistently experiencing bullying or engaging in bullying; and
  - Acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with CECG if they believe their child is being bullied.

## 4. What is Bullying

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- 4.1 Bullying is repeated and unreasonable behaviour toward person or group that can cause harm (aka a risk to health and safety).
- 4.2 It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

#### 4.3 Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or intimidating someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Psychological bullying** is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **Indirect bullying** is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **Cyber bullying** is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or mobile phones.

### 5. What is not bullying

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#### 5.1 There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- Mutual Conflict Situations which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation; or
- 'One Off' Acts of aggression or meanness including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying, although they may still warrant an appropriate response and correction.

### 6. Signs of Bullying

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#### 6.1 Bullying can result in behaviour changes in children and young people. These changes may include:

- Not wanting to go to school
- Crying or having nightmares;
- Refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?";
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches;
- A decline in quality of school work;
- frequent tears, anger, mood swings and anxiety
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- Beginning to bully siblings; or
- Acting unreasonably.

#### 6.2 Teachers, parents and carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify a teacher or the Principal, if they suspect their child or student is experiencing bullying or engaging in bullying.

## 7. Sexual harassment

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7.1 Sexual harassment is where a person makes unwelcome sexual advances, or unwelcome requests for sexual favours, or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that a reasonable person would think might offend, humiliate or intimidate another person.

7.2 Sexual harassment may be a single act or repeated acts.

### Examples of sexual harassment

7.3 Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:

- pressure or demands for dates or sexual favours
- unnecessary familiarity, eg. deliberately brushing against a person or constantly staring at a person
- unwanted physical contact, eg touching or fondling
- sexual jokes or innuendo
- offensive telephone calls or communications via social/internet media
- offensive sexual gestures
- unwelcome comments or questions about a person's sex life
- display or circulation of sexual material, including magazines, posters or pictures and email messages, including in electronic format
- sending email or text messages which contain sexual content or tone,
- any behaviour that creates a sexually hostile school environment
- Sexual harassment can be a criminal offence, including:
  - sexual assault
  - physically molesting a person
  - indecent exposure
  - obscene phone calls or emails/text messages/letters.

### What is not sexual harassment?

7.4 Mutual attraction between people is not sexual harassment. Conduct which is welcome or consensual is not unlawful. Friendships (sexual or otherwise) that develop between students who meet at school are a private concern provided they do not adversely impact on the students experiences at school.

7.5 It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that conduct is welcome (not the other person's responsibility to object it is unwelcome).

## 8. Bullying and Harassment Plans

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8.1 Schools, ELCs and SACs can implement the following initiatives as part of anti-bullying and harassment strategies and efforts to create a 'no bullying/harassment' culture within the community:

- A structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying and harassment (including cyber bullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year.

- Education, training and professional development for staff in bullying/harassment prevention and response strategies.
- Regular information to parents/carers, to raise awareness of bullying/harassment as a community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, and to provide them with clear paths to raise concerns they may have relating to bullying.
- Promoting a supportive environment that encourages positive relationships and communication.
- Reporting incidents of alleged bullying in line with processes outlined below; and
- Recording reported bullying/harassment incidents and analyzing them to identify children who persistently experience bullying or engage in bullying victims, to implement targeted support and prevention strategies where appropriate.

## 9. Reporting Bullying or Harassment

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9.1 Students and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying/harassment incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

9.2 Schools, ELCs and SACs should encourage reporting of bullying incidents and provide assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/carers) that:

- Bullying/harassment is not tolerated
- Their concerns will be taken seriously, and
- The school, ELC or SAC has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.
- Parents or children can report bullying verbally or in writing to any of the following people:
  - A teacher
  - A school counsellor
  - A student's year coordinator; or
  - The Assistant Principal or the Principal.
- The School, ELC or SAC will deal with the report in line with their anti-bullying strategies. They can draw on the support of the CECG School and Family Services team to respond to bullying. Issues that cannot be resolved at the school level may be dealt with under the CECG Complaints Policy.

## 10. Responding to Bullying

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10.1 Bullying can vary enormously in extent and intent and each incident must be dealt with on its facts.

10.2 In all circumstances CECG workplaces should:

- Take time to properly investigate the facts;
- Take time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- Maintain records of reported bullying incidents; and
- Escalate the response when dealing with children who persistently engage in bullying and/or severe bullying incidents.
- CECG workplaces response to bullying may include:
  - Notifying and consulting with parents/carers;
  - Offering counselling to children who persistently experience bullying or engage in bullying;
  - Implementing effective follow up strategies to support children who experience bullying or manage children who engage in bullying; and
  - Appropriate disciplinary action, in line with the CECG Behavioural Support policy.
- In line with the CECG Behavioural Support Policy, all disciplinary responses to bullying (or other issues) must provide procedural fairness including ensuring decision makers and process are free from bias, decisions are based on evidence supported by the facts, and any person affected by the decision has an opportunity to present their case before a decision is made.

## 11. Definitions

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11.1 **Bullying** is repeated and unreasonable behaviour directed toward person or group, which creates a risk to health and safety.

## 12. Related Documents and Legislation

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12.1 Related CECG Documents:

Behavioural Support Policy

12.2 Legislation:

*Education Act 1990* (NSW)

*Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (NSW)

*Education Act (2008)* (ACT)

*Children and Young People Act 2008* (ACT)

12.3 Other Resources:

[NSW Department of Education Anti-Bullying resources](#)

[Bullying – No Way: federal government anti-bullying resources](#)

## 13. Contact

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13.1 For support or further questions relating to this policy, contact the CECG School and Family Services Team.