

DECEMBER 2021
CARE AND PROTECTION

Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

PREAMBLE

Who this Policy applies to

Every person involved the NT Christian Schools community.

1. Summary

- 1.1 The care and protection of all people within NT Christian Schools is central to every aspect of our operation. NT Christian Schools believes that our schools and learning communities must be places where, in witnessing for Christ, we strongly demonstrate a commitment to the safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. This should arise from the understanding that all people, being made in God's image, are entitled to a fundamental respect for their person.
- 1.2 Actions and attitudes that adversely affect the ability of others to recognise and live out their God-given purpose are an affront to God.
- 1.3 This policy aims to identify inappropriate behaviours that may constitute bullying and harassment, and provide a mechanism to assist all members of the NT Christian Schools community to engage in mutual protection, support and encouragement.
- 1.4 In doing this we work together as a community to create a culture of appreciation and value across our organisation for students, staff, volunteers and visitors.

2. Related Policies

- a) NT Christian Schools Staff Code of Conduct
- b) NT Christian Schools Performance and Misconduct Policy
- c) NT Christian Schools Complaints and Investigation Policy
- d) NT Christian Schools WHS Policy

3. Commencement of Policy

- 3.1 This Policy will commence from December 2021. It replaces all other Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policies of NT Christian Schools (whether written or not).

4. Guiding Principles

- 4.1 NT Christian Schools is a caring community, filled with people committed to serving each other and building one another up. All relationships within NT Christian Schools should be built on justice, love and truth, and obedience to Christ.

- 4.2 NT Christian Schools affirms the right of all employees, students, and families in the community to feel safe, and to learn and work in an environment free from humiliation, intimidation and hurt. There is no place within the NT Christian Schools community for bullying and harassment.
- 4.3 Positive learning outcomes, physical health and emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing can be adversely affected by bullying and harassment.
- 4.4 NT Christian Schools' commitment to the wellbeing, safety and health of all students, staff and others informs school policies, programs and actions.
- 4.5 It is the responsibility of staff, students, parents, caregivers and the wider community to work together to create a culture of appreciation and acceptance, free from any form of bullying, harassment or intimidation.
- 4.6 A strong partnership, common understanding and effective communication between NT Christian Schools, its member schools, parents, caregivers, students and the community at large is central to the success of this process and the building of a healthy and respectful culture.

5. Bullying

- 5.1 Popularity, strength, size, intelligence, charisma or other characteristics that allow a person to exercise influence or 'power' are all God's gifts to us, and come with a responsibility to be used for the good of all. This gift is abused when it is used to elevate oneself at the cost of another.
- 5.2 Bullying typically involves:
 - a) hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational);
 - b) a desire and intention to hurt;
 - c) an imbalance of power;
 - d) an unwise and unjust use of power;
 - e) targeted and repetitive behaviour.
- 5.3 The nature of bullying behaviour may be:
 - a) Verbal: name calling, put downs, threats
 - b) Physical: hitting, tripping, punching, throwing objects, stealing
 - c) Social: ignoring, hiding, ostracising, exertion of peer pressure
 - d) Psychological: stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging personal possessions
- 5.4 Not all unacceptable, unkind or inappropriate behaviour is bullying. It is important to respond appropriately as a community to actions that are aggressive, hostile, unkind, antisocial, inappropriate, threatening or in other ways damage a positive culture of appreciation and acceptance within our community. It is equally important to recognise and label bullying behaviour correctly – **bullying is a recurrent and deliberate use of power that targets a person, has the intention of hurting them and indeed does hurt them.**
- 5.5 Bullying behaviour can not only cause distress at the time of the attack but also create fear by the threat of future attacks. It can have a lasting impact and cause persisting anxiety.

6. Cyber-bullying

- 6.1** The use of internet and mobile technologies provides individuals and groups with a powerful means of communicating instantly with others in both positive and negative ways.
- 6.2** Cyber-bullying is bullying which uses these technologies as a means of targeting and victimising others. It is the use of an internet service or mobile technologies – such as email, chat room discussion group, instant messaging, web pages or text messaging – and social media forums such as Facebook and Twitter with the intention of harming another person.
- 6.3** Some distinctive features of cyber-bullying behaviour, include:
- a) Having anonymity at its core, the perpetrator can cause great pain and stay anonymous, often therefore feeling that they will not get caught, nor recognise the damage caused by their actions;
 - b) The bullying behaviour can often occur in a very public forum, or carry the implicit threat of being made public by its very nature, carrying a new form of intimidation and threat of humiliation;
 - c) The bullying behaviour encroaches quickly into “personal space”, there is often no respite from it by going home and there are no clear physical boundaries to protect a person from it;
 - d) There is a greater potential for there to be a lasting record of the bullying.
- 6.4** Like all forms of bullying, cyber-bullying may involve varying levels of severity, ranging from occasional messages to frequently repeated and highly disturbing threats to a person’s life.
- 6.5** It is important for the entire NT Christian Schools community to understand that cyber-bullying can also be a crime, and to educate students in this. The *NT Christian Schools ICT Guidelines* address this further.

7. Harassment

- 7.1** Harassment can be seen as one type of bullying that involves any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour which makes a person or a group of people feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. The roots of harassment generally lie in social prejudice.
- 7.2** Harassment involves humiliating, intimidating or offending a person because of their race, religion, age, gender, disability or any other legally protected status.
- 7.3** Recipients of unwanted attention may experience harassment even if the intention of the perpetrator was not to offend or harass.
- 7.4** Harassment can be obvious or insidious; it is always inappropriate and may be against the law.

8. Sexual harassment

- 8.1** Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, or unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that offends, humiliates or intimidates.
- 8.2** It is important to note that regardless of intention, harassment is deemed to have occurred if the unwelcome conduct occurs in circumstances in which a reasonable person, having regard to all the circumstances, would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

- 8.2** Examples of sexual harassment include:
- a) suggestive behaviour
 - b) staring or leering
 - c) sexual jokes
 - d) unwanted physical contact
 - e) insults or taunts based on a person's sex
 - f) sexually offensive gestures
 - g) sexually explicit materials or emails
 - h) intrusive questions about someone's private life or body
 - i) sexting.

8.3 Mutual attraction or friendship is not sexual harassment. If there is consent. The appropriateness of any interactions within the workplace or education environment does however, require careful consideration of all relevant guidelines and the wider implications on the community.

POLICY

9. Fostering a culture of safety

9.1 The NT Christian Schools community works vigilantly across its areas of operation to prevent bullying or harassing behaviour and address it where it occurs.

9.2 Bullying and harassment will be dealt with. Where such behaviour is ignored or overlooked within a community it serves to condone or reinforce the behaviour.

9.3 Those who are audience to bullying or harassing activities, and do nothing to challenge this injustice, learn to accept injustice as a natural part of life. It is everyone's responsibility to speak out against activities that tear down rather than build up. Bystanders can encourage or even assist this unacceptable behaviour simply by doing nothing.

10. Responsibilities

10.1 Everyone within the NT Christian Schools community has a responsibility in contributing to providing a safe and supportive environment for all.

10.2 The NT Christian Schools Board and CEO have responsibility for:

- a) providing an overarching policy that informs school procedures in response to bullying and harassment;
- b) providing resources and training where appropriate in accordance with best practice principles and procedures.

10.3 The Schools within the NT Christian Schools organisation have a responsibility to:

- a) foster a culture within their school that is resistant to bullying behaviours;
- b) develop a Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan within their school community in line with this policy;
- c) provide NT Christian Schools with a copy of their current Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan annually in the first term of each year or as negotiated;

- d) work towards the dynamic implementation of Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan, ensuring that it is relevant to the specific school environment and there is positive engagement with it across the school community;
 - e) ensure all staff receive proper induction and on-going training in relation to the Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan and associated practice within the school.
- 10.4** Students, employees and anyone involved with the school community can expect to:
- a) be safe at school and work, free from the fear of bullying, harassment and intimidation;
 - b) know what is expected of them in relation to the Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan;
 - c) know that they will be provided with appropriate support if bullying or harassment occur.
- 10.5** Students, employees, parents, care-givers and members of the wider community have a responsibility to:
- a) promote positive relationships, respecting individual differences and diversity;
 - b) contribute to the development of the Bullying Prevention Plan and support it in words and actions; respond in an appropriate and timely manner to incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy.

PROCEDURE

11. Prevention Plan

- 11.1** Schools will develop their Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan using a broad consultative and educative process involving students, staff and parents. The completed Plan will be disseminated and promoted to the school community, and made available to NT Christian Schools each year by the end of Term One or as otherwise negotiated between the school and the NT Christian Schools Office.
- 11.2** Schools will provide professional development and appropriate resourcing to meet the needs of the staff in developing and implementing their Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan.
- 11.3** In developing a Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan it is important to recognise that deterring such behaviour requires a multi-faceted approach, which includes:
- a) A school plan outlining firm action and appropriate consequences;
 - b) A school ethos that models respect, compassion and cooperation;
 - c) Supervision of all students by staff;
 - d) Communication between staff, students, parents and caregivers and other agencies;
 - e) Implementing cross-curriculum anti-bullying and harassment teaching, with appropriate information about bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination being presented in the classroom within subject contexts; and
 - f) A culture of appreciation and acceptance of individuals, modelling appropriate attitudes between staff and students.

- 11.4** The Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan of each school will therefore include strategies and responses (*including curricula, programs and pedagogy and, wherever appropriate, formation of partnerships with wider community*) to address:
- a) The development of supportive environments and positive relationships;
 - b) A clear code of behaviour for students;
 - c) Problem-solving and empowerment of students;
 - d) Skills in conflict resolution;
 - e) Promotion of tolerance;
 - f) Acceptance of difference and a culture of cooperation, empathy and respect;
 - g) The resolution of problems and the restoration of relationship in whatever appropriate form;
 - h) The support and restoration to wellbeing of students who have been harmed by hurtful behaviour;
 - i) Assistance to students who bully to change their behaviours by recognising the consequence of their actions and their responsibility to behave in a way that builds others up;
 - j) The proactive engagement of bystanders to discourage bullying and harassing behaviour.

12. Response

- 12.1** Where any incident of bullying or harassment is observed or reported it will be responded to in a timely manner and with the utmost care. When dealing with any such incident the NT Christian Schools community will:
- a) facilitate appropriate communication and mediation between those involved;
 - b) communicate adequately and appropriately with parents where required;
 - c) communicate adequately and appropriately as a staff body;
 - d) have systems in place to identify where a student may be subject to repeated bullying;
 - e) maintain confidentiality, only divulging information where absolutely necessary;
 - f) use procedurally fair processes where investigation is required;
 - g) ensure that there is adequate and appropriate reporting, data collection and recording procedures in place when investigating incidents.
- 12.2** We recognise how important it is to respond swiftly to incidents of bullying or harassing behaviour. It is important because our duty of care to protect all students, staff and people within our school community from harm, and it is important because by our response we model what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour within the community.
- 12.3** The Bullying and Harassment Prevention Plan will include strategies to deal **adequately** and **appropriately** with all incidents of inappropriate, harassing and/or bullying behaviour, recognising that the behaviours do often vary widely in severity and seriousness.
- a) We encourage decisive action in dealing with all allegations of bullying behaviour. It is not appropriate to be dismissive when informed of a bullying incident.

- b) We recognise that responding adequately and appropriately to incidents of bullying can be a difficult space to work in.
- c) In all circumstances, the school’s duty of care for all students will be the paramount consideration.
- d) The response of the school to the bullying behaviour will be proportionate with its level of severity and the specific circumstances surrounding the bullying behaviour. The response may range from being dealt with in the class or playground, through to initiating an investigation, which may have consequences for a student’s enrolment.

Sources informing this policy

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia: Policy statement ‘Dealing with Bullying and Harassment (Students) (reviewed 2007)

Rigby, K. ‘Addressing Bullying in Schools: Theory and Practice’ *Australian Institute of Criminology – Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, No. 259 June 2003

NT Government – Sexual Harassment: your rights, 2021.

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

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NT Christian Schools is committed to achieving and maintaining workable solutions for your school. We may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any NT Christian Schools member or staff member who wishes to make any comment about this policy may forward their suggestions to the CEO.