

# SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL

Teachers, students and parents are committed to the following ideals for all members of the Danebank Community.

- Creating a safe and secure school where students are able to learn in a supportive and motivating environment which is free from harassment and violence.
- Striving for a sense of connection to each other and the school.
- Caring for each other at all times.
- Treating each other with respect and equality.
- Respecting the possessions and privacy of others.
- Following the School's Code of Behaviour.
- Considering how behaviour will impact others and modify behaviour accordingly.
- Using words and actions to encourage and build one another up.
- Being accountable for behaviour.
- Acknowledging mistakes and learning from them.
- Striving to be authentic and seek the truth.

Danebank strives to clearly articulate and acknowledge these ideals to the students and the wider Danebank Community. This message is reinforced weekly in Chapel Services, in pastoral care programmes, in Christian Studies, in our classrooms, our professional development curriculum, through the news sheet and school website. The school will investigate, clarify, articulate, and resolve issues that arise in the school when there has been a breach in the commitment to these ideals. Behaviour such as relational aggression, sexual harassment or violence is unacceptable behaviour and does not fit the ideals of the school.

## AGGRESSION AMONGST GIRLS

Girls engage more often in aggressive behaviour towards each other which is covert, subtle and socially sophisticated. This behaviour is referred to as "relational aggression". Relational aggression can result in harmful physical, social and emotional outcomes for all involved. An aggressive act can be present if the following behaviours are displayed:

- A hurtful action by the aggressor.
- An imbalance of power between the aggressor and the target where power is used unjustly.
- Repetitive (typically).
- Sense of oppression on the part of the target.

This aggressive behaviour can occur face to face, in a group or through the use of technology. However, in general, girls do not often use physical aggression.

Examples of behaviours that are considered relational aggression include:

- Talking nastily about the target, spreading rumours, breaking confidences, using code names to talk about the target.
- Exclusion: from low scale ignoring to more serious exclusion from the group and ultimately ostracism by the friendship group.
- Indirect harassment - aggression through SMS, online messaging and social networking sites where gossip, rumour, hurtful messages are uploaded about the target which are slanderous.
- Hiding or destroying someone's personal property.
- Use of non-verbal behaviours - huddling together to exclude others, using stares to intimidate.
- Attacking the target in covert ways through a third person in order to conceal the aggressive intent or otherwise pretend that the attack was not aggressive at all.

## PREVENTING RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

The school is committed to undertaking the following steps to prevent acts of relational aggression:

- **Name the behaviour.** Educate students to recognise relational aggressive behaviours thus removing the covertness of this type of behaviour among girls. Ensure the students are made aware of the damaging impact of relational aggression. In this way we are encouraging accountability for the behaviour.
- **Develop empathy.** Develop skills to help girls resolve interpersonal difficulties.
- **Teach assertiveness and problem solving skills and communication skills.** Help girls to be more straight forward in resolving interpersonal difficulties.
- **Provide positive role models.** Use older students/teachers/mentors who can demonstrate positive social skills to the students. Have these people be accessible to the students for advice/help.

# SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL

- **Develop strategies to examine feelings.** Develop students' capacity to examine their negative feelings such as jealousy and anxiety. Encourage them to develop skills to manage these feelings so as not to hurt others.
- **Encourage forgiveness.**
- **Build self esteem.** Help students to find their unique, God-given gifts and talents.
- **A zero tolerance approach to relational aggression.** Students must learn that threatening to not be someone's friend anymore, sighing, eye rolling, and exclusion are not to be tolerated. This social educational message must begin from Pre-K and be reinforced regularly.
- **Development of a School-wide approach to dealing with relational aggression. *This includes:*** Professional development, seminars for parents, school wide promotion of the safe and supportive school message and positive behaviour messages, provision of lessons and information to students for awareness and for skill development to prevent of relational problems. Provide support and skill development for students involved in relational aggression situations.

## DEALING WITH RELATIONAL AGGRESSION

When dealing with relational aggression age appropriate consequences will be applied. There are normally 3 parties involved in an act of relational aggression: The aggressor, the bystander and the target. A child may be the aggressor in one situation, but may be the target in another situation and maybe a bystander in yet a different situation. When an incident of relational aggression is brought to the attention of the school, the following steps will occur.

1. The incident will be investigated by the Class teacher, Year Coordinator, Deputy Principal, Pastoral Care or Head of Junior School.
2. All parties (the target, the aggressor and all bystanders) will be interviewed independently and all viewpoints will be listened to impartially. The protocols of procedural fairness will be followed.
3. If deemed appropriate, and the target agrees, target conferencing will be implemented.

## RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT AGGRESSOR

If the student is found to have engaged in an act of relational aggression, she will be asked to complete the following steps:

**Restitution:** Apologise and make effort to remedy what has happened.

**Resolution:** Develop a plan to prevent the same behaviour happening again.

**Reconciliation:** Find a way to heal the hurt. If necessary, the student will also be referred for further counselling or may have sanctions put in place by the school.

## THE BYSTANDER

All bystanders involved will be counselled regarding the role they played in the incident and given guidance as to how to respond in a more appropriate way that supports the target of the relational aggression in the future.

## THE TARGET

The target will be counselled and closely monitored and supported by the school. She will be given practical support with coping mechanisms and strategies and will receive counselling if required.

*The aim of any intervention is to find a resolution amongst the students which allows the target to feel safe, secure and comfortable at school; for the aggressive student to acknowledge and apologise for the hurt they have caused and for the hurt to be healed.*