



This Operational Policy document extends the Villanova College Anti-Bullying Strategy as outlined in the relevant College brochure. It is designed primarily to provide more detailed information, direction and guidance for staff use.

1. Bullying in our context

- a. Our Mission Statement affirms that Villanova strives to “educate young men . . . within the context of the Catholic faith”. The Operating Principles of this Statement calls those in the Villanova community to challenge those values “... which erode the dignity of the human person.” As such, we believe that bullying in any form has no place in such an environment.
- b. Students are entitled to enjoy their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Bullying affects everyone - not just the bullies and their victims. It also affects those other boys who may witness violence, intimidation and the distress of the victim. It can damage the atmosphere of a class and even the climate of a school.
- c. Bullying goes against the very grain of what makes Villanova special – a friendly, family environment. Intimidation and violence have no place in our community and will not be accepted under any circumstances.

2. Bullying – Definition

- a. Not all conflict between people constitutes bullying.
- b. Bullying is usually repeated behaviour and usually involves an imbalance of power between the individuals. The imbalance of power could arise from differences in age, ability, physical strength, social status or some other attribute.
- c. A particular single incident could be considered bullying behaviour if it involves a gross imbalance of power between the aggressor and the victim.
- d. Bullying is usually done with the intent to disrupt physically or emotionally, but it can also be an unintentional process, where people are insensitive to the feeling of others and the effects of their actions. It is “recipient defined”, i.e. “It was only a joke” or “He doesn’t mind” is never an acceptable excuse for bullying behaviour.

3. College Responses to Bullying

- a. Our school community does not tolerate bullying behaviour. It is always unacceptable. Responses to bullying behaviour should always reflect this position to all concerned.
- b. Reports or allegations or observations of bullying behaviour received or made by any staff member must be passed to a member of the Pastoral Care Team of the sub-school involved who will then investigate the report or allegation.
- c. Our first priority in any response to incidents of bullying behaviour is always the well-being and on-going protection of those who have or may have been affected by the behaviour.
- d. Our secondary priority is the encouragement of the learning and change deemed necessary for the person responsible for the behaviour.

- e. Since bullying is defined in terms of its effect on the victim, all reports or allegations of bullying behaviour will be investigated by a member of the Pastoral Care Team who will keep records of the report/allegation, the subsequent investigation, and any response made on behalf of the College if the report/allegation is substantiated or not.
- f. In response to reported bullying, the usual principles of natural justice and fair process are to apply to all parties. These principles apply to all actions taken after the initial report including the investigation and any response.
- g. As much as is possible within the constraints of the particular situation, and with the appropriate priority consideration given to the well-being of the victim, a restorative response is to be preferred in cases of substantiated bullying behaviour.
- h. In such restorative responses, once the well-being and safety of the victim is assured, the main focus of any response is the education of the aggressor to self-regulated right behaviour and the encouragement and support, as much as is possible, to repair the harm done.
- i. Depending on the severity and frequency in cases of substantiated bullying, and the particular circumstances of a given situation, responses including, but not limited to, the following may be used.

In all cases of substantiated bullying behaviour, the aggressor's parents would be notified of the situation and the response initiated. A record of the investigation and response would always be made on the student's file.

- The aggressor could be served with an *Official Caution* which could then be placed on his file.
- An impromptu or more formal mediation or circle could be conducted between the parties involved
- A restorative interview could be conducted with the aggressor aimed at increasing his ability to empathise with those he has harmed and encouraging some attempt at reparation
- The aggressor and his parents could be required to attend an interview to review his behaviour
- A full community conference involving parents and other supporters could be conducted
- Sanctions such as detention or suspension could be assigned, in cases where responses of a more restorative nature are inappropriate or unavailable, or in conjunction with other more restorative responses where this is judged necessary

In severe cases, or in cases which indicate a continuing pattern of unacceptable behaviour, the Principal at his discretion may need to suspend the aggressor's enrolment at the College until such time that certain assurances can be given and accepted. For the common good of the College Community, the Principal; may also be unable to allow a student's enrolment to continue at the College.

In certain cases, the Principal may be required to notify the police or other civil authority.