ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

- PARENTS
- STUDENTS
- TEACHERS
VISION
St Francis Xavier College is a Catholic community that is educative and supportive. We have a clear purpose: the development of a person of competence, conscience and compassion formed in the Christian tradition; one who is guided by a sense of hope and self-belief and who will be of service in the world. We recognise God’s presence in our lives by celebrating and pursuing personal excellence and by living courageously with optimism and respect for all.

PREAMBLE
St. Francis Xavier College is a Catholic learning community in which we are bound to each other by a sense of kinship and a sharing of common values and goals. The Mission of the College is to develop an environment where Gospel values are proclaimed, lived and celebrated so that our young people may find the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Christian understanding of personhood recognises that fundamental freedom and rights are reciprocated by responsibilities which proactively promote peace, justice and reconciliation. It is for this reason that we recognise the rights, responsibilities and expectations of students, parents and teachers. Bullying at school causes enormous stress for many children and their families, and has long-term effects. School bullying has been identified as a risk factor associated with antisocial and criminal behaviour. Bullies are more likely to drop out of school and to engage in delinquent and criminal behaviour. The targets are more likely to have higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression and illness, and an increased tendency to suicide.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at St Francis Xavier College.
This policy uses a framework based on restorative justice principles aimed at bringing about behavioural change for the individual while keeping schools and communities safe. The aim of restorative programs is to reintegrate those affected by wrongdoing back into the community as resilient and responsible members. Ideally, a target should feel safe and secure to report the bullying and tell the story without fear of repercussions. Targets and bullies should expect a fair investigation followed by some form of resolution.

WHAT BULLYING IS NOT
Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

1. **Mutual conflict**

   In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for ‘retaliation’ in a one-sided way.

2. **Social rejection or dislike**

   Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

3. **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness or random acts of aggression or intimidation**

   Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.
Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying. **However, since the school has a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will be dealt with.**

**WHAT IS BULLYING?**
Bullying is any repeated and unreasonable behaviour or act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or hurt to another person. The other person may include student, parent or staff member.

**TYPES**
Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic** because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** such as email & internet chat room misuse, or posting inappropriate/unkind messages or images on social networking sites.

Use of a mobile phone to make threats by text messaging & calls
Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities

**STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS**

- Ignore the bully if possible
- In a firm voice, tell the bully to stop and walk away
- Do not retaliate
- Stay in places where you feel safe
- Ask an adult for support

It can be difficult to deal with a bully on your own, even if you do have the support of your friends. Sometimes the only way to stop the bullying cycle is to tell an adult. This might be: a parent; grandparent; House Co-ordinator or teacher; school counsellor; or another adult you trust.

Often people don't tell others about bullying because they are afraid the bully will find out. Although this is a natural fear, asking for help and letting someone else know what's going on can help break the cycle. Speaking out about bullying and breaking a bullying ‘cycle’ may help other students as well.

**INTERVENTION STRATEGIES USED BY THE COLLEGE**

1. **Assertiveness Training**

There is some evidence that training students to respond assertively can be a useful strategy.

Responding assertively to a bullying incident requires the student to respond in a way that is respectful to themselves, their abilities and knowing their basic human rights.

Teachers can help students to be assertive by encouraging them to:

- Plan and practice responses to bullying incidents in a clear and polite manner that does not insult the bully
- Respond using assertive body language, i.e. standing up straight and keeping eye contact
2. **Restorative Practices**

These practices require a shift in philosophy from traditional punitive models of behaviour management to those relational models which, as well as holding wrong doers accountable for their behaviour, provide support for the community affected by the wrong doing. Specific Restorative Practices include:

**Small Group Individual Conferences**
These are usually confined to a small group of students or an individual student and perhaps teacher(s) who have been involved in a less serious incident. Typically small group conferences might be used to deal with low-level bullying before matters escalate.

**Classroom Conferences**
These involve the whole class in addressing issues which have affected teaching and learning in the classroom and student wellbeing, such as classroom bullying and more generally, classroom disruption.

**Community Conferences**
A community conference brings together, in the wake of a serious incident of harm, the wrongdoer and the student being bullied, along with their families and appropriate school personnel. An agreement is reached whereby all participants feel that there has been some restitution and that relationships have been repaired.

**Follow-up is crucial for ongoing support and to ensure compliance with the agreement.**

3. **Bystander Training**

A popular strategy in the prevention of bullying is Bystander Training. This form of prevention strategy trains bystander students to behave in a supportive way to students who are being bullied, and to intervene where feasible. It is based on the notion that bad things continue to happen if good people do nothing. For students to effectively stand up for another student who is being bullied, they need to feel confident in their own skills to intervene and know that they will have the support of teachers.

Bystander Training should:
- Stress to all students that they are expected to act responsibly and either challenge the bullying behaviour directly or indirectly or report the incident to a teacher.
- build the students skills to effectively challenge the actions of bullies.

4. **Peer Mediation**

Peer Mediation is designed to enable students to undertake a positive and proactive part in resolving issues that may arise during their time at school. It can include friendship concerns, bullying, issues relating to their transition into Years 7, 8 & 9, or relationship problems with classmates. A mediation session can be requested by one of the parties involved, although both must agree to the meeting. Peer Mediation is not a counselling service, nor does it replace or preclude the above processes.

The College Peer Mediators are trained to deal with identifying the causes of an issue and in assisting the two parties to find a resolution to the problem that both are willing to accept. All mediation sessions are confidential, although notes and a contract are written. A signed copy of the latter will be given to each of the parties involved in the mediation session, whilst a file copy is also retained.

**If these methods are unsuccessful, sanctions, such as suspension or negotiated transfer, are to be used as appropriate.**
5. **The establishment of a Cyber safety team.**

This group would lead and inform the College on the best ways to promote and teach cyber safe behaviour with regards to emerging technologies and the personal responsibility of the user to the whole College community. The College will also promote cyber safe behaviour through the provision of Professional Development for staff, along with educating and training parents and students on cyber safety.

**STUDENT-STAFF-PARENT RELATIONSHIPS**

- If a student or students feel bullied by a staff member, the incident is reported to the Deputy Principal, Head of Campus, and should be dealt with as per the *Concerns and Complaints Policy*.
- If a staff member is being bullied by students, other staff or parents, he or she reports the matter to the Deputy Principal, Head of Campus, who takes the appropriate measures as outlined in the *Concerns and Complaints Policy*. If the incident is repeated the Principal is informed for further action.
- If a member of staff is bullied by a parent or student and action has been taken as outlined in the *Concerns and Complaints Policy* and the school/family partnership is damaged, consequently, it may be in the best interests of the student to continue his/her education elsewhere.
- If a parent is intimidated by another adult in the school community, he or she should report the incident to the Deputy Principal, Head of Campus who will take appropriate action.

**EVALUATION OF POLICY**

*This policy will be evaluated to check on effectiveness every two years.*