
Anti-Bullying and Harassment (Students) Policy

Adopted: July 2014

Last Amended: March 2022

Next Review: March 2023

1. Preamble

- 1.1. Son Centre Christian College (SCCC) seeks to provide a Christian environment that is conducive to the personal (spiritual, academic, social, physical and emotional) growth and well-being of students.
- 1.2. Bullying of any description is totally unacceptable at SCCC and will not be tolerated. All SCCC students have the right to feel safe and to be kept safe at school, and it is therefore imperative that each student seeks the best for their classmates. The school is committed to providing a caring and friendly environment for all students so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere, and in the knowledge that they are valued as individuals created in the image of God.
- 1.3. Bullying places the desires of the bully ahead of the feelings and rights of the person being bullied, and ignores the value of the image of God in the victim.
- 1.4. Jesus gave clear instructions about the way people should treat each other, including “*Do to others as you would have them do to you*” (Luke 6:31). The apostle Paul said, “... *encourage one another and build each other up ...*” (1 Thessalonians 5:11). Matthew 22:34-40 also gives clear instructions about loving others.
- 1.5. This policy relates to all incidents of bullying involving SCCC students occurring during school hours and/or on school premises, and to other incidents of bullying involving SCCC students occurring outside school hours and/or away from school premises where such incidents have adverse implications for an individual’s welfare and/or for relationships within the school.

2. Definitions

- 2.1. *Bullying* is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social 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.
- 2.2. *Bullying* does **not** include mutual conflict situations (where there is an argument or disagreement but not an imbalance or misuse of power), social rejection or dislike (unless involving deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude, or create dislike for others), single-episode or random acts, and occasions where bullying is genuinely perceived but is not actual.
- 2.3. *Harassment* is defined as any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) that is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.
- 2.4. *Cyber bullying* is a form of bullying, and involves a person being targeted by another through the use of digital technology, mobile communication devices or through the internet (including social networking websites, chat rooms and email), for the purpose of harassment, stalking, threats, conveying sexual innuendo, communicating false pretences, forwarding someone else’s private communication, posting humiliating messages or pictures, or other forms of harmful behaviour.

3. Details

- 3.1. Where incidents of bullying occur at SCCC, victims have the right to expect that such incidents shall be treated seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively according to the terms of this policy and related procedures. The health and well-being of victims of bullying shall be of paramount importance and all reasonable measures shall be taken to support victims.
- 3.2. In the case of incidents of bullying occurring outside school hours and/or away from school premises, the school will take reasonable action within the limits of its capacity to do so.
- 3.3. Each reported incident of alleged bullying shall be assessed against the definitions provided above, as not all distressing behaviours and socially unpleasant situations are examples of bullying.

- 3.4. Disciplinary measures in relation to proven incidents of bullying shall be determined in accordance with the *Student Discipline and Behaviour Policy* and other relevant policies, and any related procedures, and may include the suspension or expulsion of students.
- 3.5. Staff, students and other members of the SCCC community are expected to be pro-active against bullying, including promptly reporting incidents of bullying that they become aware of.
- 3.6. As determined by the Principal, staff members shall periodically undertake professional development designed to increase awareness of bullying in schools, to increase their skill and confidence in dealing with bullying, and to enable them to consistently enforce this policy and related procedures.
- 3.7. The Principal shall ensure that specific procedures are consistent with this policy and which establish clear guidelines for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying. Procedures in relation to bullying shall be both preventative (educating appropriately to avoid incidents of bullying) and interventionist (acting appropriately as a response to incidents of bullying). Any procedural documents shall elaborate on the different forms of bullying and give examples of what bullying is *and what it is not*.
- 3.8. The Principal shall ensure that a *Student Code of Conduct* consistent with this and other related policies is developed, in consultation with both staff and students, and subsequently implemented. Such document shall identify goals and standards for student behaviour, and include safe school and specific anti-bullying strategies that aim to promote positive student behaviour, prevent anti-social behaviour, and encourage respect, compassion and cooperation.
- 3.9. The Principal shall ensure that the school is proactive in communicating its policy in relation to bullying to all members of the school community, and that parents are informed about how to detect signs of possible bullying in their children.
- 3.10. The Principal shall ensure that teaching in relation to bullying is included in selected areas of the curriculum.
- 3.11. In addition to this policy, reference should also be made to other related policies; including *Electronic Communications and Information Technology Policy* and *Student Discipline and Behaviour Policy*.

Appendix A

Procedures for Addressing Allegations of Bullying and Harassment of a student by a member of the School Staff or Other Adult

The student or parent(s) on behalf of the student should report the matter to the Principal. The following steps will be taken:

1. The Principal will meet with the parent(s) and student to clarify the allegation and inform them of the procedures in place within the College for the resolution of bullying and harassment issues. Full notes need to be made of this interview.
2. The Principal should meet with the staff member or other adult to discuss the issue and prepare for a meeting with the parent(s) and student.
3. The Principal will invite the parent(s), with the student, to meet with the staff member or other adult concerned to air the complaint and seek reconciliation and restitution.
4. If this meeting resolves the issue to the parent(s) and student satisfaction, no further action need be taken. The Principal will make a report of the meeting.
5. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the Principal will ask the parent to make a written complaint.
6. The Principal will make further investigation of the issues surrounding the complaint with view to understanding with whom the fault(s), if any, lie.
7. The Principal will meet with the staff member or other adult against whom the complaint has been made, to:
 - a. Show him/her the written complaint
 - b. Invite the person to make a written reply to the allegations
 - c. Inform him/her of the processes which will be followed to resolve the issue.
8. The Principal will then facilitate a Mediation Meeting. By agreement between the Principal and the parents, the student may or may not be involved in the Mediation Meeting.
9. If both parties agree to a Mediation Meeting, the Principal will facilitate such a meeting within 7 days of agreement.
10. If both parties do not agree to mediation, the Principal will determine one of the following courses of action:
 - a. If there appears conclusive evidence of fault, the Principal will carry out necessary discipline action.
 - b. If no clear fault can be established, the Principal may require the people concerned to show cause why they are not willing to attend a Mediation Meeting.
11. If the mediation process fails to produce its objectives, the following actions may be taken:
 - The Principal may give appropriate directions to either or both parties involved in the complaint.
 - The complainant may choose to take civil court action or make complaint to the relevant Industrial relations, Sexual Discrimination or Anti-Discrimination body.

The Mediation Meeting

Generally, the aim of the mediation meeting will be to resolve the issue at stake with minimal disruption to the people concerned and the life of the school. In particular, the objectives of the meeting will be:

- To facilitate open and honest communication between the parties
- To bring an awareness of the wrongdoing and its effect on people
- To facilitate repentance and the restoration of the relationships

The following people should attend a mediation meeting:

- The parties in dispute
- A support person for each party (e.g. Counsellor, pastor)
- Principal or another person decided upon to be a mediator
- Another party to record the process

In preparation for the Mediation Meeting the Principal will meet with the mediator before the Mediation Meeting to brief the mediator and give him/her copies of relevant documents.

The protocols of the Mediation Meeting will be:

- The Principal will introduce all parties to each other, briefly state the purpose and protocols of the meeting and the mediator/Principal will be in charge of the meeting.
- Participants in the meeting will speak through the mediator/Principal at all times unless asked by the mediator/Principal to address others directly.
- At the conclusion of the meeting the mediator/Principal will summarise the current position, indicate further action, then close the meeting.
- The Principal will be responsible for keeping a report on file.

To achieve the goals of mediation, several meetings may be necessary. A follow-up process and evaluation meeting may also be needed.

Appendix B

Bullying (Information for Parents)

Son Centre Christian College desires to provide a safe and happy environment for young people that is free from negative and hurtful experiences. All forms of bullying are unacceptable in the school.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined as an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.

Cyber-bullying is defined as bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as mobile phones, computers, tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages and websites.

Forms of Bullying

1. Physical

Examples:

- Pushing, hitting, fighting, punching, poking, spitting
- Hiding, damaging or destroying property
- Touching in offensive ways

2. Verbal

Examples:

- Comments about appearance, race, cultural beliefs, disability, weaknesses, family, etc.
- Put-downs, offensive names/sounds, teasing, taunting, rude comments, joking, mocking, mimicking, threats and shouting
- Public criticism or ridicule of another's actions or appearance, particularly without having first given the person the dignity of discussing the issue personally and privately
- Malicious gossip, rumours or words to cause embarrassment

3. Non-verbal

Examples:

- Rude gestures
- Taunting looks or body language used to intimidate others

4. Extortion

Examples:

- Forcing students to hand over lunches/money
- Forcing students to do acts of service

5. Exclusion

Example:

- Excluding others from activities for the purpose to hurt, frighten, embarrass or humiliate

6. Cyberbullying

Examples:

- abusive texts and emails
- hurtful messages, images or videos
- imitating others online
- excluding others online
- humiliating others online
- nasty online gossip and chat

Guidelines for Students

If students feel that they are being bullied at school, or if they observe somebody else being bullied, they should act in the following manner:

- If the incident is happening in the playground, they should seek help from a school leader or a teacher on duty. The matter must be reported and dealt with for the sake of all concerned.
- If the incident is happening in the classroom, they should report the matter to their teacher.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

Complaints concerning bullying and harassment must be responded to and investigated in a timely manner that respects the dignity and the privacy of those involved, whilst observing due process and procedural fairness.

- All students have the right to be heard and listened to and issues are to be resolved in a calm manner with as much time as necessary given to hearing what each student feels and assisting all students to feel more able to cope
- The class teacher will investigate and respond to initial concerns, behaviours or reports of bullying or harassment in accordance with the Student Discipline Policy & Procedures. If it occurs in playground, outside of class time or reported to another staff member, the class teacher will be informed and is required to follow up the situation.
- If the issue is considered significant, complex or unclear, the Principal will be informed, will investigate and take appropriate action in line with the Student Discipline Policy & Procedures. Parents of all students involved will be informed at this point.
- Students with identified bullying behaviour will take responsibility for their actions.
- The Principal will record all reported acts of bullying, investigations and follow-up meetings in the Behaviour Register.
- Continuing or more significant acts of bullying/harassment by an individual or a group will result in student(s) being interviewed by the Principal. Parents will be contacted again, and the student will be disciplined in a manner appropriate to a serious misdemeanour.
- The College chaplain(s) will be available to provide follow-up support and individual programs for those with identified bullying behaviours and those who have been bullied.
- Parents may be asked to initiate some counselling processes to help their child in this situation.
- If a student continues to display bullying behaviour or harassment towards others, the Principal may require that parents withdraw him/her from the College. This action will be taken if the Principal feels that there has been no positive response from the student or from the parents to the discipline and counselling process.

Procedures for dealing with cyber-bullying

The College reserves the right to determine whether incidents of cyber-bullying relate to the responsibility of the College. If determined the College has a role to play, we will:

- Ensure each student is safe and arrange support, including the involvement of the College chaplain(s).
- Support from staff should be provided on an ongoing basis with the agreement of the student and parent to assist the student to work through the effects of the cyber bullying and to help them develop and implement effective coping strategies.
- The student's parents will be contacted to alert them to the issue, and ongoing concerns regarding the welfare of the student, and discuss the issue of how best to deal with it.
- Reassure the student that the College is taking the incident and that seriously the reported bullying will be acted on.

- Gather basic facts about the suspected cyber bullying and, if possible, identify the student(s) involved.
- Provide the following strategies to the student and parent to assist in managing the issue in the future:
 - don't respond to any further messages/postings from the bully and, if possible, block any further correspondence from them
 - report any further correspondence from the bully to the parent and an agreed school contact
 - keep evidence of any bullying to assist with tracking down the bully and potentially reporting the matter to police
 - report any concerns to the administrator of the service used, including the mobile phone provider, website provider or internet service provider
- The College will follow its established approach to its incidents of bullying as outlined in the procedures for dealing with bullying.

Parent Guidelines for Dealing with Bullying

If you feel that your child may be subject to bullying:

1. Ask your child if he/she has reported the incident to your child's teacher. If he/she has, please make a note to see the teacher sometime soon to find out what was done about the issue.
2. If your child is afraid to see the teacher, please make an appointment to see the teacher and report the matter yourself. Please note that some students are afraid to report a matter because they are afraid that the bully will find out and carry on more bullying. Our undertaking to families is:
 - When we investigate bullying, we do not identify the sources of information we receive & endeavour to protect those who give the information.
 - A student who carries out, or threatens to carry out such reprisals will be immediately suspended pending a meeting with his/her parents to show cause why the student should not be expelled from the school.
3. If bullying continues after you have reported it to the teacher, please make an appointment with the Principal.

Symptoms of Being a Victim of Bullying

Some children may be unwilling or unable to identify the occurrence of bullying against them, but they may show some symptoms that will lead a parent to suspect such an activity. If a child shows the following symptoms, parents are advised to discuss the issue with the child's teacher.

- An unusual unwillingness to go to school
- Continued unusual signs of physical/emotional distress; e.g., stomach aches, loss of appetite, bad dreams, bedwetting
- An unusual loss of interest or withdrawal from aspects of life and relationships
- The development of an unusual level of frustration and anger