



Safe School - Policy Against Bullying

Rationale:

There is an increasing awareness that bullying exists within the community. Research and anecdotal evidence confirms that bullying takes place within schools.

Bullying can make people feel powerless, scared and insecure at school. This can affect their ability to learn and concentrate and their relationships with others.

Members of the Al Siraat College community have the right to expect a safe and caring environment which promotes emotional well being and learning. This right has concurrent responsibilities which include accepting others and treating them with dignity and respect.

Definition:

Being bullied means that someone is subjected to behaviour that is hurtful, threatening and frightening to them. This behaviour is often repeated over a period of time.

- Verbal bullying:
The use of language to threaten or hurt including name-calling and put-downs.
- Physical bullying:
Any intentional and unwelcome use of physical contact or deliberate property damage.
- Gesture bullying:
The use of non-verbal signals to cause intimidation or fear.
- Exclusion bullying:
Leaving someone out on purpose in order to cause feelings of non-acceptance and hurt.
- Extortion bullying:
The use of threat and power to obtain favour and goods.
- Racial bullying:
Antagonism or prejudice directed towards someone on the basis of their race.
- Telephone/e-mail, chat room, internet social networking site or other cyber bullying:
any cyber usage with the intention to harass or cause discomfort.
- Sexual bullying:
Any unwelcome and uninvited comment, attention, contact or behaviour of a sexual nature that is found to be humiliating, offensive or intimidating.

WHAT DO WE DO TO PREVENT BULLYING AT AL SIRAAT COLLEGE?

As a College we will endeavour, through a variety of approaches and in collaboration with all parties concerned (staff, students and parents), to prevent bullying.

This requires the College to:

- Provide a safe environment for members of its community.
- Provide a supportive environment that encourages positive relationships between peers, staff and parents.
- Provide discussion forums and curriculum material that raises bullying awareness (eg. definition and effects) and challenges attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate the behaviour. In addition, provide students with skills (eg. conflict resolution) to negotiate potential bullying.

- Maintain a pastoral care system that enables students to develop a feeling of connectedness and belonging, and fosters relationships based on trust.
- Take all reports or signs of bullying seriously
- Provide ongoing professional development for staff in how to manage incidents of bullying (eg “The Method of Shared Concern” / “No Blame Method”).

This requires students to:

- Refuse to be involved in bullying incidents. Students are encouraged to support the Bullying Policy by reporting all incidents or suspected incidents of bullying so they can be investigated.
- If bullying occurs where and when you are present, if possible, take some form of preventative action.

If you are being bullied, the following are some strategies:

- If possible remain calm.
- Positively ignore it. Show that it does not upset you; the bully is then not encouraged and may stop.
- Maintain strong body language (eg. shoulders back, head up).
- Do not provide the bully with bait by verbally bullying back. Instead use conversation stoppers such as “so”, “could be” and “maybe”.
- Confront the person bullying you, reminding that their actions are unwanted and illegal.
- If the student is engaging in extortion bullying, use the “broken record” strategy: “No you cannot have my lunch money.” over and over until they get the message.
- Positive self-talk (“I can handle this situation”).
- Find an exit (being assertive doesn’t always mean confronting the bully). Ask a trusted adult for support.

The College recommends that parents:

- Watch for signs of distress in your son/daughter (eg. unwillingness to attend school, missing equipment without explanation, a pattern of repeated headaches or unexpected abdominal pain).
- Advise your son/daughter to act assertively and avoid making emotional responses when the bullying first occurs.
- Advise your son/daughter to report incidents of bullying. If possible encourage them to report the incident himself/herself. This will result in a greater sense of control and self-respect that the experience of bullying often diminishes.
- Role model assertive approaches in interpersonal interactions
- Notify the school of any bullying incident you become aware of, even if your child was not involved.
- Help your children to develop a “pro-victim” attitude. This may involve challenging beliefs such as “people who are bullied are wimps/deserve it”
- Challenge the age-old myths that “sticks and stones may break their bones but names will never hurt them”, “bullying is part of growing up”.
- Support the school in its actions if your son/daughter has been bullying others.
- Be aware of internet sites and forums that children join and keep the children’s computer in a public area of the home.

INTERVENTION

Al Siraat College is committed to dealing with bullying behaviour using preventative (as outlined above) and reactive processes. The College is reluctant to include a prescriptive reactive process in this policy, as this would minimise the myriad of complexities that often surround bullying incidents. It will, however, take all reports of bullying seriously, tailoring interventions to the individual incident. These could include:

- Education involving empathy raising, remembering that the “severity of bullying is often in the eye of the beholder”.
- Consultations with parents.
- Consultations with the peer group (eg “The No Blame Method”).
- Referral to the School Counsellor.
- Structural changes (eg. change room procedure, locker positioning).
- Detention
- Suspension
- Expulsion

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the College’s three-year review cycle, however it may be reviewed before the review date in response to relevant changes, or as requested by the Principal or School Board

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