



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

## St Vincent's College - Prevention of Bullying and Intervention Policy & Procedures

### PREAMBLE

St Vincent's College is a Mary Aikenhead Ministry in the tradition of the Sisters of Charity. We are called to develop in each member of our community a contemporary understanding and application of the charism of Mary Aikenhead and the spirituality of the Sisters of Charity, and the Mary Aikenhead Ministries' mission, vision and values of justice, love, compassion and hope.

### RATIONALE

The College Mission and College Values inform all proactive interventions and responses regarding student conduct and engagement.

All members of the community are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions - living our values of Generosity of Spirit, Hope, Justice, Respect, Service of the Poor.

*"May we always act with justice and truth" - Mary Aikenhead.*

The community of St Vincent's College has, as its foundation, a deep respect for the dignity and the uniqueness of the individual, as all people are made in the image of God. (Gen 1: 27). All members of the community seek a strong sense of wellbeing, belonging and security which affirms their dignity and worth and assists them to achieve to their full potential as a person - physically, socially, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually.

St Vincent's College does not tolerate bullying in any form. All members of the College community have a right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and fear. The College is guided by the **Australian Student Wellbeing Framework** – "Australian schools are learning communities that promote student wellbeing, safety and positive relationships so that students can reach their potential."

St Vincent's College is a **Visible Wellbeing Partner School** and intentionally seeks to strengthen relationships as one of the pathways within our SEARCH framework through our structures and the implementation of Visible Wellbeing practices and experiences. The fostering of high quality interpersonal relationships among staff, students and parents is a shared responsibility. In the College's daily and routine life, the ways in which people interact with each other significantly affect each person's sense of self worth, belonging and wellbeing, and collectively ensure a safe and caring environment, which promotes personal growth and quality relationships.

Bullying in any form is not acceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated because it infringes the personal rights of another or others. If any member of the community experiences harm due to bullying/harassment, they are encouraged to speak to an appropriate person for support. Under no circumstances is it advised to tolerate bullying, especially out of fear of the matter getting worse. It is unlikely that bullying will simply "go away." There is little chance that bullying/harassment can be dealt with if names are not given to the appropriate persons. (i.e.: Tutor/class teacher, Dean, Deputy Principal, Principal)

Allegations of bullying of a student by a staff member will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the College's *Complaints and Grievances Resolution Policy*.



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

### Statement of Child Safety

St Vincent's College is committed to the safety of young people.

We support the right of young people to be informed, transformed and empowered.

We listen to our young people and learn from their insights and wisdom.

We believe that everyone in our community has a role to play in ensuring a safe environment for young people.

If a student feels unsafe, she is encouraged to seek support from her Tutor Teacher, Dean of Early, Middle or Senior Secondary, College Counsellor, Pastoral Dean of Students, Deputy Principal, Principal or any trusted member of staff.

### College Expectations

All members of St Vincent's College have a responsibility to create a safe and inclusive community so that each student receives an education that celebrates their strengths of character and ensures they are free from discrimination and harassment irrespective of difference, for example: ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation. Our College mission inspires us to give particular care to those who are marginalised and furthermore to celebrate the gifts of our diversity.

All members of our College community have a responsibility to:

- Model and promote appropriate behaviour, respectful relationships and acceptance of individual differences and diversity
- Behave as responsible digital citizens
- Behave as responsible bystanders
- Be alert to signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying and report any incidents of bullying
- Work collaboratively to resolve any breaches of College expectations constructively.

The St Vincent's College policies and procedures inform, support and guide the responsibilities that are expected of each member of the College community. Together, our aim is to create a safe and inclusive school community that celebrates respectful relationships and a positive learning environment.

### Consent

The College recognises that there are many situations where students have the right to exercise consent. The College promotes the FRIES acronym as a widely used tool to help people remember their rights:

- F** - Freely given
- R** - Reversible
- I** - Informed
- E** - Enthusiastic
- S** - Specific



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

**BULLYING** typically involves behaviour which hurts, threatens, frightens or embarrasses another person. It is still bullying even if the person bullying does not think that she is doing anything wrong. Bullying:

- is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another;
- can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, written, gesture, extortion and exclusion;
- is an abuse of power;
- can be planned and organised or it may be unintentional;
- involves individuals and/or groups;
- may involve the violation of the space of another;
- can be intimidation, which may include verbal aggression (abusive or unacceptable language), rudeness or confrontational and provocative behaviour. (egg silence, body language, or written abuse).

### **SOME EXAMPLES OF BULLYING INCLUDE:**

Verbal: using words to directly or indirectly hurt or humiliate another person. Examples include:

- using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families;
- using put downs, belittle others' abilities and achievements;
- making degrading comments about another's culture, religious or social background, sexual orientation;
- making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse;
- ridiculing another's appearance or attributes.

Physical: using physical force or gestures to harm, exclude, mock or embarrass another person. Examples include:

- hitting or pushing others;
- interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it;
- writing offensive notes or graffiti about others.

Social: excluding, pressuring, offending or intimidating another person. Examples include:

- deliberately excluding others from a group;
- threatening to take others' possessions;
- belittling others' abilities and achievements;
- deliberately damaging a person's relationship with others;
- forcing others to act against their will;
- giving a person 'the silent treatment';
- mocking someone by mimicking their voice or mannerisms;
- staring or giving looks and making gestures that are unwelcome and hurtful.

Cyber: using technology to make another person feel uncomfortable, hurt or unhappy. Cyberbullying takes advantage of the anonymity created by technology. It can occur in different forms, such as text, video or image, and can be conveyed using a variety of modes such as email, instant messaging (IM), chat rooms, mobile phones, social networking websites, weblogs (blogs), and online personal polling sites. Examples include:

- sending offensive/put/down/rumour messages or images;
- sending malicious emails in the name of another person;
- using the telephone as a derogatory communication process, e.g. prank calls;
- creating websites with material that hurts or makes fun of another person;



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

- posting hurtful, damaging or embarrassing messages about another person on an online bulletin board;
- using social networking sites to exclude, hurt or embarrass another person;
- photographing or filming an incident in which someone is threatened, hurt or embarrassed and forwarding this to others.

NOTE: The Commonwealth's *Criminal Code Act 1995*, section 474.17 outlines that ***"it is an offence for a person to use 'a carriage service to menace, harass, or cause offence"***.

**The above lists of bullying examples are not exhaustive.**

### **WHAT DO WE DO TO PREVENT BULLYING AT ST VINCENT'S COLLEGE?**

As a College community, we will endeavour to work towards preventing bullying through a range of strategies, which include:

- the College values are articulated frequently in community gatherings of students - including liturgical celebrations and prayer that professes Christ love for all as the model for our interactions;
- the College Visible Wellbeing Framework informs our language and practices in nurturing positive relationships and is evidenced in the provision of educational resources and Science of Wellbeing lessons;
- school based activities and interventions which support the College values of generosity of spirit, hope, justice, respect and service of the poor;
- opportunities for senior students to model positive relationships through leadership and their interaction with younger students;
- opportunities for staff professional development;
- opportunities for parent education through channels such as the College newsletter and information evenings.

**In order to foster a supportive and caring environment at St Vincent's College, staff, students and parents need to work together.**

#### **THIS REQUIRES STUDENTS TO:**

- uphold the College values in their relationships and interactions with others;
- not be silent observers;
- report the incident or suspected incident (choosing to be an upstander rather than bystander);
- refuse to be involved in any bullying situation;
- take some form of preventative action, if appropriate;
- support those involved in bullying;
- have the courage to speak out in order to help to reduce pain for themselves and others.

#### **THIS REQUIRES STAFF TO:**

- be role models in word and action at all times;
- be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying;
- take steps to help students who have been impacted and remove sources of distress;
- report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member.



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

#### THE COLLEGE RECOMMENDS THAT PARENTS:

- watch for signs of distress in their daughter, e.g. unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, damage to property or persons; shift in mood; avoidance in socialising;
- take an active interest in their daughter's social life, friends and acquaintances;
- advise your daughter to tell a staff member about the incident as soon as possible and inform the College if bullying is suspected;
- do not encourage your daughter to retaliate;
- communicate to your daughter that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation;
- attend interviews at the College if your daughter is involved in any bullying/harassment incident;
- speak to their daughter's Dean of Secondary (Early/ Middle/ Senior) if they are aware of incidents of bullying;
- monitor daughter's technology use and encourage placement in an open, common area;
- inform Internet Service Provider (ISP) or mobile phone carrier of any abuse of technology; report serious online abuse or illegal and restricted online content instances to the Office of eSafety Commissioner <https://www.esafety.gov.au/report> and/ or police;
- keep electronic records of acts of cyber-bullying by saving or printing out messages, or keeping a screenshot and noting the time and date of the incident. Do not forward any such material.

#### PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED SHOULD BULLYING OCCUR

At St Vincent's we employ a restorative justice approach to managing instances of bullying. These approaches are facilitated by the Deans of Early/ Middle/ Senior Secondary/ Dean of Boarding and the Pastoral Dean of Students where necessary.

Procedural fairness is afforded to all those involved. Those person/s who have been harmed, observers and the alleged perpetrators of the bullying behaviours are asked to report (orally or written) the incident individually, without the opportunity to compare with one another.

The staff member may decide that the method of *shared concern* needs to be implemented with all parties involved. Shared concern is a method of intervention addressing bullying. It aims to break through the enmeshment of the group. This is achieved by working with the perpetrator/s of the bullying behaviours around concern for the person/s who have been harmed to bring about change in patterns of behaviour.

**The Restorative approach** starts from questions such as:

- What happened?
- Who's been harmed? and
- What needs to happen to repair some of that harm?

In this approach the focus is on the harm that has been done and the obligation this brings on the part of those responsible to 'right the wrong' as much as possible. It seeks to develop in the wrongdoer an understanding of the harm their behaviour has caused to others so that they can best try to make amends to those most affected.



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

Those most affected by the wrongdoing have the opportunity to be involved in working out what has to happen in order to move forward. Students who have been the recipients of the harm are provided the opportunity to agree or not to meet with the person/s who have caused the harm (facilitated by the appropriate staff member), mindful not to place this person/s in a position of vulnerability due to the possible power dynamic of a group.

**Restoring relationships in this way is not without consequences.**

The person/s who has been hurt is provided opportunity to express the impact of the behaviour and assert what she wants to change in the behaviour / relationship. The person who has engaged in harmful behaviours is provided an opportunity to listen to the person/s who has been hurt (or representative), learn about the impact of their actions, express remorse and decide what action she may take to restore the relationship and her self-respect. **Often only the person and her supporting adults are aware of the restorative action decided upon.** This action aims to provide opportunity to learn from mistakes and change.

***Additional consequences and / or sanctions for harmful behaviours may involve:***

- Sanctions and loss of privileges. This could affect students' involvement in College activities.
- Behaviour improvement plans constructed in partnership with parents/carers and the College.
- Intervention, counselling, work in partnership with parents.
- Further action at the discretion of the College Principal.

The perpetrator of bullying behaviours will be expected to reflect upon the College values and Student Responsibilities. Consequences will range in severity according to the seriousness of the immediate behaviour as well as consideration of previous expressions of behaviour. As part of this process students may be asked to sign an agreement of expectations for behaviour, and parents may be asked to attend an interview.

**The College process for dealing with bullying and other inappropriate behaviours is based on procedural fairness and does not permit corporal punishment.**

**This policy is to be read in conjunction with the *Management of Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy*.**

**FURTHER FOLLOW UP**

It should be remembered that the person/s who have been harmed, the perpetrator/s of the bullying behaviours, and other groups in the College community might need further support. This may take the form of professional counselling or assistance in strategies and skills for future problems and/or changed behaviours. It is important to note that where damage has occurred, the perpetrator is expected to pay for the damage they have caused.

Should there be any further incident, an interview will be arranged with the student, her parents, the relevant Dean and the Deputy Principal. The consequence for the continued bullying will be decided at or following the interview in consultation with the Principal.



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

## PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

Students experiencing bullying are reminded that they have influence in responding to the incident/ relationship. Different ways of dealing with bullying can vary and will depend on the person and situation. You can:

- Not retaliate.
- Be assertive and tell the person that you do not like what she is doing and that you want it to stop.
- Talk it over with someone you trust. This may be a parent, teacher, or senior student.
- Report the incident. It is OK to let someone know what is happening. You are not alone and you have a right to feel safe.
- Ignore it and show that it doesn't affect you.

Ignore the bullying



If it stops, no more action is needed.

If it continues ...



Without registering fear or being upset, tell the person guilty of bullying that their behaviour is not wanted and that you want it to stop.

If it stops, no more action is needed.

If it continues ...



Refer the matter as appropriate to:

- Class teacher
- Tutor/ Boarding Coordinator
- Dean of Early/ Middle/ Senior Secondary/ Dean of Boarding
- College Counsellor
- Pastoral Dean of Students
- Any other staff member



With the help of this person, make a plan to deal with the problem.  
Put the plan into action.



If it stops, no more action is needed.

If it continues ...



Report the matter as appropriate to your Dean of Secondary (Early/ Middle/ Senior), Dean of Boarding or the Pastoral Dean of Students or Deputy Principal. Inform them of the situation and of the action that has been taken.



**Appropriate action to resolve the matter will be taken.**



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

## PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO REPORTS OF BULLYING

All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated by the appropriate member of staff. A matter may progress through the stages, or commence at either 1. or 2. Serious matters may be dealt with by the Deputy Principal or Principal in the first instance. The nature and extent of investigation will depend on the seriousness of the incident reported.

### 1. Notification – A student brings an instance of bullying and/or harassment to the attention of a teacher

STAGE ONE: informal mediation by the teacher. This occurs where the teacher feels the situation does not demand a more serious tone. The teacher will mediate between the students in the classroom, immediately after the class has finished, or on the playground if that is where the incident has occurred. The teacher records the incident and forwards it to the students' Dean. Contact is made with parents of the students involved.

STAGE TWO: formal mediation by the students' Dean. Where the situation is of a serious nature, the teacher records the report received by the student and forwards it to the students' Dean for investigation. Contact is made with parents of the students involved.

### 2. Dean of Secondary or Pastoral Dean of Students receives report of bullying from a teacher or student

1. The relevant Dean of Secondary (Early/ Middle/ Senior/ Boarding) investigates the report ensuring awareness with the Pastoral Dean of Students.
2. The student making the report is interviewed by the Dean and given reassurance that the matter will be investigated. If the student is very disturbed, the Dean may counsel the student while the investigation proceeds or refer the student to the College Counsellor or the Pastoral Dean of Students.
3. The Dean may gain information by interviewing individuals including the alleged perpetrator and/or witnesses. The Dean may also request copies of written notes and/or evidence of cyberbullying.
4. Parents of all parties will be notified by the Dean.
5. Students will be cautioned against any act of revenge or retaliation and that such behaviour may result in further consequence.
6. Following completion of the investigation, the College will implement measures it considers appropriate, which could include one or more of the following:
  - mediation
  - interview with parents
  - counselling
  - disciplinary consequences such as College Detention, Suspension, or Expulsion

### 3. Deputy Principal – Receives reports of continued incidents of bullying

Deputy Principal arranges for an interview to take place with the student, her parents, the Dean of Secondary and/ or the Pastoral Dean of Students. The consequence for the continued bullying will be decided at or following the interview in consultation with the Principal.

Records of interviews with the person/s who have been both the recipient and perpetrator of and witness to the bullying behaviours, parents and staff members are maintained and stored. All records of interviews remain confidential.



Under the Stewardship of Mary Aikenhead Ministries

## SUPPORT SERVICES

The following services offer confidential support and advice and are available out of school hours

### **Kids Helpline - 1800 55 1800**

To talk to someone about anything that is going on in your life.

This is the best number for young people to talk to someone urgently.

- Age: 5–25
- Free on-line and phone support and counselling 24/7
- Online web chat <https://kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling>
- Many resources to offer advice <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>

### **eheadspace - 1800 650 890**

Support and counselling to young people, their families and friends.

- Age: 12–25
- Free on-line and phone support and counselling - 9am to 1am 7 days a week
- Online webchat and phone support <https://headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/>

### **Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner**

Offers helpful advice to prevent and deal with harm caused by serious online abuse or illegal and restricted online content.

Age: For all ages

Website has lots of advice <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people>

Direct links to report <https://www.esafety.gov.au/report>

### **ReachOut**

Provides online information and resources - articles, fact sheets with tips and tools, as well as professionally moderated peer-support community to receive support from peers who have experience who have been there.

- Age: ReachOut is for young people aged 14-25;  
ReachOut Parents is for parents seeing support relevant to teenagers aged 12-18.
- <https://au.reachout.com/bullying>
- Young people - Chat with a peer worker: <https://about.au.reachout.com/our-services/young-people>
- Parents/ carers - Parent Resources available; Plus option to join the free online community to receive peer support from moderators and other parents. <https://parents.au.reachout.com/>

### **Suicide Call Back Service - 1300 659 467**

Support if you, or someone you know, is feeling suicidal.

- Age: For all ages
- Phone counselling 24/7

## REVIEW

This policy statement was updated in June 2024. It is due for review again in 2026.