



## **AQUINAS COLLEGE**

### **Anti - Bullying Policy**

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*Aquinas College strives to create a caring, safe and rich learning environment in which every young person feels safe, valued and connected. We believe that all members of our College community are made in the image and likeness of God and therefore have a special value, dignity and worth. We encourage the positive participation of all students in our College community.*

*This Policy provides a focus on strategies that aim to enhance and strengthen the community of Aquinas College through establishing student, teacher and parent connectedness. We believe that all members of the College community share the responsibility to teach, foster, promote and encourage positive student behaviour.*

*This policy reflects and is applied in the context of our Catholic tradition and worldview, as well as, the values of academic excellence, mercy, justice, faith, courage, service and compassion as identified in our College vision and mission statement.*

### **POLICY AIMS**

We aim to provide an environment that is physically, emotionally and intellectually safe for all members of our school community.

We seek to achieve this by:

- preventing the occurrence of bullying. We do this by educating the students on establishing positive relationships and reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of all school members;
- developing individual self-esteem and respect for others through informative lessons and activities through our Pastoral Care system and classrooms; and
- combating bullying by processes of reconciliation, support (which may include involvement by school Guidance Counsellors, Deputy or Assistant Principals and parents as deemed necessary by the Pastoral Leader) or sanctions (as prescribed by the Deputy or Assistant Principal) which are directly linked with the Policy.

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is when an individual or group misuses power to target another individual or group to intentionally threaten or harm them on more than one occasion. This may involve verbal, physical, relational and psychological forms of bullying. Teasing or fighting between peers is not necessarily bullying.

### **Bullying may involve:**

- **verbal bullying:** The repeated use of words to hurt or humiliate another individual or group. Verbal bullying includes using put-downs, insulting language, name-calling, swearing, nasty notes and homophobic, racist or sexist comments.
- **emotional/psychological bullying:** Includes repeated stalking, threats or implied threats, unwanted email or text messaging, abusive websites, threatening gestures, manipulation, emotional blackmail, and threats to an individual's reputation and sense of safety.
- **relational bullying:** Usually involves repeatedly ostracising others by leaving them out or convincing others to exclude or reject another individual or group, making up or spreading rumours, and sharing or threatening to share another's personal information.
- **physical bullying:** Includes repetitive low level hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing, tripping, 'ganging up', unwanted physical or sexual touching and damage to personal property. More serious violent behaviours are not necessarily treated as bullying and may be better managed through the school's discipline processes.
- **cyber bullying:** Involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, text messages, instant messaging, social media and websites to engage in the bullying of other individuals or groups. This technology provides an alternative means for verbal, relational and psychological forms of bullying.

- **Bystander:** A Bystander is a person who witnesses a bullying incident as an onlooker. At Aquinas College, we agree that, if you are a bystander who encourages bullying behaviours, or if you witness bullying and do not report the incident, your behaviour is considered to be bullying.

## **MOBILE PHONES AND CYBER BULLYING**

Using mobile devices to bully (also known as cyber bullying) and threaten other students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour.

Students are reminded that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person and almost all calls, text messages and emails can be traced.

Mobile phones or other mobile devices must not be used to take photos/video of any other student or teacher without their consent. It is also prohibited to upload photos/video of other students/teachers to social media websites or email photos/videos to others if doing so would embarrass, humiliate or cause discomfort to the subject of the photo/video. Students are reminded that mobile phones are not to be used in toilets or changing rooms.