ST. MARY'S COLLEGE MARYBOROUGH

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Purpose

The policy outlines the stance of the St Mary's College community in relation to Bullying and Harassment and the associated processes and procedures in place to address instances of it.
This policy applies to all St Mary's College staff and students.

Rationale

To reflect the College's Vision, Mission and core values, we have a responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment in which bullying and harassment are minimised and students receive support on issues related to their safety and well-being. St. Mary's College seeks to protect all its community member's social, emotional, psychological, and physical well-being through pro-active and supportive policies and procedures. Through dedicated pastoral care programs and middle leadership structures, the College continues to raise awareness of the harmful effects of bullying, harassment, and violence, promotes individual responsibility for the reporting of such incidents and supports those individuals experiencing these behaviours.

Policy Statement

At St Mary's College everyone has the right to work and learn in a safe and supportive environment. Bullying, harassment and violence are not part of the Catholic ethos and do not in any way reflect the College's core values of Service, Courage and Justice.

Guidelines

All St Mary's College community members have the right to:

- feel safe, secure and valued at all times
- experience positive and respectful relationships with each other
- learn, work and socialise in a supportive, caring and inclusive environment

All members share the responsibility to:

- maintain a safe school environment
- promote a positive culture and respect the dignity of others
- respect differences between people and promote empathy and inclusion of all
- refrain from bullying, harassing and violent behaviours
- recognise bullying, harassing and violent behaviours and report the actions or situation to an appropriate member of staff

Definitions

1. Bullying

In order for negative interactions between people or groups of people to be classified as bullying, three factors need to exist:

- An intent to cause harm
- An imbalance of power
- Repetition of the behaviour on an ongoing basis

Bullying can include, but is not limited to, the following behaviours:

- Direct physical attacks
- Damaging or hiding property
- Using physical intimidation such as blocking or bumping someone
- Name-calling (including online)
- Belittling or insulting someone (including online)
- Making racist remarks (including online)
- Trying to damage someone's reputation by spreading rumours (including online)
- Using verbal or non-verbal put-downs
- Playing practical jokes (including online)
- Encouraging others to socially exclude someone (including online)
- Accusing someone of things they haven't done (including online)

Bullying does not include the following behaviours:

- a disagreement or argument between people (including online)
- a mutual conflict where both parties are upset (including online)
- when someone decides not to be friends with someone else anymore due to a disagreement or a difference in values/beliefs (including online)

2. Harassment can include, but is not limited to, the following behaviours:
    - unwanted and one-sided conversations or actions towards another that demean, annoy, alarm or abuse (including online)
    - name-calling, belittling, insulting someone (including online)
    - making racist remarks (including online)
    - threatening violence (including online)
    - trying to damage someone's reputation by spreading rumours (including online)
    - using verbal or non-verbal put downs
    - unwanted romantic advances
    - invading the personal space or privacy of others
    - interrupting the conversations of others

3. following people around Violence can include, but is not limited to, the following behaviours:
    - hitting, slapping, pinching, biting, punching, hair pulling, tripping, kicking, wrestling with or throwing objects at others

- a verbal or online threat of violence

Procedures

- Acts of bullying, harassment and violence by staff against students are incorporated in the BCE Student Protection Policy.

- Acts of bullying, harassment and violence by staff against staff are incorporated in the BCE Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy.

- Acts of bullying, harassment and violence by students against staff are incorporated in the St Mary's College Behaviour Support Plan which is aligned with BCE Student Behaviour Support Policies and Guidelines.

- Acts of bullying, harassment and violence by students against students are incorporated in the St Mary's College Behaviour Support Plan which is aligned with BCE Student Behaviour Support Policies and Guidelines.

Breaking the Cycle of Bullying and Harassment for Students (excerpt from the St Mary's College Behaviour Support Plan)

The intent to cause harm, imbalances of power and repetition of inappropriate behaviours all need addressing if the cycle of bullying and harassment is to be broken. It is also essential that learning always occurs when school processes and procedures are applied in each instance. Both the students exhibiting these behaviours and those experiencing these behaviours have a right to develop strategies which will enable them to effectively engage in life after school.

Empathy – the key to addressing the intent to cause harm and imbalances of power

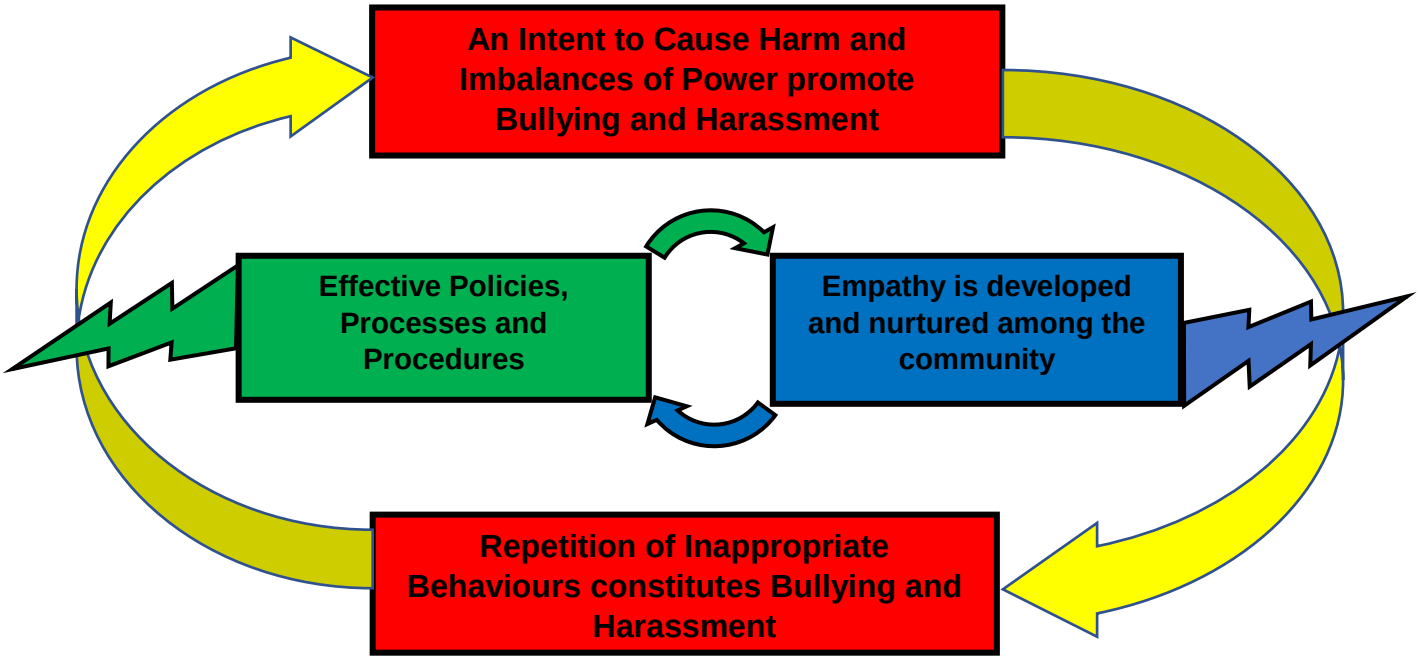
Studies show that bullies quite often have very low self-esteem which explains their need to position themselves above other, perceived 'weaker' individuals to make them feel better about themselves. Having low self-esteem also means that people who bully quite often rely on others for their power base. Developing empathy among community members is essential if this power base is to be reduced. While studies have shown that people who bully struggle with empathy (which further explains their behaviour), the key is to develop empathy among all students through inclusive and multi-faceted practices. This drastically reduces any intent to cause harm which in turn reduces the number of students prepared to support the bully and their behaviour. Without 'bystanders' and 'cronies' the bully's powerbase is seriously eroded.

Effective processes and procedures – the key to addressing ongoing inappropriate behaviours

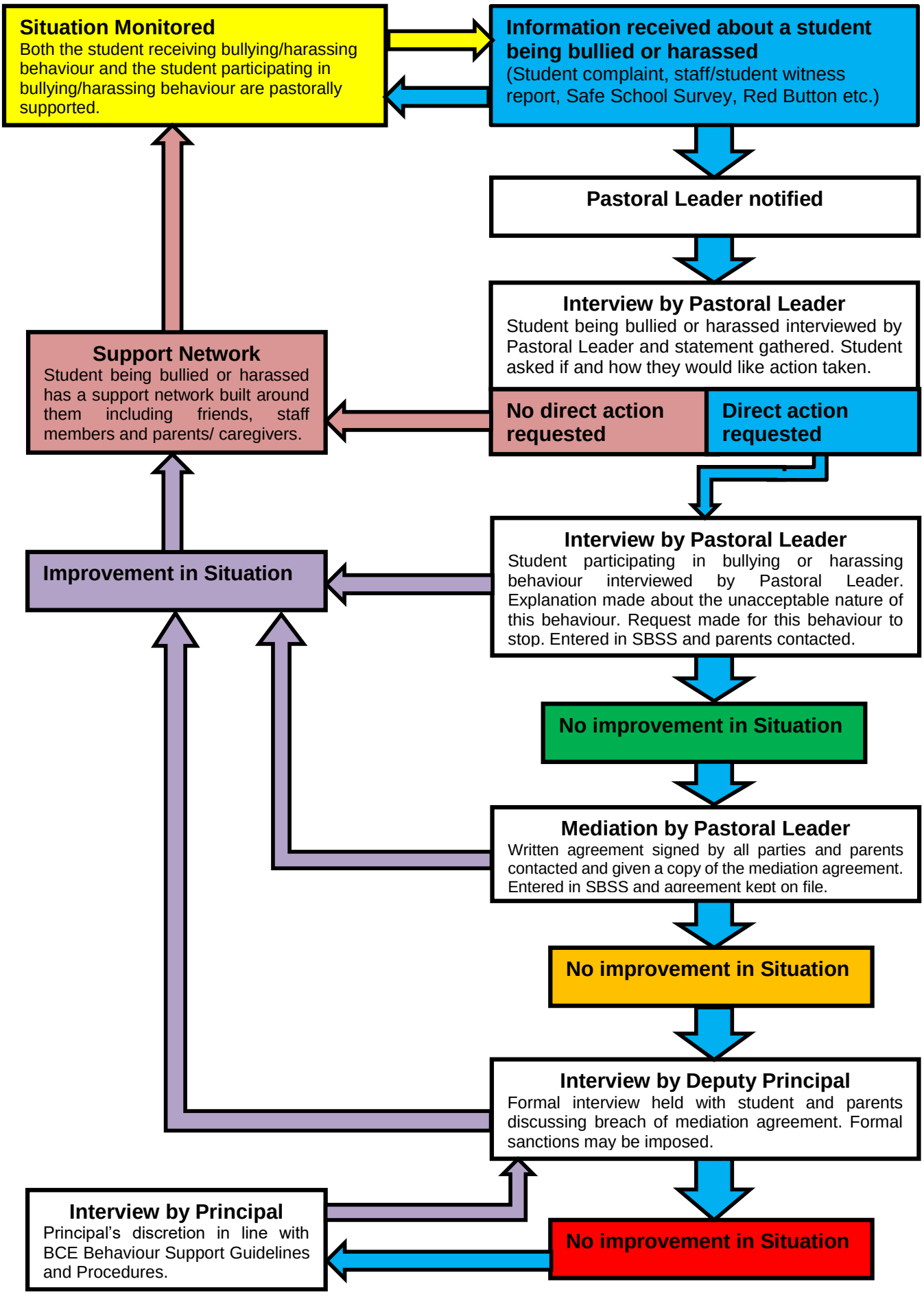
People who are experiencing bullying or harassment are constantly supported and encouraged through dedicated pastoral programs to seek assistance. Other members of our community are encouraged to speak up on their behalf with many opportunities provided including our Safe School Survey and 'Red Button'. Students can then be empowered by wrap-around support networks thus tipping the imbalance of power in their favour.

Is essential that addressing bullying and harassing behaviours is approached from a whole school perspective. The college's Behaviour Support Plan and Bullying and Harassment Policy and associated procedures underpin this approach. Effective communication between students, staff and parents is paramount to ensuring that together we can make a stand against bullying and harassment.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT



ST MARY'S COLLEGE MARYBOROUGH
BULLYING AND HARASSMENT SUPPORT FLOWCHART



Responsibility for implementation:	Staff, students and parents/guardians
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The content of this policy can be changed at the College's discretion at any time without notification.