Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Procedures

Introduction

At our school, we value a community where everyone feels safe, respected, and seen. Every person is created with 'b'tzelem elokim' - *a spark that deserves care*. We choose kindness and respect, because every spark at our school deserves to shine.

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

Purpose

This Policy describes Mount Sinai College's strategies to prevent students from bullying other students, and how incidents of bullying are to be managed.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Mount Sinai College activities, including camps and excursions and before and after school programs.

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

Roles and 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, refer to the Mount Sinai College Child Safe Policy and Procedures
- acknowledging the right of parents/carers to speak with Mount Sinai College if they believe their child is being bullied.

Policy Statement

Mount Sinai College 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.

Mount Sinai College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within Mount Sinai College are respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at Mount Sinai College.
It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a "whole-of-Mount Sinai College community" approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians
- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within Mount Sinai College on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/guardians 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.

Procedures

1. **Bullying Prevention Strategies**

Mount Sinai College recognises that the implementation of whole-Mount Sinai College prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a "no-bullying" culture within the Mount Sinai College:

- A structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age-appropriate information and social and emotional competencies relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year
- Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies
- Appropriate sharing among staff of information about cyberbullying incidents
- Regular provision of information to parents/guardians, to raise awareness of bullying to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have related to bullying directly with Mount Sinai College
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/guardians
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/guardians
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff is encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below)
- Students are supported by their teachers, Welfare Staff and the Mount Sinai College leadership when they report a bullying incident and during the processes that follows the submission of the report

- Regular risk assessments of bullying within Mount Sinai College are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate
- Education of staff, students and parents/guardians on health conditions and diversity to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear
- Anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within Mount Sinai College
- Promotion of student awareness and a "no-bullying" environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence, and R U OK Day

2. **Reporting Bullying**

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

A key part of Mount Sinai College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:

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

Bullying incidents can be reported to Mount Sinai College verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher
- informing Mount Sinai College Psychologist
- informing a student's Stage Coordinator
- informing the Deputy Principal or the Principal.

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

a. **Making a Complaint**

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 Commonwealth Online Safety Act 2021) – see The eSafety Guide for information about providers
- the eSafety Commissioner under Section 30 of the Commonwealth Online Safety Act 2021.

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner can be made through the online portal by the child, their parent or guardian, 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.

b. **Responding to Bullying**

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, consequently, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.
In all circumstances Mount Sinai College:

- takes bullying incidents seriously
- takes seriously, and monitors single incidents of conflict or fights between students, that do not ordinarily amount to bullying, for signs of ongoing behaviour that may be an indicator of bullying
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected
- ensures that teachers, Welfare Staff and Mount Sinai College Leadership Team, support the student being bullied through the reporting process and the corresponding investigation and resolution processes
- involves the Mount Sinai College Psychologist who has specialist skills in helping both students who have been bullied and students who are bullying others
- Facilitates a Welfare Committee, and Kidsmatter Team to instigate anti-bullying initiatives
- ensures that student leaders support the Mount Sinai College's Anti-Bullying Policy and promote anti-bullying behaviours
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders
- keeps parents and guardians of both the student who was bullied and the student who did the bullying, informed of the situation as and when appropriate to do so
- teachers will close the loop for both sides of the incidents
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents, even if these are not necessarily repetitive
- considers 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, follows the follows the Mount Sinai College Child Safe Policy

These following approaches may be used to intervene in group or relational bullying situations. Some are only appropriate during the initial stages whilst others are appropriate for persistent or severe bullying incidents and others as final consequences:

- notification of/consultation with parents/guardians
- offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims
- implementing effective follow up strategies

- disciplinary action, at the Principal's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

4. **Bullying Support Services**
   a. **School Liaison Police**

School Liaison Police are NSW Police officers who work with schools to reduce crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. Our Parents are encouraged to contact the School Liaison Officer if they have any concerns.

Our School Liaison Police Officer/s are from Maroubra Police and can be contacted on 02 9349 9299.

Mount Sinai College also provides access to the following support services:
Bullying No Way https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/

   b. **Signage**

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

   c. **Implementation**

This Policy is implemented through a combination of:

- 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 Mount Sinai College community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

5. **Breach**

Where a staff member breaches this Policy Mount Sinai College will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, dismissal.

6. **Definitions**
   a. **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.

b. **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.

c. **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.

d. **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 schoolwork
- 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/guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify Mount Sinai College 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.

e. **Cyberbullying Material**

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

- be intended to influence 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.

7. **Related Policies**
   - Mount Sinai College Child Safe Policy
   - Mount Sinai College Welfare Policy

8. **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.

Name of Policy	**Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy & Procedures**
Owner	**Principal**
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	5-6-25
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