

Our Lady of the Rosary
Catholic Primary School,
Waitara



**Pastoral Care
Policy**

2007

Rationale:

I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.

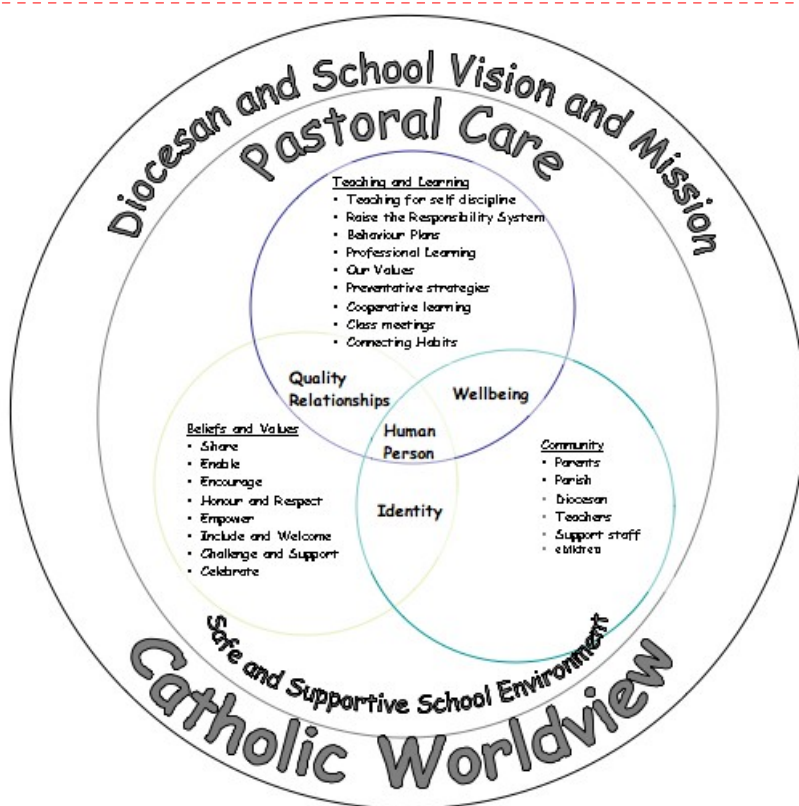
(John 10:10)

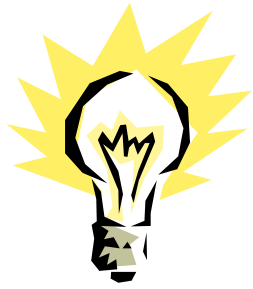
Pastoral Care is central to the ethos and identity of a Catholic school. It is based on a deep respect for the dignity and uniqueness of the individual person as we are all made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). The Catholic school by providing a strong sense of wellbeing, belonging and security, that affirms students in their dignity and worth, assists students to achieve their full potential as a human person, physically, socially, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. (Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools 2003, CEC, p6)

Pastoral Care at Our Lady of the Rosary is based upon shared Catholic values through which families and teachers work together to provide a positive supportive environment characterized by trust, cooperation and respect. We acknowledge the right for all Our Lady of the Rosary community members to feel safe.

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With a shared value system between school and the community students are educated within an environment of trust, cooperation and respect.





Pastoral Care involves

building relationships between children, staff and parents so that we can all be responsible, respectful and caring people within an environment where everyone 'Cooperates' at the level of Principles

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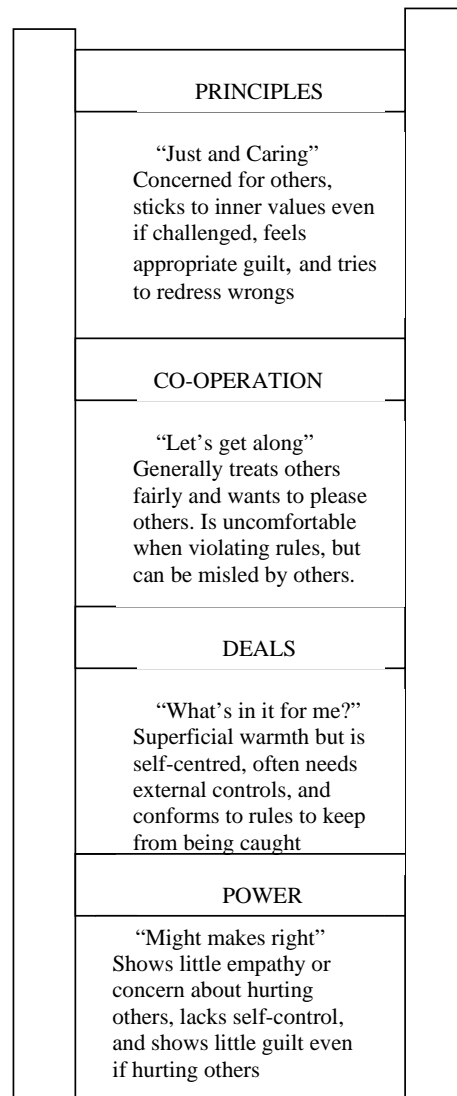
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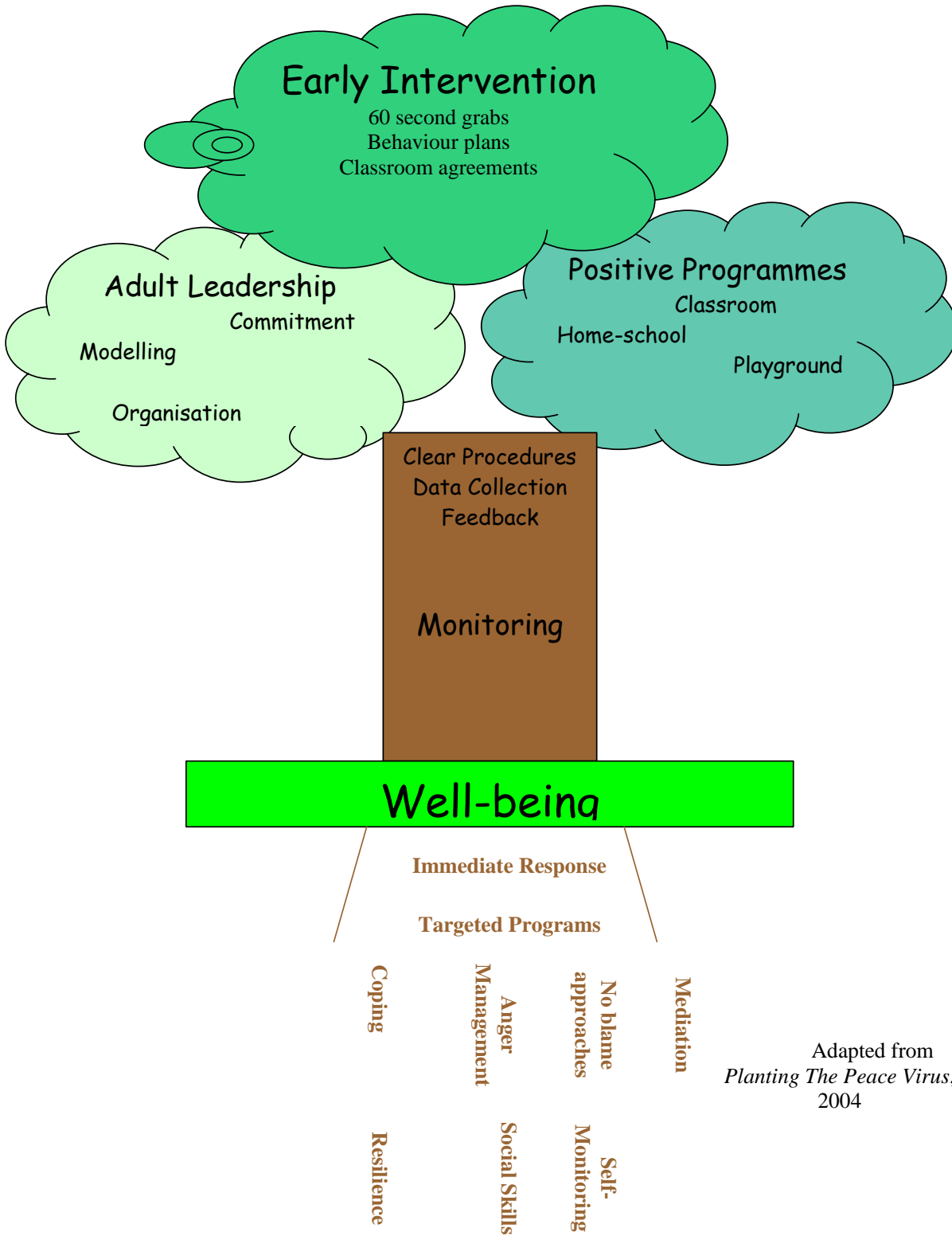
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The Ladder of Conscience Development

<u>CO-OPERATES</u>
<u>C</u> are and Compassion
<u>O</u> penness
<u>O</u> ptimism
<u>P</u> articipation with eyes, ears & hearts
<u>E</u> ncouragement of others
<u>R</u> espect for self & others
<u>A</u> ppreciation of others
<u>T</u> rust & Teamwork
<u>E</u> xcellence
<u>S</u> afety



(Ladder- Reclaiming Children & Youth, 1996, Gibbs, Potter, Golstein & Brendro)



Adapted from
Planting The Peace Virus,
2004

Principles that guide this policy:

These principles guide the way we work for the wellbeing of our community. They enable us to work flexibly with each other to develop and enhance positive relationships.

1. *Pastoral care is a responsibility shared by all members of the OLOR community*

Effective education of children is a partnership between school staff and parents. Positive interactions and relationships between parents, community members, staff and students are important to the wellbeing of all. At OLOR we acknowledge that our parents are the first and most important educators of their children. Together we nurture Catholic values and social responsibility.

2. *Positive caring relationships are developed and maintained by the use of Connecting Habits*

Wherever and whenever members of our community are together, in formal or informal situations, we expect all members of our school community, teachers, children and parents, to use the Connecting Habits of:

Caring	Supporting	Contributing	Encouraging
Listening	Trusting	Befriending	Respecting Difference

The use of the disconnecting habits of criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing or rewarding to control are unacceptable at OLOR.

3. *Behaviour has a positive focus, describing what we want for our children- quality behaviour- and how we support its development*

Our Mission Statement says, *'the gift of God's love for us is central to our relationships,'* and quality behaviour is based on quality relationships. As we live out our mission to nurture our children into a community of disciples of Jesus, we are concerned with the dignity and integral growth of each child. As members of a hope filled community, we are here to help our children succeed. We have high expectations of every child and we believe that every child can succeed.

4. *We teach for self-discipline and emotional and social development*

We have a whole school approach to developing self-discipline and responsibility in our students. Our focus is on the development of social and emotional learning. At Our Lady of the Rosary, discipline is seen as a developmental path for acquiring skills and competencies. Learning positive social skills and competencies takes place within the broader context of collaborative learning across the curriculum.

5. *Cooperative Learning*

Cooperative learning is about working together to accomplish shared goals. For cooperative learning to work well there need to be five key elements:

1. Positive interdependence (We sink or swim together)
2. Face-to-face interaction
3. Individual accountability and personal responsibility to achieve the group's goals
4. Specific interpersonal and small-group skills (which are taught)
5. Group processing to improve the group's future reflection

6. *Moving beyond compliance to an understanding of community*

Our focus is to develop within each student an understanding of community and how to act responsibly towards self and others. Meeting students' needs is the foundation of our approach to quality behaviour and is based on Choice Theory, an internal theory of human behaviour. We believe that all behaviour is purposeful in order to meet basic needs of:

Love and Belonging
 Personal Power
 Fun
 Freedom
 Survival

We explicitly teach students social and collaborative skills and how to get their basic needs met in responsible ways. Children are taught that mistakes are a natural part of learning. Students are provided with opportunities to make choices within boundaries and those boundaries widen as the children develop their repertoire of responsible behaviours. We do this individually, within classrooms, and at whole school levels.

Strategies that promote the well-being of all at OLOR:

Our Shared Values

From K-6, at OLOR, we have shared values which provide teachers and children with the language to discuss behaviour in a consistent way. These values form the basis of agreements for responsible behaviour in each classroom, and provide the focus for reflection about any behaviour. We act justly, showing compassion and respect by:

- Listening to each other with our ears, our eyes and our hearts
- Appreciating each other, because each person is important (Dignity)
- Looking after each other to make sure that everyone feels safe and is safe (Compassion)
- Including everyone because everyone belongs (Inclusion)
- Helping each other so that everyone can learn

Our commitment to these values therefore means that at OLOR every child has the right to be safe and to feel safe: physically, psychologically and emotionally.

Developing Social and Emotional Wellbeing

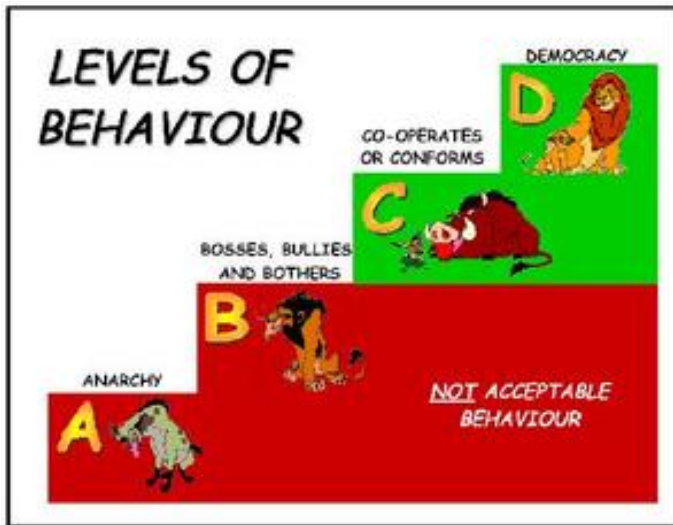
Social literacy is highlighted within all areas of the curriculum. Care, respect, cooperation and diversity are promoted by pro-active strategies for emotional and social development. The strategies at OLOR include:

- Cooperative Learning structures e.g. 'Think/Pair/Share'
- APEEL Program (A Partnership Encouraging Effective Learning)
- Tribes strategies e.g. Community Circle
- Developmental Play (in Kinder)
- Class Meetings
- Model of Student Leadership including cross-age buddies
- Dads in School eg. Men in the Morning
- Rock and Water Program

- Kids Space (optional lunchtime group)

The Raising Responsibility System

The Raising Responsibility System provides a concrete model for children to support them when reflecting on behaviour and provides parents, teachers and students with a common language to describe behaviour.



If a student's behaviour is unacceptable, teachers support them to develop a behaviour plan which will enable them to learn and practise an acceptable replacement behaviour. If appropriate, teachers will also negotiate a consequence for the behaviour with the child.

The process for managing incidents will always follow procedural fairness guidelines. See Appendices.

Corporal punishment is illegal in NSW, and is never used at Our Lady of the Rosary School. At no time do we sanction the use of corporal punishment by parents.

Developing a Behaviour Plan

At OLOR a behaviour plan enables children to demonstrate behaviour that will meet their needs effectively in socially responsible ways. All plans need to be:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Responsive and
- Time framed.

A plan can be verbal or written and its purpose is to help the child succeed, with the support and encouragement of the teacher. Plans can be developed for relatively simple to more complex behaviours. The major focus of any behaviour plan is to educate the student to internalise and practise the skills of responsible behaviours.

Teachers and parents are encouraged to meet and work together to support any behaviour plan. We recognise that on occasions, children may need a referral to an outside agency for learning or behavioural issues. Such a referral would be part of a consultation process between the school,

Catholic Schools Office and parents. See Support Documents for relevant forms.

Promoting Staff Well-being

Well-being of all staff is an important component of OLOR's Pastoral Care Policy. When the needs of staff are effectively met, the needs of students are met more effectively.

We have a commitment to promote an emotionally and physically safe environment. This supportive setting encourages staff well-being and resilience. The school follows procedures outlined in the diocesan Complaints Handling Policy. Copies of this are available on request.

Supporting staff with specific students who are experiencing difficulties

As a staff we have shared responsibility to support one another and develop positive programs for managing children who are experiencing specific learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties/disorders.

Interagency meetings enable the school staff and parents to develop programs to support these children.

Professional Learning

The development of quality behaviour is a responsibility we all share. To support our whole school approach, we are committed to ongoing professional learning and staff training. All staff will have the opportunity to attend the Basic Intensive Training week in Choice Theory/ Reality Therapy/Lead Management as part of our induction process. Teachers are encouraged and supported to gain further qualifications in Choice Theory.

To support ongoing learning a minimum of two staff meetings per year is devoted to further up-skilling with a consultant from the Glasser Institute.

Celebrating Success

At OLOR we celebrate success by showing true appreciation of the children's and staff members' achievements and endeavours. Celebrations happen in a variety of ways: individually, class and whole school. We express appreciation that is:

Timely
Relevant
Unconditional and
Enthusiastic.

As part of the Diocese of Broken Bay, OLOR is bound by the guidelines for major disciplinary sanctions for the Diocese. A copy is available on request.

Related Policies

Commonwealth:

Commonwealth Safe Schools' Framework

Diocesan:

Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Student Discipline Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Anti-Bullying Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Anti-Harassment Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Complaints Handling Policy & Procedures for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Drug Education & Management Policy for the Diocesan School System

Manual Handling & Lifting/Transferring of Students Policy in Diocesan Systemic Schools

First Aid Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Medication Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Occupational Health & Safety Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Creating Safe & Supportive School Environments -Child Protection Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Privacy Policy for Diocesan Systemic Schools

Acceptable Use Policy for Internet/Intranet and Network Services in the Diocesan School System

Related OLOR Policies and Statements

Occupational Health and Safety Policy for Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School

Medication Policy for Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School

Occupational Health and Safety Purchasing Policy for Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School

First Aid Policy for Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary School

Staff Handbook

Parent Handbook

Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2009.

This policy complies with the National Safe Schools Framework Guiding Principals.

References

Catholic Education Commission. (2003). *Guidelines for Pastoral Care in Catholic Schools*. New South Wales. pg. 6

Hromek, R. (2004) *Planting the Peace Virus*. Anthony Rowe Ltd, United Kingdom. pg 6.

Marshall, M. (2002). *Discipline without Stress, Punishments or Rewards*. Piper Press, California.

McGrath, H and Noble, T. (2006). *Bullying Solutions. Evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools*. Pearson Education Australia, Frenchs Forest.

Rigby, K. (2001) *Stop the Bullying. A Handbook for Schools*. The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd. Victoria. P6

Support Documents

1. 'CO-OPERATES' Rubric	Page 12
2. A Safe School (Anti-Bullying) Statement	Page 13
3. An Overview of Bullying Prevention and Management	Page 15
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7. Parent Permission Form for Release of Information	Page 19
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10. Family Information Referral Form	Page 23
11. Referral Form for Counselling/Behaviour	Page 25
12. Class Meeting Outline	Page 27
13. Scope and Sequence of teaching about Basic Needs	(still in development)

<u>CO-OPERATES</u>	D Democracy (Principles)	C Co-operation Conformity	B Bossing/ Bullying/Breaking Boundaries	A Anarchy
Care & Compassion	Inviting others Welcoming	Doing & wanting acknowledgment	Excluding others Using Put downs	Messing up others' games
Openness	Being honest Being assertive Holding to Principles	Saying the right things "Talking the talk"	Covering up for self and others Blaming	Denying Having a "Who cares" attitude
Optimism	Being happy and friendly Having courage to take risks Being assertive	being happy in own friendship groups Being someone who doesn't want to "rock the boat"	Being negative Rejecting others Having a Fatalistic approach	being totally self absorbed Being Ego- centric
Participation with eyes, ears & hearts	Actively making decisions in collaboration with others Encouraging others to participate	Encouraging friends Play only with their own friendship groups Bows to peer pressure	Putting down others for participating Imposing decisions "Firing the bullets"	"Loading the bullets" Acting like "Might is right"
Encouragement of others	Displaying empathy Encouraging others Looking after & including others	Encouraging the children in their own friendship groups Wanting attention being a teacher pleaser	Lacking enthusiasm Saying "This is boring"	Using Put downs Destroying others work and games Disrespecting
Respect for self & others	Using names Making Eye Contact Using the 3 P's Producing Quality work Demonstrating confidence Maintaining open body language	Doing it when a teachers looking – they want recognition for doing the right thing...what's in it for me? Following teachers direction when asked	Taking people's things Pushing in Being Loud Dominating Making put-downs across the classroom Littering...not putting anything away	Stealing Destroying things Swearing Hurting others Ruining the Environment
Appreciation of others	Complimenting others Appreciating others Accepting others Using appreciation statements	Doing it because "I was told to" Compliance Saying something nice to friends	Staying quiet Being apathetic Hearing selectively	Being rude about achievements Heckling Using stand- over tactics for Special Needs chn
Trust & Teamwork	Communicating Playing fairly Including others Being honest Togetherness Taking messages, getting equipment out, etc Accepting Feedback	Including friends in team selection Being acknowledged for doing the right thing Pleasing others	Complaining Wanting their own way Excluding others from the group Not sharing Using Put downs	Disrupting the group Being hurtful to others Destroying others work Dominating the situation
Excellence	Presenting Quality work Being Honest Self-evaluating Striving to do their best Going the extra step	Doing work to please others Doing enough to get by Only feeling worthwhile if recognised Doing as requested	Complaining Saying "I'm Bored" Asking "Why?" Doing enough to avoid the pain	Refusing Not trying Not participating Only doing what they want to do
Safety	Understanding game rules Supporting others Standing up for others...being assertive	Complying with rules Conforming	Pushing Shoving	Being violent Fighting Intimidating

A Safe School (Anti-Bullying) Policy

At OLOR we believe that all members of the community have a right to a learning and work environment free from intimidation, humiliation and hurt. We all share a responsibility to create a culture of caring which does not tolerate bullying. These protocols provide clear and agreed procedures and strategies to respond to any bullying behaviours which might occur and to protect and support all parties involved.

What is Bullying? (McGrath & Noble, 2006)

Bullying IS	Bullying IS NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberate and repeated in a broad range of contexts (refusing to work with them, sit near them etc) Deliberate (neither incidental nor accidental) attacks which cause distress at the time and the threat of future attacks Directed towards a specific person or group eg. gender, ethnicity or friendship A repeated pattern of harassment An imbalance and misuse of power between the recipient and those bullying Unreasonable and unjustified Direct and/or indirect and takes on the forms of verbal, gestural, physical and relational abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A disagreement between students where both have the same power When students decide not to be friends with someone anymore in a social situation. Single-episode or random acts of meanness, intimidation or violence <p>(These behaviours are also not acceptable at OLOR)</p>

Bullying behaviours can be classified in the following way:

	Direct	Indirect
Verbal Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verbal insults Unfair criticism and blaming Name calling Sarcasm Put-downs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuading another person to criticise or insult someone Spreading malicious rumours Anonymous phone calls, sms, emails or instant messages (cyber bullying)
Gestural Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatening or obscene gestures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberate turning away or averting one's gaze to ignore
Physical Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Striking Throwing things Using a weapon Removing and hiding belongings Playing nasty practical jokes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting another person to assault someone
Relational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forming coalitions against 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Persuading people to exclude someone

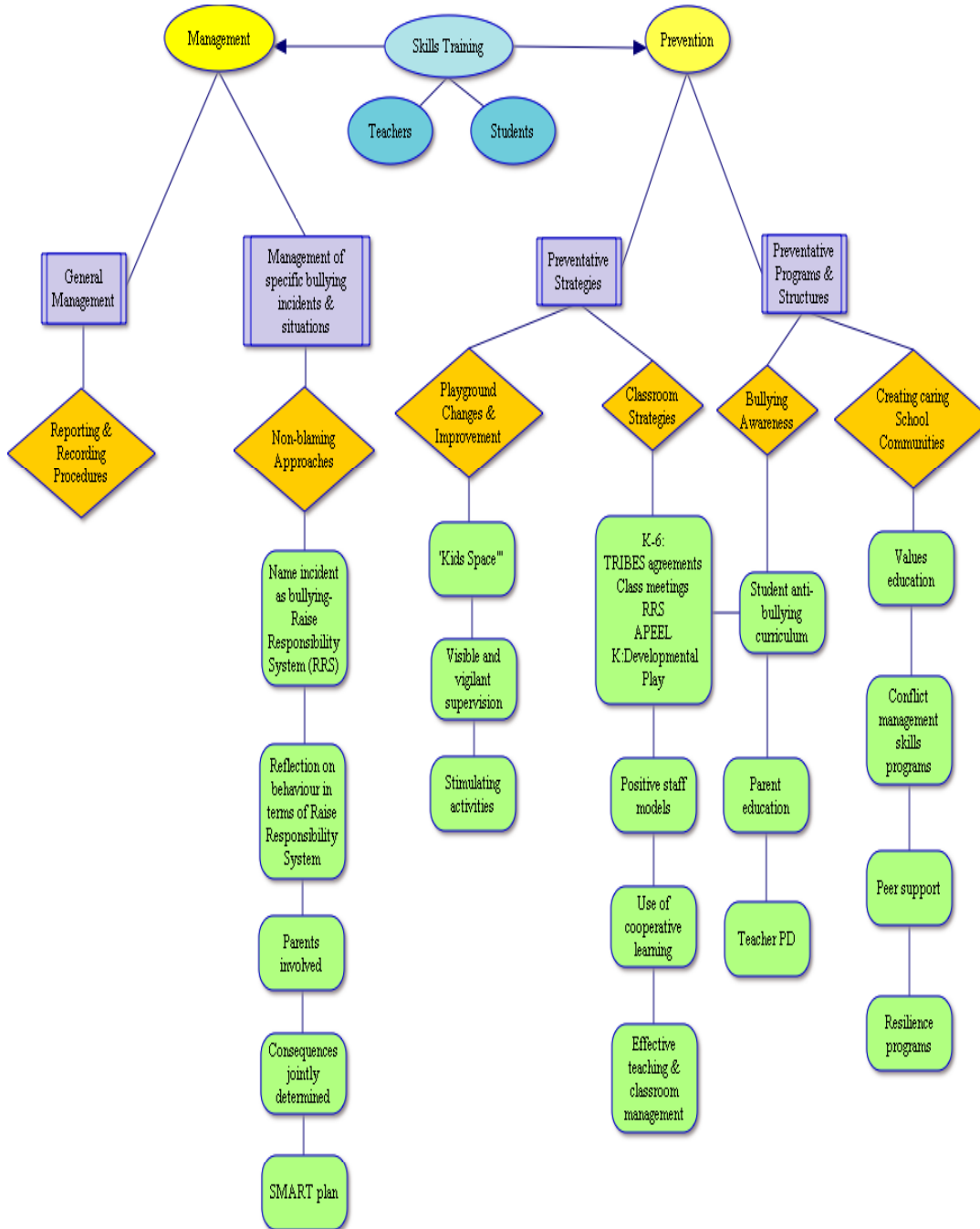
Bullying	someone	
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Our Responsibilities

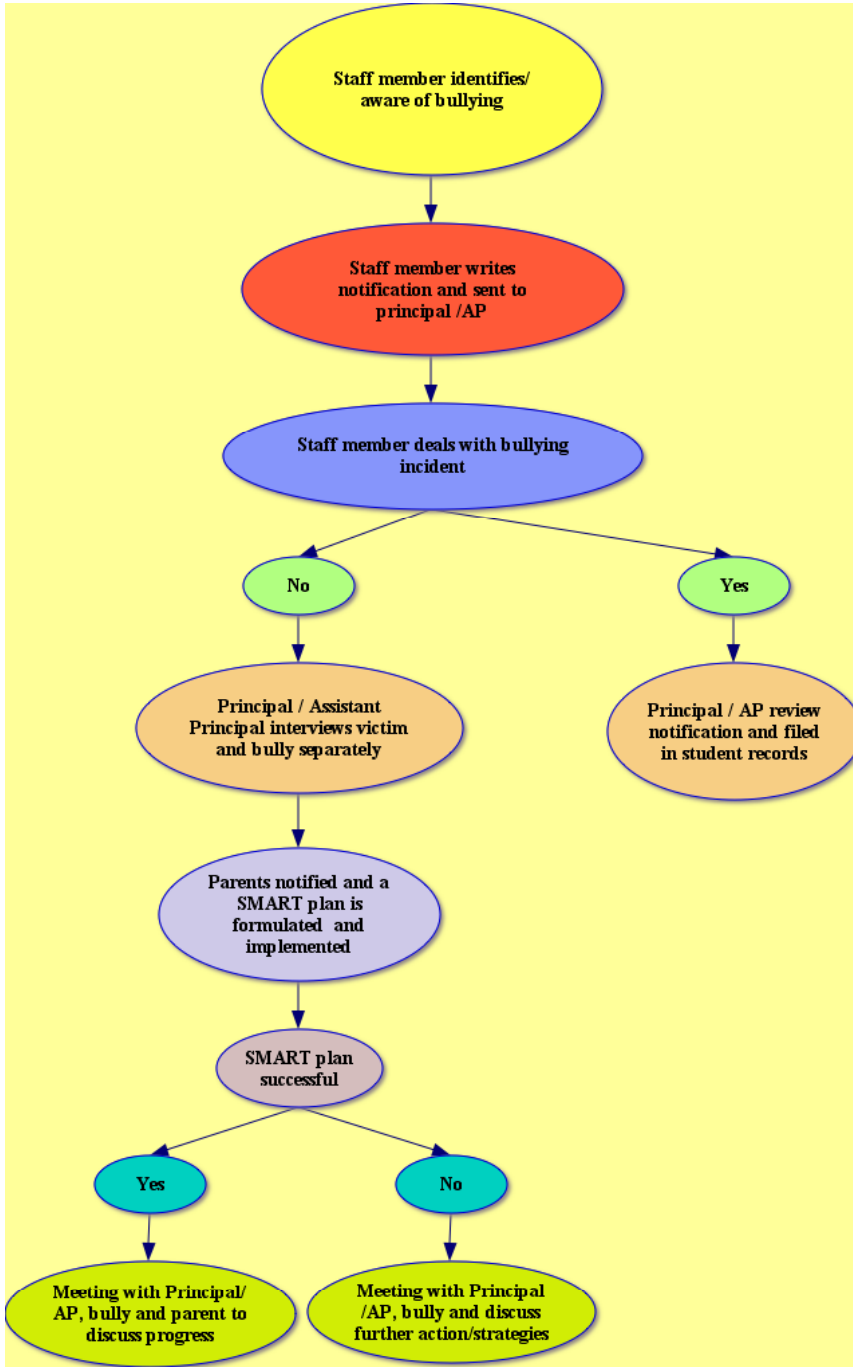
Ultimately, strategies to minimise and prevent bullying will only be effective when placed within the context of a culture in which respect for others is consistently taught and demonstrated across all facets of school life. Our Catholic values, which represent the antithesis of bullying, must be continually affirmed in words and actions. The following are the responsibilities of all in the OLOR community to prevent bullying:

<u>Responsibilities of Staff</u>	<u>Responsibilities of Students</u>	<u>Responsibilities of Parents</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Moral education' in the context of religious education, liturgies and assemblies where the value of the individual is affirmed and the importance of qualities such as compassion, kindness, reconciliation, tolerance, respect and justice are encouraged. ○ Provide opportunities for the children to observe, learn and apply the Connecting Habits. ○ Teach the basic needs and how the behaviour relates to the Raising Responsibility System. ○ Teach values 'across the curriculum' teaching (eg looking at the problem of prejudice within the context of a picture book/novel, or Inquiry Unit). ○ Clear statements from staff about the nature and unacceptability of bullying. ○ Use class meetings to discuss issues related to the children and formulate agreements. This open communication allows for an agreed class view of the issue (eg bullying) and ways/strategies that can be applied by the children. This 'ownership' of the issue promotes a commitment by all to follow the agreements. ○ Teach aspects of the PDHPE curriculum specifically related to bullying. ○ Teaching more positive ways of resolving conflict, such as working co-operatively within the classroom and playground, using I-messages. ○ Staff and students as role models, particularly those in leadership roles such as peer support, school captains, house captains, SRC, Year 6 Team Leaders, Year 5 Buddies. ○ Measures for vigilant classroom and playground supervision, especially of "high risk" areas. ○ Provide safe and structured playground areas (Kids Space). ○ Provide activities which develop a culture of caring for one another and acknowledging the worth and contribution of others and which help to develop compassion (Peer Support, SRC, Community days - fundraisers, etc). ○ Provide appropriate counselling or other support services. ○ Provision of support for parents through information seminars, support networks. ○ Develop and implement SMART plans that help the child practise a replacement behaviour that will meet their needs effectively in socially responsible ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Help fellow students who have problems related with bullying. ○ Look out for students who are having problems with others. ○ Provide staff with information about ongoing bully/victim problems. ○ Initially ignore the bullying and not show that it is upsetting. Many bullies will stop if they do not elicit a response. ○ Confront the bully and let him/her know that his/her behaviour is unwanted and unjustified through the use of I-Messages. ○ Discuss the problem with friends and parents, who may be able to assist with strategies to deal with the problem. ○ Notify their class teacher/or teacher on duty. ○ Apply the Connecting Habits when interacting with others. ○ Assess behaviour using the Raising Responsibility System. ○ Acknowledge the role they play in modelling the Connecting Habits and the Raising Responsibility System for fellow students. ○ Commit to the agreements made during class meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage your child to talk if you suspect they are being bullied at school or are bullying others. ○ Make sure your child knows that being bullied is not their fault. ○ Listen carefully and sympathetically. ○ Let your child know that bullying in any form is never acceptable. Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously. ○ Don't call your child names, like "weak, sook, wuss". Don't tell them "not to worry, to forget it, to toughen up". ○ Use the Connecting Habits with your child. If the bullying is verbal, help your child develop the skills to ignore it so that the student who bullies does not get the satisfaction of a reaction. ○ Practise the way to walk past looking confident with head up and use quick (not insulting) responses. ○ Explore alternative courses of action (acting more assertively, talking to a teacher etc). ○ Avoid the urge to take everything into your own hands unless absolutely necessary, as this will make your child feel less in control. ○ Help your child feel good about the other things in their life. Enhance their self-esteem. ○ The recipient and witness/es of the bullying may need further support to develop strategies to overcome the situation. The class teacher will seek to involve the parents in the formulation of a SMART plan and its monitoring. ○ Cooperate with the school in implementing the appropriate procedures for dealing with bullying.

An Overview of Bullying Prevention and Management



A Safe School- Action Plan



Incident Report

<u>Incident Report Form</u>	
Date _____	Teacher _____
Duty _____	
Name(s) of those involved	Class
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Rough play	<input type="checkbox"/> Swearing
<input type="checkbox"/> Teasing	<input type="checkbox"/> Excluding
<input type="checkbox"/> Fighting	<input type="checkbox"/> Violence
<input type="checkbox"/> Disobeying Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Further details _____	

<input type="checkbox"/> Solved on the playground	
<input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up required	
Follow up action _____	

The report forms are carried in teacher first aid 'bum-bags' to record incidents during playground duties. Once completed they are placed in the Principal's pigeonhole for notification and data collection.

Basic elements of procedural fairness when dealing with student discipline include:

1. Students need to be treated with respect and dignity and to know what is expected of them. The school enacts codes of conduct and rules that are clear and well communicated.
2. In accordance with school policy, a student who is accused of breaching a rule will be notified of that of which he/she is accused, with the essential facts of what he/she is alleged to have done.
3. An accused student will be given an opportunity to tell his/her side of the story. The right to be heard is a fundamental element of procedural fairness. Where the stakes are minor, this can be satisfied by the principal or teacher asking the student to explain her/his actions. More serious matters require more formal investigation and documentation.
4. The student and parent should be informed of any appeal or review procedure in accordance with school policy. Some form of appeal, e.g., to the principal or Catholic Schools Office, will be provided for, depending on the severity of the discipline.
5. There should be an assurance of no retribution for pursuing an appeal or review.



Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Broken Bay

Caroline Chisholm Centre
Building 2, 423 Pennant Hills Road
PO Box 967 Pennant Hills
NSW 1715
Tel (02) 9847 0000
Fax (02) 9847 0001
mail@cso.brokenbay.catholic.edu.au

**PARENT PERMISSION FORM FOR
RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

To: _____
[School Name and Suburb]

*I/We give permission for confidential information to be requested/released by
Special Needs personnel from the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay
concerning my/our son/daughter:*

[Name of Son/Daughter]

If you wish to limit the above release in any way, please give details below:

Name and Address of Parent/Guardian:

Signature/s: _____
[Parent/Guardian]

Date: _____



**Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Broken Bay**

Caroline Chisholm Centre
Building 2, 423 Pennant Hills Road
PO Box 967 Pennant Hills
NSW 1715
Tel (02) 9847 0000
Fax (02) 9847 0001
mail@cso.brokenbay.catholic.edu.au

**PARENT PERMISSION FORM FOR
INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT**

School Name & Suburb: _____

Dear _____
[Name of Parent/Guardian]

The following Education services are offered by the Catholic Schools Office:

- **Individual Speech & Language Assessment** - *by a Speech Pathologist;*
- **Individual Ability/Education Assessment** - *by an Educational/Clinical Psychologist;*
- **Individual Motor/Movement Assessment** - *by an Occupational Therapist.*

*In order for your child _____ to benefit from these services
[Name of Child]
we need your written permission.*

Yours sincerely

[Principal]

I/We give permission for my/our child _____ to be assessed by:
[Name of Child]

- a Speech Pathologist
- an Educational/Clinical Psychologist
- an Occupational Therapist

My/our private health fund will contribute to the above: **Yes:** _____ **No:** _____

Signature/s: _____ Date: _____
[Parent/Guardian]

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR PLAN FOR: _____

From: _____

To: _____

Strengths	Key Needs/Difficulties

Outcomes	Targets	Teaching Strategies
1)		
2)		
3)		

General Strategies [eg, help from parents/pastoral care/medical requirements/peer support/teaching non-teaching support/rewards/sanctions/curricular

Sample Individual Behaviour Plan

(this will differ according to audience and purpose)

Child's Name: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Timeframed

SMART Goal/s:	Strategies to help achieve goal	If goal not achieved, then...
1.		
2.		
3.		

This plan will be reviewed on _____

Signed: _____ (child) _____ (parent)

Date _____

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

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Class Meetings

We have a video of some major aspects of class meetings filmed at OLOR on the school server. Teachers are encouraged to view this brief snapshot as a refresher.

Physical Environment

Wherever possible the class sits in a tight knit circle, either sitting on the floor or on chairs. Teachers are at the same height as the students.

Structure of a class meeting

- 1) Define the issue/problem eg. "I think the issue is..."
- 2) Personalise the issue/problem – eg. "When...I felt..." or "I have..."
- 3) Challenge – eg. "I think we should..." or "We could try..." Other children give thumbs up or down to new ideas/suggestions
- 4) Reflection

Teacher's Role

The teacher acts as facilitator, and does not make judgements about contributions. He/She is also a participant in the meeting and therefore can contribute their own ideas and feelings.

Rules for Class Meetings

- We listen to, and respect, others in the meeting
- We talk about actions not people
- We take turns (talking sticks are helpful here)
- We acknowledge others' positions
- We only give a thumbs down if we can suggest an alternative

The following is some information from Dr Marvin Marshall. For the entire article, please visit the website -

http://www.marvinmarshall.com/pdf/promoting_learning/classroom_meetings.pdf

Classroom meetings differ from usual class discussions in that, to some extent, *the process is the point*. As suggested, these meetings not only give ownership of the class to the students, they facilitate the development of skills. In addition, classroom meetings provide a venue to gain understanding of how other people think and feel—two necessary aspects of getting along with others. A prime reason why class meetings assist in the development of social skills is that they use procedures of civility. Put-downs, snide remarks, or untimely giggles are not appropriate or acceptable. Courtesies that are used include respect for the opinions of others whether or not you agree with them, acknowledging others' positions, listening attentively, making constructive rather than destructive contributions, taking turns, and not interrupting others when they are speaking. Although these procedures are reviewed at the beginning of each meeting, once they have become thoroughly internalized and are regularly observed, it is only necessary to mention them periodically or when there is an infringement.

Class Meetings (cont'd)

Purposes and Objectives

Some meetings have specific purposes such as instructional reflection, discussing pertinent items, articulating and applying the values that schools engender toward civility and character development, and solving problems.

Specific objectives for classroom meetings include the following:

- Improving communication skills of listening and speaking
- Providing opportunities for insightful, creative, and critical thinking
- Learning the process of respectful interaction and promoting teamwork
- Increasing social intelligence such as empathy
- Fostering social skills such as reducing shyness
- Enhancing aspects of character education such as being trustworthy and fair
- Reducing anonymity and promoting feelings of acceptance and being worthwhile
- Building a trusting and caring relationship between teacher and student and among students themselves
- Creating and maintaining an open, trusting atmosphere for risk-taking in learning
- Creating a sense of community by increasing class cohesiveness
- Providing a channel for relevancy where students talk about subjects which interest, affect, or concern them

Structure of a Class Meeting

Most meetings should have three parts in addition to rehearsing the procedures at the beginning and, on some occasions, summarizing at the end. The first part is *defining the topic* to be sure that everyone understands the issue or topic so that everyone talks about the same thing. The second part, *personalizing*, gives participants the opportunity to relate the topic to their own knowledge and experiences. The third part has to do with *challenging*, which provides an opportunity for the teacher to stretch the students' minds by applying the ideas through hypothetical questions or situations. In problem-solving meetings, the third part, *challenging*, should be designed to facilitate a solution to the problem.

Closing the Meeting

A final aspect of the leader's role is to use reflection to bring the discussion to a positive close.

Sometimes it will be necessary to summarize the discussion, draw out the consensus, or clearly state the final agreed solution in a problem solving discussion. Examples are, "The main ideas expressed today are. . . ." "It seems that most people think. . . ." "Have we agreed that. . . ?" "I think we will have to disagree because there are so many different ideas." Following are additional reflective techniques:

- Keepers - "Name one thing you want to *keep* from the meeting." or "Restate something that was said that you thought was a good point—even if you didn't agree with it?" Have students share with a partner or share it in the circle.
- Complete a sentence - Invite all to complete a sentence, e.g., "At the end of this meeting, I hope. . . ."
- Silence - "Take a minute to think about today's meeting such as a new idea or something you will do differently as a result of our discussion. If you would like, take a moment to write it down."
- Post Mortem - Share a few comments asking, "What did you like about today's meeting? "What made it a good discussion?" "What could or should we do differently next time?"

Evaluation

After each class meeting, the teacher should evaluate or reflect on the meeting in order for skills (both of students and teacher) to be continually improved. Some considerations are:

- Am I becoming more comfortable and skillful at questioning and leading/facilitating discussions?
- Are the students expressing and supporting their own opinions?