



St Mary & St Mina's Coptic Orthodox College

"In Whom are hidden all the treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge"
(Colossians 2:3)

Manual Referencing Code
SW0004

ST MARY AND ST MINA'S COPTIC ORTHODOX COLLEGE

Safe & Supportive Environment Guidelines & Procedures

1. GUIDELINE DESCRIPTION

The College is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment which focuses on the rights of:

- ⇒ all students to learn
- ⇒ teachers to teach
- ⇒ all to be safe.

These rights will be outworked in a Christian community that places emphasis on providing a secure and caring, quality education that values and encourages spiritual, intellectual, creative and physical growth in each individual.

2. PURPOSE:

The College wishes to create a learning environment where all students and staff feel safe, supported, respected and valued. It is the responsibility of all members of the College communities to ensure the safety and protection of one another. No form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated. The College is aware of its legal obligations to protect students and staff according to international conventions and Commonwealth and State legislative requirements.

Furthermore, as a Coptic College, we have a primary obligation from biblical teachings whereby each human person is valued by God and the given commandments to love and care for one another. This policy is supported by pastoral and academic programs which focus on conflict resolution, individual choices, promoting self esteem, healthy relationships, and an understanding of the characteristics and behaviours that constitute bullying as well as an explanation of causes and consequences. We believe the key to encouraging a safe and supportive College environment lies less in legal remedies or disciplinary action than in the College creating a positive culture, a culture which enhances self-worth and builds caring relationships.

3. OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the Safe & Supportive Policy are to facilitate the implementation of the National Safe Schools Program principles which includes, to:

- affirm the right of all College community members to feel safe at College
- promote care, respect and cooperation, and value diversity
- implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive College environment
- recognise that quality leadership is an essential element that underpins the creation of a safe and supportive College environment
- develop and implement policies and programmes through processes that engage the whole College community
- ensure that roles and responsibilities of all members of the College community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated
- recognise the critical importance of pre-service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive College environment
- have a responsibility to provide opportunities for students to learn through the formal curriculum the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships
- focus on policies that are proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention
- regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence-based practice supports decisions and improvements
- take action to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect

4. STRATEGIES:

4.1 School values, ethos, culture, structures and student welfare

The learning environment we seek to provide is one that is safe, supportive, inclusive and respectful of individual differences. The academic endeavours of the College cater for a wide range of interests and talent in students.

Staff at the College will seek to maintain a safe and supportive environment by:

- Supervising students in the playground and in all areas of the College
- Watching for signs of bullying and dealing with incidences appropriately, as outlined below
- Responding quickly and sensitively to bullying reports and following up reported bullying incidents
- Taking parents' concerns about bullying seriously
- Being a role model in word and actions at all times
- Assigning consequences for bullying according to the College procedures

Students at the College should maintain a safe and supportive environment by:

- Treating others respectfully
- Refusing to bully others
- Refusing to let others be bullied
- Refusing to watch, laugh or join in when someone is being bullied
- Trying to include everyone, especially those who are often left out
- Reporting bullying to an adult
- The College has a hands off policy

To uphold College's Christian ethos, students are expected to:

- Be respectful of the views of others
- Be aware that people are different individuals and should be treated respectfully regardless of religion, culture, disability, gender or physical appearance
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in dealing with others
- Make a positive contribution to the wider community.

Students are encouraged to take pride in the College and uphold the College's values in the wider community. Students are expected to:

- Be well-groomed and wear the uniform correctly at all times
- Represent the College at all times with pride
- Show consideration of others within the College and in public
- Be courteous and well-mannered at all times
- Take pride in, and responsibility for, the College's appearance and image

Parents of students at the College are expected to cooperate in accepting certain regulations. These are fundamental to the well-being of all students in the College. They are based on courtesy and consideration for others, as well as instilling a sense of responsibility in the students. Parents are reminded that, by accepting a place at the College for their son/daughter, they are agreeing to support the College's expectations. Sanctions will follow if students fail to meet required expectations.

Prevention strategies include:

- We encourage and maintain a climate of respect at all times
- College leadership and management reflect practices that contribute to building a safe and supportive learning environment for all students
- The College curriculum develops life skills to nurture personal development in an inclusive and equitable manner
- The College's Student Behaviour Management Policy is implemented in a consistent manner
- We strive for a common understanding of acceptable classroom behaviour
- Expectations for behaviour outside the classroom are communicated and practiced by all members of the College community

4.2 Establishment of agreed policies, programmes and procedures

The College wishes to establish policies, programmes and procedures to facilitate a protective and respectful culture.

The following programs are considered for possible implementation:

- Peer Support Programs
- Student Leadership Teams – Captains, Vice Captains and Prefects
- Beyond Me Program
- Orientation Program
- A whole College Anti Bullying Strategy

- Christian Groups “Jolt”, “Jam”
- House System
- Training Student Leadership Teams
- Teaching of Christian Studies
- Camps and Retreats
- Duke of Edinburgh’s Award Scheme
- College Productions
- Music Tutorial Program
- Sporting Program
- Buddies not Bullies
- Positive Friendship
- A Cyber Bullying Strategy (including information for parents)

Within these programs and the wider College environment, staff aim to develop positive relationships with students. Students are supervised in the playground and staff use effective teaching and classroom management.

The issue of maintaining a safe and supportive College environment will remain a high priority for all at the College. The Policy will be reviewed regularly and amended if necessary to ensure that the College has effective management of bullying behaviours and is actively promoting a safe and supportive environment.

Procedures

The Head of College will:

- Develop a whole College approach and commitment to the provision of a safe and supportive environment
- Foster positive practices that contribute to a sense of well-being and safety for staff and students
- Ensure that the teaching and modelling of positive social skills are embedded across the College
- Facilitate professional development for staff to enhance skills in providing a safe and supportive environment
- Ensure that any resolution of problems reflects appropriate legislative requirements
- Promote effective communication and liaison with families
- Ensure staff are aware of and implement this policy and related policies and documents

All staff will:

- Provide and support effective classroom practice that promote a safe learning environment
- Utilise student management protocols to address issues of student behaviour
- Have professional and respectful collaborative working relationships with students and parents and other agencies.
- Not use physical restraint as punishment or for enforcing compliance.
- Use physical restraint when acting to prevent students injuring themselves or to prevent students injuring other students. This should be a last resort. The force used should be no greater than reasonably necessary and should be for the minimum time required to achieve its aim.
- If a teacher has serious personal safety concerns, it is reasonable in the circumstances to decline to intervene and to call for assistance.
- The safety of all students is important. It may at times be necessary to re-locate groups of students away from a dangerous incident.

4.3 Provision of education/ training for staff, students and parents

The College is committed to providing relevant education and training for staff, students and parents.

All staff will attend an orientation program that includes child care and protection, WHS and anti-bullying and harassment training. Staff will also be provided with a Staff Handbook which includes a statement of professional standards.

All volunteers attend a volunteer training program that includes child care and protection and WHS training. Volunteers are also provided with a Voluntary Helpers Code of Conduct which includes a statement of professional standards for volunteers.

Relevant parent information sessions are conducted and a College Handbook will be distributed annually.

The students of the College are informed of and expected to uphold the Student Code of Behaviour. This Student Code of Behaviour is designed to promote a high standard of conduct in each student and to ensure the safety of all and the efficient running of the College. It should be noted that corporal

punishment is not and must not be administered at the College nor should parents be encouraged to administer it to their children on our behalf.

Our Student Code of Behaviour expectations are based on the following principles. Students should:

- Be able to learn in a safe and secure environment
- Treat personal possessions and College property with care and respect
- Take pride in the College and uphold its values in the wider community
- Support the College's Christian ethos

To enable all students to learn in a safe and secure environment, students are informed of the following:

- Harassment in any form is unacceptable.
- Personal safety and the safety of others are of paramount importance.
- Consideration of others should be shown when waiting in queues, moving in crowded corridors and travelling on public transport.
- Travel with a student who is a licensed driver is permitted only when the students involved are siblings and when written parental consent is provided to the Year Advisor.
- Good manners and courteous language are to be used at all times.
- Movement around College corridors should be calm and sensible, keeping to the left in corridors and on stairways.
- Possession or use of cigarettes, alcohol or non-prescribed drugs is prohibited whilst at College, travelling to or from College, or on any College-related occasion.
- No medicines should be brought to College unless the Office Receptionist been notified in writing via the College 'Permission to Administer Medication Form'. The medicine is to be taken directly to Reception and administered under supervision. All medicines will be administered as per the Medical Practitioner's instructions. At no time should a student be in possession of, or use, another student's medication.

The College appreciates that some senior students may be of an age to self-administer some medications. This does not preclude the Receptionist being informed in writing via the 'Permission to Administer Medication Form' of the identity of the student who is able to self-medicate and the medicine they are taking. The medication should be kept at the Student Reception at all times.

Students are educated to treat the College environment with respect including:

- No littering, graffiti or other form of vandalism
- No eating in buildings, except in designated rooms on wet days
- Ensuring personal possessions are clearly named and secured in lockers when not in use
- Demonstrating a commitment to Thomas Hassall's physical environment by maintaining classrooms and grounds in a tidy and orderly state
- No unauthorized borrowing of personal or College property

4.4 Bullying

Bullying is a product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. We define bullying behaviour as repeated and deliberate harassment, intimidation or abuse that can be verbal, social, psychological, emotional or physical. Bullying is unfair and one-sided. Typically it occurs when a person or group of persons, repeatedly and deliberately tries to harm, harass, humiliate or distress another person. It occurs when someone keeps hurting, frightening, threatening, or leaving someone out on purpose.

Bullying occurs in a number of ways, including:

- *Verbal* - Teasing, name-calling, offensive language, unwelcome comments, intrusive questions, 'nuisance' or abusive phone calls, emails, MSN or text messages, spreading malicious gossip verbally or electronically.
- *Physical* - Fighting, pushing, hitting, offensive gestures, invasion of personal space.
- *Social/Emotional* - Standover tactics, extortion, threats, damage or disregard of property or possessions, repeated exclusion.

The College's Safe and Supportive Environment Policy promotes resolution rather than punishment. Bullying will not be tolerated at St Marys.

4.4.1 Strategies to Manage Bullying

Responses to incidents of bullying and/or harassment will be tailored to suit the situation according to severity, frequency and duration. A positive approach, which seeks to bring about change in the

behaviour and thinking of student/s who are bullying, will be used wherever possible. However, disciplinary sanctions may also be required. At all times discretionary judgment will be applied according to the age of the students involved. Any situations reported will be thoroughly investigated, treated with discretion and appropriately acted upon. The aim at all times is to create a situation where all parties can co-exist peacefully in the College in an environment of care and safety.

Staff members are committed to a common response to bullying when incidents occur, using procedures outlined below:

- A staff member who witnesses a bullying incident should respond to the students involved immediately, indicating that the behaviour witnessed is unacceptable and contrary to expectations at the College
- A staff member who is informed of, or witnesses, a bullying incident should report the incident to the relevant Head of College. While the College will provide support for the offender, the first priority is to support those targeted and protect them from further bullying. Following the investigation, if bullying/harassment is found to have occurred, the following range of strategies may be implemented, depending on the severity of the incident:
 - Discussion with student/s in order to bring about a positive reconciliation of the parties. Mediation may be required.
 - Opportunities created for those involved to discuss and explore possible solutions that may resolve the issue and repair the harm done
 - Counselling of those targeted
 - Counselling of others involved (eg witnesses) if necessary
 - Counselling of the offender to help her to understand the implications of her actions and the likely consequences if the behaviour continues
 - Discussion with relevant parents
 - Isolation from peers
 - Detention/s
 - Removal of privileges
 - Professional assistance from experts within the College or from outside the College (eg conflict resolution, anger management)
 - Suspension
 - Expulsion

All actions are based on the principles of procedural fairness. Throughout the investigation and subsequent actions, care will be taken to maintain confidentiality as far as possible.

4.5 Working closely with parents

Parents will be made fully aware of the College's policy regarding a safe and supportive environment. When appropriate, the parents of non compliant students will be informed.

Parents can assist the College by:

- Taking an active interest in their son/daughter's life
- Being alert to any changes in their son/daughter's behaviour or academic performance
- Listening without judgment in the first instance
- Encouraging their son/daughter to talk to a teacher
- Encouraging their son/daughter to be a proactive bystander by expressing disapproval of bullying behaviour and seeking help
- Attending information sessions organised by the College and reading College newsletters.
- Contacting the Class teacher, Year Advisor, College Counsellor, Head of College with information about any incident that may involve bullying behaviours.

4.6 Safety & Security of the Learning Environment

The College is committed to ensuring a safe environment for all persons including employees, students, contractors and others that have a legal right to be on the premises according to legislative requirements. To ensure a safe and secure learning environment the College ensures:

- Appropriate design, function and maintenance of the College buildings, premises, facilities, equipment, and plant meets legislative requirements
- Staff are informed and relevant training is provided in relation to safety and security procedures
- Staff and students are aware of emergency evacuation and 'lock down' procedures and are practised by the College community on a regular basis
- Adequate supervision of students is provided inside and outside the classroom
- Procedures are implemented to monitor and record staff, students, contractors, volunteers and visitors to the College premises
- Staff, students and volunteers and contractors are informed of relevant 'Codes of Behaviour'
- The perimeter of the premises is appropriately secured according to safety procedures

4.7 Pastoral Care / Student Welfare and Counselling Support

A team of staff have been allocated to be responsible for pastoral care / student welfare. The team comprises of the Head of School, Year Advisors and the College Counsellor. The Student Welfare Teams meets to discuss and plan student welfare strategies.

Referral to the College Counsellor is as follows:

Self Referral

- The student reports to student reception and informs them that they would like to make an appointment with the Counsellor. Direct referrals to see the Counsellor are either seen immediately if available or are provided with an appointment.
- The student can inform the teacher that they would like to see the Counsellor. The teacher usually sends a note informing the Counsellor of the student's request. The student is then provided with an appointment.
- The student receptionist sends a note to the student's class and informs them to visit the Counsellor.
- All of the above is done in a way to protect the student's privacy.

Teacher Referral

- Teachers who identify learning, emotional or behaviour difficulties can refer a student to the Counsellor using the referral form which requires completion of the following:
 - Date of referral
 - Student name
 - Gender
 - Year
 - Roll Class
 - A brief description of the concerns
 - Is the student aware of the referral
 - Case priority – Critical, Within a week, long term
 - Name of referring teacher
 - Staff/classroom extension
 - Free periods for today, tomorrow
- Teachers are notified of the student's appointment with the Counsellor
- The Counsellor determines if it is necessary to contact the parents. Often students request that their parents should not be informed of sessions.
- Confidentiality and the Counsellor's responsibilities in relation to safety of all students is explained.
- Teachers also encourage parents to consult the Counsellor if they think it is necessary.

Parent Referral

- Parents can contact the College and talk to the Counsellor about their concerns related to their child/ren.
- If necessary they make an appointment to see the Counsellor in person
- Confidentiality is explained to parents and they are ensured that the College will do what we can to support them and their child/ren

The referring agent is informed of developments related to the student if it is appropriate. Parents are encouraged to get additional support from psychologists, speech therapist, occupational therapists, university psychological clinics, naturopaths or other relevant agencies as required.

The counselling program is proactive and preventive in focus. It is integral to the education program. It assists students in acquiring and using life-long skills through the development of academic, career, self-awareness and interpersonal communication skills. The goal of the comprehensive school counselling program is to provide all students with life skills to be self sufficient.

5. RELATED LEGISLATION, DOCUMENTS AND WEBSITE REFERENCES:

- WHS Act 2011
- Ombudsman Act 1974 (as amended by Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2003)
- Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 (as amended by Child Protection Legislation Act 2003)
- Child and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
- Child Protection Legislation Amendment Act 2003
- Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998
- Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000
- NSW Commission for Children and Young People – Website: www.kids.nsw.gov.au
- Working with Children Check Policy – Dept of Education and Training - Website: www.det.nsw.edu.au
- BOSTES Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual Section 3.6.2 (Safe and Supportive Environment)Section 3.7.1 (Discipline)
- Department of Family and Community Services www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au