

STUDENT BULLYING and HARASSMENT POLICY

PURPOSE

Melbourne Montessori School is committed to providing Staff and students with a safe working and learning environment free from all forms of harassment and bullying. Bullying and harassment both involve a more powerful person or group oppressing a less powerful person or group, often on the grounds of 'difference'. These differences can be related to culture, ethnicity, sexuality, sexual orientation, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, age, marital status, parenting status or economic status.

It is often quite difficult to distinguish between bullying and harassment. In day to day management within a school it is important that all forms of bullying are addressed, even in the case of misunderstandings and one-off comments. For this reason, we distinguish in this policy between bullying, which for the purposes of this policy is defined as more easily resolved harassment, and harassment. A key defining feature to distinguish between bullying and harassment rests with how the complainant wishes the issue to be resolved.

The School is legally bound by and strongly supports the tenets of equal opportunity and human rights legislation. All Staff, students and contract workers are required to honour and support this commitment and to be mindful of and respect the rights of others, consistent with our culture. They need to be aware of interactions with others, of situations, actions and words that could cause offense, intimidation, or humiliation.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Position/Roles	Responsibilities
School Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure strategies and programs exist to foster an inclusive and anti-bullying culture at the School review the Bullying and Harassment policy annually
Principal and School Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure there is a specific policy that addresses bullying and harassment act in accordance with the School's Bullying and Harassment policy develop and implement strategies for responding to incidents of bullying and harassment ensure ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the School's policy to enable reflective practice and improvement provide Staff with access to professional learning opportunities to assist with prevention and effective handling of incidents. ensure that support is provided to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour

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All Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act in accordance with the School’s Bullying and Harassment policy and suggest improvements where necessary create and maintain a safe learning environment support the health and wellbeing of their students and colleagues
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act in accordance with the School’s Bullying and Harassment policy and provide input to the policy’s review show respect to all members of the School community not hinder or harm the learning of others
Parents and Guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act in accordance with School policy support the School in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Melbourne Montessori School does not tolerate bullying or unacceptable behaviour. Students and Staff have a right to a safe environment which promotes respect and acceptance.

This policy aims to:

- reduce the incidence of bullying and other unacceptable behaviours such as harassment, discrimination, threats or acts of violence
- increase the incidence of standing up against bullying: “If you see something, say something”
- treat all incidents of bullying and unacceptable behaviour seriously
- create a safe and supportive environment
- provide all members of the School community with options to respond to bullying and unacceptable behaviour.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Bullying

Bullying occurs when an individual (or a group of individuals) uses physical, verbal or psychological behaviour that deliberately and repeatedly harms another individual. Bullying behaviour causes someone to feel fearful, threatened, unsafe, excluded or in pain within an isolated period of time or repeatedly for an extended period of time. Bullying behaviour is a misuse of power that hurts, controls, silences and belittles another person. There is a power

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imbalance when bullying behaviour occurs. An aggressive act is a one-off incident. Bullying however, is a behaviour that is repeated over a period of time.

Behaviours that may constitute bullying include:

- Verbal bullying: The use of language to threaten or hurt including name-calling and putdowns
- Physical bullying: Any intentional and unwelcome use of physical contact or deliberate property damage
- Gesture bullying: The use of non-verbal signals to cause intimidation or fear
- Exclusion bullying: Leaving someone out on purpose in order to cause feelings of nonacceptance and hurt
- Extortion bullying: The use of threat and power to obtain favour and goods
- Sexual bullying: Any unwelcome and uninvited comment, attention, contact or behaviour of a sexual nature that is found to be humiliating, offensive or intimidating
- Cyberbullying: Any bullying that is carried out through information and communication and/or social networking technologies

Bullying can occur when antagonism or prejudice is directed towards someone on the basis of their race, religion, sexual preference and gender orientation, perceived academic prowess, disability, health, socio-economic status, cultural practice or sporting ability.

Behaviours that do not constitute bullying but still require follow up and resolution include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite
- isolated incident of aggression, intimidation or violence.

Harassment

Harassment is behaviour intended to annoy, disturb, threaten or upset another person. Harassment and bullying may involve similar behaviours as both usually involve a person or group of people who have, or are perceived to have, more power deliberately upsetting someone on more than one occasion.

Harassment may also occur because of perceived differences such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, identity or religion.

Discrimination

Discrimination is treating a person or group less fairly or well because of a particular characteristic such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or identity, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, age; or marital, parenting, or economic status. Discrimination commonly involves exclusion or rejection.

Conduct which causes someone to suffer a detriment or to be treated less favourably than someone else because of their race can be racial discrimination. The term detriment is very broad and includes emotional and physical detriment. Racial

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discrimination means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race which has the effect of impairing a person's enjoyment, recognition or ability to exercise a human right.

Violence

Violence is the damaging and destructive use of force by a person or group towards another person, group or property. This force can be physical, verbal, sexual or another action or behaviour and can involve an ongoing relationship between the parties. Violence may involve provoked or unprovoked acts and can be a one-off incident or can occur over time. Violence may be used by those targeted by bullying or other unacceptable behaviour to try to redress the imbalance of power.

A threat of violence is words or gestures expressing intent to use an act of force against a person.

Definitions and examples of harassment, bullying, violence and discrimination can be found at <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>

Other acts of criminal behaviour

This includes but is not limited to theft, graffiti, damage to property, physical assault, sexual assault, use of or selling drugs and/or alcohol.

PREVENTION

The School will undertake a number of the following activities to prevent and address bullying and other unacceptable behaviours:

- include bullying prevention programs in the curriculum
- refresh students' knowledge of the policy
- reinforce School values and expectations of the way in which we treat one another in the School community, for example, through role model discussion in assemblies
- make available policy and procedures to all members of School community on the website
- provide parent/student/teacher support to increase knowledge of bullying and how to implement effective anti-bullying strategies
- conduct bullying audits and safe school surveys
- provide counselling support as required
- implement restorative practices

RESPONSE TO BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Melbourne Montessori School is committed to dealing with bullying and other unacceptable behaviours using preventative, pro-active and reactive processes.

If bullying behaviour occurs it must not be ignored, and action should be taken by students, teachers or parents. Reports of bullying behaviour will be treated seriously and appropriate action will be taken.

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Student's Response

If a student feels that she or he has been bullied or has witnessed bullying behaviour, the following provides responses that could be followed:

- tell the person that s/he is being a bully and to stop the behaviour (if safe to do so)
- support the person being bullied and ask an adult for help
- report the behaviour to a teacher
- talk to a trusted student or student leader
- talk to a trusted adult with whom you feel comfortable, including:
 - Cycle teacher
 - Cycle Leader
 - Advisory Teacher
 - Head of Campus
 - School Nurse
 - Trusted parent or other adult

It is very important that witnesses to bullying speak out and report instances of bullying.

Teacher's Response

If a student or colleague reports a bullying incident or a teacher or other employee witnesses incidents of bullying, s/he should:

- listen and provide support to the target of the bullying by acknowledging the nature and seriousness of bullying behaviour
- attempt to resolve the incident
- document and report the incident to the Head of Year or Head of School

Teachers with pastoral leadership responsibilities:

- investigate the allegation, collect and document the facts
- contact the parents/guardians of the offender and of the victim
- document the incident using incident report protocols
- arrange counselling support to targets of bullying
- put in place anti-bullying procedures as appropriate, e.g. ask the offender to acknowledge the behaviour and agree to stop it; arrange a restorative practice session
- advise the victim on strategies to deal with incidents
- encourage the victim to report similar behaviour if repeated
- involve the students' class teachers where appropriate
- record and monitor any incidents of bullying on School Register

Parents

The following actions are recommended to parents:

- encourage children to discuss the effects and consequences of bullying
- encourage children to report any incidents of bullying to a teacher

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- watch for signs of distress in your child e.g. unwillingness to attend school, missing equipment without explanation, a pattern of repeated headaches or unexpected abdominal pain
- contact the School if you believe any child is being bullied and you feel the matter is not being addressed
- support the School in its actions if your child has been bullying others
- report any incidents of bullying witnessed while in the School

INTERVENTION

Melbourne Montessori School is committed to dealing with bullying or unacceptable behaviour using preventative, reactive and restorative processes. It will take all reports of bullying or unacceptable behaviour seriously, tailoring interventions to the individual student while consistently applying the policy to all students.

A restorative practice approach can be used as a first step in responding to many incidences of bullying. Restorative practice is the recommended first course of action. An approach that engages students who are bullying and attempts to enhance their feelings of empathy and understanding for the student they are harming is more likely to bring about a change in behaviour. A punitive response by the School may be implemented in some circumstances.

A restorative practice example:

Step 1: Interview the students involved. This involves fact-finding, building their awareness, reassurance, the result desired and preparation for the final interview.

Step 2: Interview the alleged perpetrator/s. This involves clarifying their involvement, advising that there is a situation that needs to be sorted out, encouraging them to take responsibility for their own actions, building their awareness and preparation for the final interview.

Step 3: The two parties and sometimes, appropriate supporters, are brought together for a restorative practice interview.

Step 4: An action plan is developed.

Step 5: Arrangements are made for follow up.

Other intervention approaches include:

- consultations with parents
- consultations with the peer group
- further education about bullying
- referral to the School Psychologist
- referral to external party e.g. law enforcement or health service

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- punitive response which may include loss of any office held, community service, suspension, being placed on a behaviour contract, exclusion from selected activities or expulsion in extreme or repeated cases

The Principal will determine the consequences for extreme instances of bullying or unacceptable behaviour.

Any concerns or complaints associated with the School's handling of bullying or unacceptable behaviour will be addressed in accordance with the *Grievance Policy*.

INCIDENT REPORTING AND FOLLOW UP

All incidents of bullying or unacceptable behaviour should be recorded. This records the nature of the incident and the agreed actions.

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PROCEDURE OF COMPLAINT FOR BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

If you are feeling threatened, intimidated, harassed, victimised or discriminated, contact your choice of:

