



# St Joseph's Catholic School

Queenstown

## Cyberbullying Policy

### **RATIONALE**

Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide educational and workplace environments that promote dignity and respect of everyone within the entire school community. Cyberbullying, like all forms of bullying, must not be tolerated in the school and as it pertains to relationships between school community members; it erodes the rights and the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual and social well-being of individuals. Therefore, bullying in all its forms must be challenged when identified.

### **Definition**

*Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.* (Definition that has been adopted by the Federal Government's Australian Communications and Media Authority)

Cyberbullying:

- Can be difficult to escape and is invasive, potentially occurring 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly disseminated to a large audience.
- Can provide the bully with a degree of anonymity.

### **AIMS**

- To provide clarity of definition to all members of the school community, including the implementation of regular information communications on important educative aspects of cyber safety.

- To highlight the duty of care obligations held by the school in ensuring it takes reasonable care to protect all in the school community from cyberbullying – duty of care can extend outside of normal school hours where a school authority becomes aware that a member of the school community may be harmed by their association with the school.
- To ensure effective and appropriate monitoring of school practices relevant to this policy are implemented, including an annual 'Acceptable Use Agreement' is signed by all students and staff and relevant others.

## **PROCEDURES**

- The school will ensure students and parents are regularly informed of cybersafety news and strategies, and ensure students and staff sign an ICT Acceptable Use Agreement annually.
- Any concern held by any member of the school community regarding cyberbullying must be raised in a timely manner with the school principal, who will then undertake a thorough investigation. The school Grievance Policy provides a structure for any investigation, unless of a very serious nature, in which case, police may be involved immediately.
- It is important for the victim of cyberbullying to retain and keep evidence of any cyberbullying to assist with any investigation.
- The alleged perpetrator/s of cyberbullying will be invited to cooperate with investigations and challenged accordingly and appropriately; offences by students will be dealt with under the school Behaviour Management Policy.
- Support for the victim/s of cyberbullying will be pursued along the usual lines of referral i.e. in-house counselling by a senior staff member or school counsellor; referrals to external agencies such as Health West may also be initiated.
- Police will be contacted immediately in cases of possible serious threats to life or physical well-being or where a child protection offence has occurred.

*This policy and procedures will be reviewed as part of St Joseph's Catholic School review cycle.*

*Implemented June 2011*