



Shire Christian School Anti-Bullying Policy

Purpose

This policy seeks to deal with allegations of bullying involving students enrolled at Shire Christian School. The policy applies to all on-site and off-site activities the school has directly organised involving its students. The policy applies to all students from Shire Prep to Year 12.

This policy seeks to comply with Commonwealth and State legislation such as:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Act 1986
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Racial Hatred Act 1995
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984.

Context

Shire Christian School is a Prep to Year 12 co-educational, non-selective Christian school in Sydney's southern suburbs.

The school believes that the Bible provides guidance on how it should respond to allegations of bullying. Each member of the school community is uniquely created in the image of God, which means that all members of the school community should be loved and valued as the individuals God has created them to be. Because we live in a sinful world, the school is not immune from students mistreating or bullying others.

The school teaches the Bible to students, which involves them learning to develop personal qualities the Bible teaches such as kindness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22). The school also encourages students, through the teaching of the Bible and associated welfare programs, to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4).

Definition

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or psychological harm. Bullying can be overt or covert and can involve an individual or group misusing their power over one or more persons. Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals are not defined as bullying. Bullying can involve an individual, or group, repeatedly humiliating, dominating, intimidating, victimising, harassing or excluding¹ other individuals or groups. Bullying can occur in a variety of ways including verbal and non-verbal bullying and cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, these words will collectively be referred to as mistreatment

What bullying is not:

- Arguments or disagreements between individuals or groups.
- An individual or group choosing not to mix socially with another individual or group.
- Social rejection or dislike, unless that rejection involves deliberate and repeated actions to cause hurt.
- One-off acts of an individual or group mistreating another individual or group.

Sometimes individuals or groups will mistreat others in a way that does not constitute bullying according to the definition of that term. The school is committed to dealing with students who mistreat others, whether or not that behaviour meets the definition of bullying.

Where the alleged mistreatment does constitute bullying, the school will apply the **anti-bullying policy**. Where such alleged mistreatment does not meet the definition of bullying, the school will apply its **discipline policy and procedures**.

Prevention

The school uses varied methods, based on the professional judgment of teachers, to discourage bullying. These may vary over time and new initiatives are introduced as needed. Methods may include:

- Developing a positive culture of acceptance and respect for self and others helps to prevent bullying.
- Reminders of ‘no tolerance’ for any kind of bullying are part of the Pastoral Care program in the Secondary School.
- Dealing with bullying incidents quickly and sensitively with support for the victim and the bully, and parent involvement.
- Classroom teachers are encouraged to build positive relationships within their classroom and to promote empathy and respect for all students.

Early intervention

The school is committed to preventing bullying from occurring through pro-active strategies that may include:

- Social skills programs to build positive relationship skills in students.
- Informing classroom teachers (P-6) and pastoral care (PC) teachers (7-12) of students who have either been the victims of mistreatment or bullying, or are at risk of being a victim. The teacher who is informed will then use his/her professional judgment to provide appropriate support for that student.
- Students with identified social needs, who are at risk of being the victim of mistreatment or bullying, may be referred to a school counsellor or an external specialist program.
- The school also seeks to build resilience in students so that they will be able to manage situations where they perceive that they have been either mistreated or bullied.

Support for students

The school will consider providing support and guidance for students who:

- have, after an investigation, been found to have been the victim of bullying.
- have been mistreated in a way that does not meet the definition of bullying.
- are claiming to have been mistreated or bullied, but these claims have not yet been, or cannot be, verified.
- claim to have been mistreated or bullied, but have misunderstood the situation.
- make false claims of being mistreated or bullied.
- are perpetrators, or alleged perpetrators, of bullying or mistreatment.

The nature of the support provided will be determined on a case-by-case basis. This support may be provided by one or more of the following people:

- Classroom teacher (P – 6) or pastoral care teacher (7 – 12).

- Section coordinators in the Junior School.
- A Year Coordinator in the Secondary School.
- The school counsellor or psychologist.
- The Head of Junior School.
- The Head of Secondary School.
- The Deputy Principal or the Principal.

Where a student makes false claims of being bullied, that student may be disciplined.

Communicating with parents

Parents of the perpetrator/s and the victim(s) will be informed if, after an investigation, the school determines that their child has been the victim or perpetrator of bullying. Parents may also be informed prior to, or during an investigation.

Support agencies/personnel

Police Youth Liaison Officer, Kids Helpline–1800551800, Lifeline–131114, Salvo Youth Line–87363293

Websites:

- www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- www.kidshelpline.com.au