Policy title: Bullying, Harassment and Anti-Discrimination

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to prevent or minimise bullying across the school and to ensure that recognised, best-practice procedures and strategies are implemented to manage and resolve harassment, bullying and hurtful discrimination.

Related documents (eg, procedure):

- Addendum to this policy (bullying and harassment)
- Student Protection Policy
- Supporting Students and Teachers’ Wellbeing Policy

Summary overview:

- Complaints about bullying, harassment and discrimination will be taken seriously, investigated and if appropriate, reported to the Educational Administrator. This policy details the exact steps that will be followed.
- All parties involved in a complaint of bullying, harassment and discrimination will be treated fairly with a goal of resolving the complaint as quickly as possible.
- The school will endeavour to protect ‘whistleblowers’ from victimisation.
- Ongoing monitoring by the class teacher/guardian and follow-up by the Educational Administrator will take place within one week after an incident to monitor the behaviour or put in place a follow-up strategy.

Scope:

The policy is applicable to the entire school community and applies:

- on school premises
- at functions, excursions or camps organised by the school
- when members of the school community are representing the school.

Policy details:

The school is committed to offering students and staff members a respectful, safe and supportive learning and working environment that is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. The Board, the Executive, teachers and parents at the school believe that:

- every student and employee is entitled to a learning and working environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination
- the most positive outcome for our students will occur when teachers and parents work together to prevent or limit bullying, harassment and discrimination.
Preventative measures

The school provides staff with education and training to:

- enable them to develop the knowledge, skills and strategies necessary to deal effectively with bullying, harassment and discrimination
- inform students (in age-appropriate ways) of the nature of harassment; its unacceptability and unlawfulness within both the school and the wider community; their rights and responsibilities and the school’s policy
- encourage communication by students – to report bullying/harassment to a trusted adult and their parents
- communicate that it is the expectation of the whole school community (teachers, parents and children) that the policy will be enforced.

The information in this policy will be shared with parents through a variety of methods such as class parent/teacher meetings, the school newsletter, brochures, the parents’ handbook.

Cyber-bullying may be less evident than other forms of bullying to a parent or teacher, but like emotional or social forms of bullying, it can be highly intrusive, hurtful and destructive. The school will educate students about:

- how to use and understand online and mobile phone technologies safely
- the risks and consequences of misusing these technologies
- what to do if they or someone they know are being cyber-bullied.

If they do have a problem, they can talk to the school, parents, the police, the mobile network (for phone) or the Internet Service Provider (ISP) to do something about it. The school has a Network User Policy and agreement that includes clear statements about e-communications.

Legislative context:

The school operates within a state and federal government duty of care and compliance context.

Roles and responsibilities:

The school believes that bullying is best prevented and addressed by parents and teachers working together.

Responsibilities of students

- To behave respectfully towards others and to work through problems fairly
- To refuse involvement in any bullying situations and to support others by speaking up
- To tell a teacher or parent if they see bullying occurring.
Responsibilities of teachers

- To arrive at class rooms on time after breaks
- To foster cooperative learning approaches that promote self-esteem and positive peer relations
- To be thoughtful, courteous and respectful of students at all times
- To help create a culture of ‘We all have a right to feel safe – it’s OK to tell’ instead of ‘Don’t dob’
- To teach students methods for challenging bullying as bystanders
- To make every effort to remove occasions for bullying by active patrolling during supervision duty, and to be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents
- To listen to and take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk.

Responsibilities of parents

- To be supportive of the school’s policies and underlying philosophy, and supportive of teachers in their endeavours to improve student relations and welfare
- To be aware of signs of distress in their child, eg, unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or sickness, requests for extra money, damaged clothing or bruising, behavioural issues eg, emotional outbursts, temper tantrums or depression
- To advise their child to talk with their class teacher, another staff member or a member of the Executive if they experience a bullying incident
- To keep a written account of any bullying relayed to them by their child and to communicate with the school about this
- To encourage their child not to retaliate
- To be willing to attend discussions at the school if their child is involved in a bullying incident.

Consequences of a breach in this policy

The exact action the school will take depends on the situation and age of the students involved. However, the actions outlined below will be followed in an age-appropriate manner.

Step 1

- The class teacher will talk with the students involved, preferably separately and then as a group. An incident report may be created, depending on the seriousness of the situation. (See over page)
- Teachers will initially adopt a ‘no blame’ approach and will attempt to resolve the situation immediately for all parties.
- All or any of the following strategies may be used:
  - A reminder given of the seriousness of bullying
  - Discussions about preventative, self-assertive and supportive strategies
  - A student may be asked to apologise
Those involved may be taken to the Educational Administrator (or delegate) for further discussion.

In the lower Primary School classes, a common method of addressing bullying behaviour involves the perpetrator discussing the incident (with the victim) and apologising. In the upper Primary School and High School, a common method also involves a handwritten apology that describes what the perpetrator will do to heal the feelings of those involved. This is known as a restorative justice approach.

A verbal checking with the students will take place soon after the incident (within a few days).

If the circumstances involve physical harm to a student (physically or emotionally), a letter or incident report will be provided to the student’s parents (same day), and/or if the situation warrants, the parents of the students involved will be telephoned. The Educational Administrator (or delegate) also has the discretion to immediately suspend a student.

**Step 2**
After more than one bullying incident involving the same students, the school will act in partnership with the parents to work through a process aimed at resolving the conflict, where possible. This will occur as soon after the incident as possible. Students involved will be counselled. Suspension, exclusion or expulsion will be at the discretion of the Educational Administrator or delegate.

**Step 3**
Further incidents of bullying may result in suspension from the school.

Following any suspension, a process will be set in place, in partnership with the parents involved, to determine the conditions under which the student may re-enter the school. This may include referral for external counselling or assessment.

If bullying continues to be unresolved, the final result may be exclusion (of up to one term) or expulsion, at the discretion of the Educational Administrator.

The school takes cyber bullying as seriously as other types of bullying and, therefore, will deal with each situation individually. An episode may result in a verbal warning or a parental discussion. Serious cases will result in direct action as described in this policy.

**Complaint resolution process:**

All complaints or grievances will be managed in accordance with the Complaints and Grievances Policy.
Definitions:

What is bullying?
Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyber-bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Conflict or fights between equals, and single incidents, are not defined as bullying.

What is harassment?
Harassment is behaviour that targets an individual or group due to their identity, race, culture or ethnic origin, religion, physical characteristics, gender, sexual orientation, marital, parenting or economic status, age, ability or disability, and that offends, humiliates or creates a hostile environment. Harassment may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour or it may be a single act.

Source: Department of Education and Children’s Services Bullying and harassment at school brochure, September 2011

Other:

The Constitution of the Mount Barker Waldorf School confers on the Board the power to make sub-rules. This policy is a sub-rule of the Constitution and operates as if it were a term of the Constitution.

Recommended resource: www.kenrigby.net.html