

# *Policy Documents*

## **MT MARIA COLLEGE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

This Operational Policy extends the Mt Maria College Anti-Bullying Strategy as outlined in the relevant College brochure. It is designed primarily to provide more detailed information, direction and guidance for staff and parent use.

### **Bullying in our Context**

- a. Mt Maria College aims to provide a safe, nurturing, respectful school community, in which all members have a role to play in building positive relationships, as reflected in the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and our understandings of Mary Our Good Mother who teaches her son's ways of justice, tenderness, contemplation and concern for others. In this way we fulfil the desire of our founder, St Marcellin Champagnat "to make Jesus known and loved." As such, we believe that bullying in any form has no place in such an environment.
- b. Students are entitled to enjoy their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Bullying affects everyone - not just the bullies and their victims. It also affects those other students who may witness violence, intimidation and the distress of the victim. It can damage the atmosphere of a class and even the climate of a school.
- c. Bullying goes against the very grain of what makes Mt Maria special – a friendly, family environment. Intimidation and violence have no place in our community and will not be accepted under any circumstances.

### **Bullying - Definition**

- a. Not all conflict between people constitutes bullying.
- b. Bullying is usually repeated behaviour and usually involves an imbalance of power between the individuals. The imbalance of power could arise from differences in age, ability, physical strength, social status or some other attribute.
- c. A particular single incident could be considered bullying behaviour if it involves a gross imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim.
- d. Bullying is usually done with the intent to disrupt physically or emotionally, but it can also be an unintentional process, where people are insensitive to the feeling of others and the effects of their actions. It is "recipient defined", i.e. "It was only a joke" or "S/He doesn't mind" is never an acceptable excuse for bullying behaviour.

**Our school community does not tolerate bullying behaviour.**

**It is always unacceptable.**

**Responses to bullying behaviour should always reflect this position to all concerned.**

## College Response to Bullying

### 1. Identify & Report

- Staff or student identifies incident, or signs of distress in student.
- Staff member offers support to distressed student. The wellbeing and on going protection of those affected is the first priority.
- Staff member passes on information to relevant House Coordinator or AP Students.



### 2. Investigate & Record

*In response to reported bullying, the usual principles of natural justice and fair process are to apply to all parties.*

House Coordinator

- Investigates and interviews students concerned. If the matter is a STUDENT PROTECTION ISSUE, student protection contact (SPC) and Principal are notified immediately.
- House Coordinator completes a Bullying Report which is kept on a student's file.
- Informs relevant members of support team - APC, House Coordinators, Counsellors, Tutors.
- Parents notified



### 3. Respond & Restore

*A restorative response is to be preferred in cases of substantiated bullying behaviour. As such, once the well-being and safety of the victim is assured, the main focus of any response is the education of the aggressor to self-regulated right behaviour and the encouragement and support, as much as is possible, to repair the harm done.*

*In all cases of substantiated bullying, parents will be notified of the situation and the response initiated.*

- Depending on severity and frequency in cases of substantiated bullying, responses may include:
  - The aggressor could be served with an Official Caution which is placed on his/her student file
  - An impromptu or more formal mediation or circle could be conducted between the parties involved
  - A restorative interview could be conducted with the aggressor aimed at increasing his/her ability to empathise with those s/he has harmed and encouraging some attempt at reparation
  - The aggressor and his/her parents could be required to attend an interview to review his/her behaviour
  - A full community conference involving parents and other supporters could be conducted
  - Sanctions such as detention or suspension could be assigned, in cases where responses of a more restorative nature are inappropriate or unavailable, or in conjunction with other more restorative responses where this is judged necessary.

In severe cases, or in cases which indicate a continuing pattern of unacceptable behaviour, the Principal at his/her discretion may need to suspend the aggressor's enrolment at the College until such time that certain assurances can be given and accepted. For the common good of the College Community, the Principal may also be unable to allow a student's enrolment to continue at the College. In certain cases, the Principal may be required to notify the police or other civil authority.