Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

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Introduction

We are committed to meeting our Student Duty of Care obligations.

Purpose and Objectives

This Policy describes Mosman Church of England Preparatory School's strategies to prevent students from bullying other students, and how incidents of bullying are to be managed.

Scope

This Policy applies to all School activities, including camps and excursions.

It also applies outside of school hours and off School premises where students have been involved and there is a clear and close connection to the School.

Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for:

- modelling appropriate behaviour at all times
- dealing with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this Policy

- ensuring that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately
- being vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either students who persistently bully or are persistently bullied
- considering whether any behaviour gives rise to concerns that the student exhibiting the behaviour and/or the student subject to the behaviour may be experiencing child abuse or other harm, and, if so, follows the School's procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns
- acknowledging the right of parents/carers to speak with the School if they believe their child is being bullied.

Policy

Mosman Preparatory School is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, to acting in students' best interests and to keeping them safe from harm.

Mosman Preparatory School recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the School are respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at Mosman Preparatory School.

It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a "whole-of-School community" approach involving students, staff and parents/carers
- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within the School on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and respond appropriately
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- we establish procedures for reporting and responding to child safety concerns, including when the behaviour may be an indicator of child abuse and other harm
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or using an object to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Verbal/written bullying:** examples include: name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic.
- **Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying):** examples include deliberate acts of exclusion, spreading rumours or sharing information to have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
- **Cyberbullying** which is the misuse of power within a relationship to repeatedly threaten or harm another person using technology. **Cyberbullying behaviour** may include:
    - abusive texts and emails
    - hurtful messages, images or videos
    - imitating others online
    - excluding others online
    - humiliating others online
    - spreading nasty online gossip and chat
    - creating fake accounts or 'avatars' to trick someone or humiliate them.

Cyberbullying can occur on internet services, social media and electronic services that enable communication including, but not limited to, instant messaging, chat services, email communications, online games, SMS and MMS. It can be verbal or written and can includes images, videos and/or audio.

These behaviours can also be an indicator of child abuse and other harm.

Bullying can be illegal if it involves intimidation, stalking, physical violence, threats of violence or damaging property.

What Is not Bullying?

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- **Mutual Conflict Situations** which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation.
- **One-Off Acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

Signs of Bullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- crying at night and having nightmares
- refusing to talk when asked “What’s wrong?”
- having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school, a school organised activity or reluctance to attend other social events
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of school work
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- appearing lonely or distressed
- beginning to display bullying behaviour towards siblings
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- acting unreasonably.

Students may also not disclose cyberbullying to adults through fear that the adults may overreact and make the situation worse. Signs of cyberbullying to watch out for may include one or more of the behavioural changes outlined above, and/or other signs, including a student:

- being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone
- being hesitant to go online, avoiding their phone or seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- spending unusually long hours online or on their mobile phone
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.

Parents/Carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the School through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a class teacher), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

These behaviours can also be an indicator of child abuse and other harm.

Cyberbullying Material

Cyberbullying material is material that is provided on a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) that an ordinary person reasonable person would conclude is likely to:

- be intended to have an effect on a particular child; and
- have the direct or indirect effect on the child as seriously threatening, seriously intimidating, seriously harassing or seriously humiliating the child,
- can be the subject of complaint to the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act.

Procedures

Preventing Bullying

Mosman Preparatory School takes a proactive, whole-of-School approach to preventing bullying and before it occurs, embedding respectful relationships education and a positive culture across the curriculum and daily practice.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a “no-bullying” culture within the School:

- The development of this Policy and related anti-bullying processes with involvement from students, parents/carers, staff and the School community.
- A structured curriculum and peer group support system that provides students with age-appropriate education on respectful relationships, social and emotional skills, online safety and bullying (including cyberbullying), over the course of the academic year.
- Leadership embedding anti-bullying and behavioural expectations across all aspects of School operations and culture.
- Setting and enforcing clear behavioural expectations for students, including informing them of their rights, responsibilities and expected conduct.
- Role-modelling of respectful, courteous behaviour by staff in all interactions with students, colleagues and the community, reinforcing the standards of conduct the School expects of its students.
- The provision of trauma-informed education, training and professional development for staff to recognise, respond to and manage bullying behaviour and to create safe environments. This includes understanding this Policy, identifying bullying and students at risk of bullying, risk and protective factors and prevention and response strategies.
- Appropriate sharing among staff of information about bullying, including cyberbullying, incidents, while maintaining privacy.
- Regular provision of information to parents/carers, to raise awareness of bullying as a School community issue, to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the School.
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/carers.
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour among students, staff and parents/carers.
- Regular risk assessments of bullying within the School are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff.
- Monitoring early signs of harmful behaviour or of single incidents of conflict or fights between students that may be an indicator of bullying and intervening early to prevent escalation.
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, to identify students who are persistently involved in bullying incidents and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- Statements supporting bullying prevention are included in students' School diaries.
- Education of staff, students and parents/carers on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear.
- Ensuring policies, teaching practices and the physical environment of the School are inclusive and address the unique needs of diverse student groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander students, students who identify as LGBTIQA+, students with disability and other groups experiencing additional risk factors, so that every student feels valued and diversity is celebrated.
- Engaging a Student Council, or similar, to instigate anti-bullying initiatives.
- Ensuring that student leaders support the School's anti-bullying policy and promote anti-bullying behaviours.
- Promotion of student awareness and a "no-bullying" environment by participating in events such as the Bullying No Way week.

Reporting Bullying

Students and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

The School aims to encourage reporting of bullying incidents by providing assurance to students involved in bullying incidents and their parents/carers that:

- bullying is not tolerated within the School
- their concerns will be taken seriously
- the School has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Students and parents/carers are supported by teachers, pastoral care staff and the School leadership to report bullying incidents and during the processes that follow the submission of the report.

Reporting Bullying Incidents to the School

Bullying incidents can be advised to the School verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher
- informing the **School Counsellor**
- informing a student's **teacher**
- informing the School's Deputy or the **Headmaster**.

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner About Cyberbullying Material Targeted at a Child

Where cyberbullying material is targeted at a child under the age of 18 years, a complaint can be made to:

- the provider of a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) – see **The eSafety Guide** for information about providers
- the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner can be made through the **online portal** by the child, their parent or carer, or an adult authorised by the child to make the complaint. The eSafety Commissioner has the power to investigate the complaint and to issue a removal notice.

For the eSafety Commissioner to investigate cyberbullying, the harmful content must have first been reported to the service or platform used to send, post or share it – at least 48 hours before it is reported to eSafety.

Responding to Bullying

Response Strategies

The School takes all bullying incidents seriously.

When an incident of bullying is reported or observed, it is referred tothe Deputy and Head of Pastoral Care, who will ensure that:

- staff consider and respond to any immediate safety risks. This may include separating students, administering first aid or calling 000
- staff determine whether the behaviour gives rise to concerns that the student exhibiting the behaviour and/or the student subject to the behaviour may be experiencing child abuse or other harm, and, if so, follow the School's procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns
- incidents are triaged to determine their severity and urgency and reasonable efforts are made, typically within two school days of becoming aware of an incident, to support affected students. This includes early safety and support planning and action to prevent further harm and initial communication actions with relevant persons and agencies, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. Factors considered in this assessment include physical harm, emotional impact, student vulnerability and recurrence

- the facts of an incident are properly investigated, including discussing the incident with the students involved and any bystanders, while maintaining procedural fairness and respecting any concurrent external investigations
- targets of bullying are reassured that they are not at fault
- students who engage in bullying are helped to understand the underlying motivations and impact of their behaviour and are supported to change their behaviour
- proportionate and evidence-informed response strategies that address the diverse needs of students are implemented within a reasonable timeframe. For example, for students involved in minor incidents, staff may closely monitor students through regular check-ins. For students with complex or ongoing needs, more targeted support may be needed, such as the involvement of the School Counsellor, an individual support plan or a referral to an external agency
- responses are coordinated, trauma-informed, fair and tailored to each situation, while maintaining privacy and safety
- there is regular engagement with the parents/carers of the students involved in the incident, as appropriate, so that that the parents/carers remain informed and to tailor support to individual contexts
- the actions taken, and the reasons for them, are communicated to those involved or impacted through appropriate channels, to the greatest extent possible while maintaining privacy responsibilities
- outcomes are monitored and ongoing support and follow-up is provided to all those involved in or impacted by bullying incidents, including staff, with responses adjusted as needed
- staff maintain accurate and secure records of all reported or observed incidents throughout the process.

Escalation Pathways

The School prioritises prevention and proactive early intervention action to stop bullying from occurring and escalating. Where these actions do not resolve an incident, it will be escalated to the Headmaster for further investigation and action.

Students, or their parents/carers, who believe that an incident has not been dealt with effectively may make a complaint following the School’s Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures .

Follow up for Incidents of Continued Bullying

1. Follow up for incidents of continued bullying at Mosman Preparatory School may include:

- notifying/consulting with parents/carers
- offering counselling to students who are involved in bullying incidents
- implementing effective follow-up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the Headmaster's discretion, for students who persistently bully, or in cases of severe incidents.

Partnership

The School partners with students, families and local communities, and where appropriate, community agencies and services, to ensure that bullying prevention and response strategies are culturally safe, responsive and inclusive. This includes regular communication with families about bullying prevention and response, opportunities for students and families to contribute to the School's anti-bullying approaches and referral to specialised community services and support where a student's needs exceed what can reasonably be provided by the School.

School Liaison Police

School Liaison Police are NSW Police officers who work with schools to reduce crime, violence and anti-social behaviour.

School Liaison Police can be contacted on the **NSW Police website**.

The Deputy Heads Pastoral Care, the School Chaplain, the School Counsellor, who are guided by the School's Pastoral Care policy, act as guides and liaisons for students needing additional services.

Regular Review and Analysis of Anti-Bullying Approaches and Data

The School regularly reviews bullying-related data and its anti-bullying approaches to identify emerging patterns and trends, enabling staff to proactively address issues and target interventions where they are most needed. This includes evaluating whether existing strategies are being implemented as intended and are making a meaningful difference for students, as well as monitoring, evaluating and refining this Policy, practices and support systems on an ongoing basis to drive continuous improvement.

Implementation

This Policy is implemented through a combination of:

- communication about anti-bullying procedures, and this Policy, to students, parents/carers, staff and the wider School community
- staff training
- student and parent/carer education and information
- involvement of external bodies and authorities as and when appropriate
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported
- the creation of a “no-bullying” culture within the School community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

This Policy is also made publicly available.

Signage

Anti-bullying posters may be posted in strategic locations in the School to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

Related Policies and Procedures

- **Cyber Safety Policy and Procedures**
- **Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy and Procedures**
- **Harassment (Student Against Student) Policy and Procedures**

References

The **Office of the eSafety Commissioner** provides resources, advice and strategies for parents, schools and children on how to deal with cyberbullying for people under the age of 18.

NSW Anti-Bullying Framework

Policy History and Schedule

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