



Bullying (Students) Policy

Level: 3

Version Number: 7

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1. Preamble

- 1.1. As an outworking of our desire to “*aim for excellence by providing an environment in which students and staff are encouraged to reach their full God-given potential*” (Vision Statement), Chairo 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. In Victoria, serious bullying can be both an Occupational Health and Safety issue as well as a criminal matter. Bullying that is sexual in nature may breach sexual harassment laws, and bullying behaviours that target someone because of their personal characteristics may breach anti-discrimination laws. Additionally, in an amendment to legislation known as Brodie’s Law, people who engage in serious bullying can now be prosecuted under the Crimes Act 1958 for the offence of stalking, that includes:
 - making threats to the victim
 - using abusive or offensive words to, or in front of, the victim
 - performing abusive or offensive acts in the presence of the victim
 - directing abusive or offensive acts towards the victim
 - acting in a way that could reasonably be expected to cause physical or mental harm to the victim, including causing the victim to self-harm (including suicide).
- 1.3. Bullying of any description is totally unacceptable at Chairo and will not be tolerated. All Chairo 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 his/her 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.
- 1.4. Chairo’s *Code of Respect* expects all members of the Chairo community to respect others, themselves, authority, property, the privilege to teach and learn, and Chairo and its Christian foundations.
- 1.5. 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.
- 1.6. 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. Chairo seeks to “*cultivate community that reflects the love of Christ*” (Vision Statement).
- 1.7. This policy relates to all incidents of bullying involving Chairo students occurring during school hours and/or on school premises, and to other incidents of bullying involving Chairo 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.



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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. *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.
- 2.4. *Covert bullying* is a type of bullying that is very difficult for someone outside of the interaction to identify. It can include hand gestures and threatening looks, whispering, excluding, restricting another's opportunities or interactions. Social bullying (spreading rumours, manipulation of relationships, excluding, isolating) is often covert bullying.

3. Details

- 3.1. Where incidents of bullying occur at Chairo, 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. In cases where covert bullying has been alleged, and proves difficult to identify or investigate, efforts should still be made to bring about reconciliation and set expectations about future interactions.
- 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 Chairo 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 Heads of Teaching and Learning, 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 Executive Leadership of the school shall ensure that individual campuses and/or school sections develop specific procedures that 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



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documents shall elaborate on the different forms of bullying and give examples of what bullying is *and what it is not*.

- 3.8. The Executive Leadership of the school 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 Executive Leadership of the school 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 Executive Leadership of the school shall ensure that teaching in relation to bullying is included in selected areas of the curriculum.
- 3.11. The Executive Leadership of the school shall ensure that the school is proactive in making members of the school community aware of related, helpful resources from government and other organisations such as:
 - *Bullying. No Way!* (www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)
 - *National Centre Against Bullying* (www.ncab.org.au)
 - *Student Wellbeing Hub* (www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au)
 - *Bully Stoppers | Victorian Government* (www.vic.gov.au)
 - *Bullying online or at school | Victoria Legal Aid*
 - *Building-Respectful-and-Safe-Schools.pdf* (is.vic.edu.au)
 - *Bullying - Brodie's Law | Department of Justice and Community Safety Victoria*
- 3.12. 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*.