



# St Francis Xavier College Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying in College may be defined as: “The willful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten, upset or frighten anyone”. It can include incidents away from the college premises which are college related, but it excludes injury through accident. It is recognised that some bullying might be through individual incidents of a relatively minor nature but which assume a greater significance when viewed in context, perhaps through their frequency or reason.

The principle aim of this policy is to foster an atmosphere where bullying is discouraged and is seen to be inappropriate and wrong. Every person in the college must take responsibility for bullying. If anyone of us sees a bullying action we have a responsibility to act. The obligation to tell must be emphasised and the “Code of Silence” that young people keep must be discouraged. We should ensure the victims feel supported and know that their concerns will be treated in confidence and with discretion. Where bullying does occur students and parents are encouraged to report it. All reports will be followed up and the college undertakes to:

- have an awareness of the special needs of vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- operate a reporting and recording procedure on the pastoral log
- deal with all reports speedily, fairly and positively
- take account of the evidence and all views
- provide anonymity for the victim whenever possible
- offer advice and support to the victim
- offer advice and support to the person responsible
- ensure that all involved are kept informed

- operate a system of sanctions or punishments which will reflect the seriousness of the offence.

Students are not expected to tolerate bullying or to suffer in silence. They will be encouraged to disclose problems in an environment in which they feel safe and have confidence. Early intervention is important if behaviour is to be changed

Bullying may be verbal, physical or psychological. In fact any action which makes a student feel uncomfortable, insecure or threatened may be defined as bullying. The college disapproves of bullying in all its forms and considers it a most serious offence. The Principal and senior staff take the lead in creating a climate in which students will report immediately any bullying incident in the expectation that it will be dealt with urgently and firmly.

SFX is committed to the Investors in Diversity programme. Bullying, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated in the college. Posters are displayed in the college and on Moodle demonstrating that bullying is not acceptable and who to speak to if a student feels they have been bullied. In particular there are named staff members if the bullying, harassment or discrimination regards one of the protected characteristics.

Bullying can be carried out by individuals or groups and often bullies try to include others in their activities. Most bullies feel confident enough to act in public, the onlookers becoming part of the process. They depend for their success on the silence of their victims. A student with learning difficulties and disabilities may appear to be an easy target. These students may also require clear guidelines on how not to bully others.

The college staff are further aware of an increase in financial bullying that can involve people external to the college. This can include the extortion of money but is more likely to involve bank cards and / or bank account details. It is critical that any member of staff who suspects any wrong doing of this type should report it to the DSO immediately and ultimately to the police.

### **Signs that might indicate that bullying is occurring**

This is often difficult. Students tend to keep such things secret. Staff should be vigilant and look out for injury or damaged property, abnormal behaviour, students that are withdrawn, unusual shy or reticent. Sometimes students tend to hang back as if they want to talk to you - draw them out. Look out for patterns of absence, lateness to lessons, unwillingness to leave or to be near other members of the class. Other signs may include:

- change of friendship groups
- lack of friends
- 'illness' at certain times or on certain days
- change in standard of work
- sudden lack of confidence
- severe cases of depression

Although the above list is most likely to apply to victims, changes in behaviour could indicate that someone has developed anti-social traits and may be bullying.

All staff are required to report incidents of suspected bullying to the Personal Tutor and Head of House of both bullies and victims. In all cases, students should be dealt with appropriately with reference to the Student Code of Conduct. If not resolved or if repeated, the Head of House must inform the Assistant Principal for Student Welfare.

In cases that involve a student receiving support with a learning difficulty or disability the Head of Learning Support should be informed. If the student makes an initial disclosure to a member of staff about a disability or learning difficulty the tutor should ensure that the student signs a C5 form before sharing this disclosure. These forms are available from Learning Support (or the Student Welfare Officer if it is an ESM disclosure). If the student does not wish to sign the form then the information relating to their learning difficulty or disability cannot be shared. In cases where this creates a health and safety risk this confidentiality is overridden e.g. with a mental health issue. Once the bullying incident has been reported to the Head of House, appropriate action must be taken in consultation with the Head of Learning Support

### **Guidelines for staff on the prevention of Bullying**

- The starting point for discouraging bullying is a positive acceptance of the College Mission statement and the clear message that we will not tolerate any kind of physical, verbal or psychological aggression. This should be promoted in the tutor group, subject/course lessons and the R&P period as well as by informal contact with students.
- Bullying, whether physical, verbal, or psychological is to be deplored and will not be tolerated at SFX.

- e-Safety includes an awareness of abuse using mobile phones, social networking and other forms of electronic communication
- It is up to everyone to be aware and work together to prevent bullying from happening and to develop positive strategies for students to cope with this type of situation.
- Staff must deal immediately with any incident they witness, either in their own classroom or around the college.

Each case will be treated individually and depending on severity of circumstances, one or more of the following strategies will be employed.

- Interviews/counselling of bully/victim by the Personal Tutor (this may be done individually or together). Head of House to be informed.
- Informing the parents of both the bully and the victim of the incident by telephone and/or letter. Head of House to be informed.
- Requesting interviews with the parents of the bully and/or the victim. Personal Tutor and Head of House to be involved.
- When appropriate, involve college chaplain/counsellor or outside agencies on behalf of the victim or bully.
- Regular follow-up to bullying incidents is dealt with or instigated by Head of House. This may include letter or telephone contact with parents and by interview with bully or victim.
- Clear written records to be kept by Tutor/Head of House of all repeated bullying behaviour by perpetrator on the Pastoral Log.
- Involvement of Additional Learning Support service in providing additional care for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Assistant Principal for Student Welfare may be involved where the bullying is not resolved or is extreme in nature.

### **Sanctions that may be imposed on a bully**

These include.

- Removal of privileges/activities
- Exclusion from peers/lesson.
- Exclusion from college.

### **Permanent Exclusion**

Bullying will be considered an act of violence or aggression and as such falls within the category of behaviour that may lead to permanent exclusion.

### **Whole College Strategy – How we create a safe community**

The issue of bullying cannot be separated from our explicit commitment to educate the 'whole person'. Our Religion and Philosophy and Tutorial programmes, as well as the

opportunities we give to worship and pray together, make explicit the Christian values that underpin our mission and aims. We must make clear at every opportunity that we will live out the Gospel values of peace and love.

We are committed to the concept of the 'Safe Learner' be it through the employment of security personnel, CCTV, risk assessments and ID checks or the pastoral and academic curriculum where students should be given the opportunity to discuss bullying and to raise their own issues and concerns. This encourages an active participation in a "safe" environment and helps build positive relationships within our community that help ensure that our students do not experience bullying while at St Francis Xavier College.

***Policy to be reviewed Sept 2021***