

Anti-Bullying & Harassment

POLICY & GUIDE



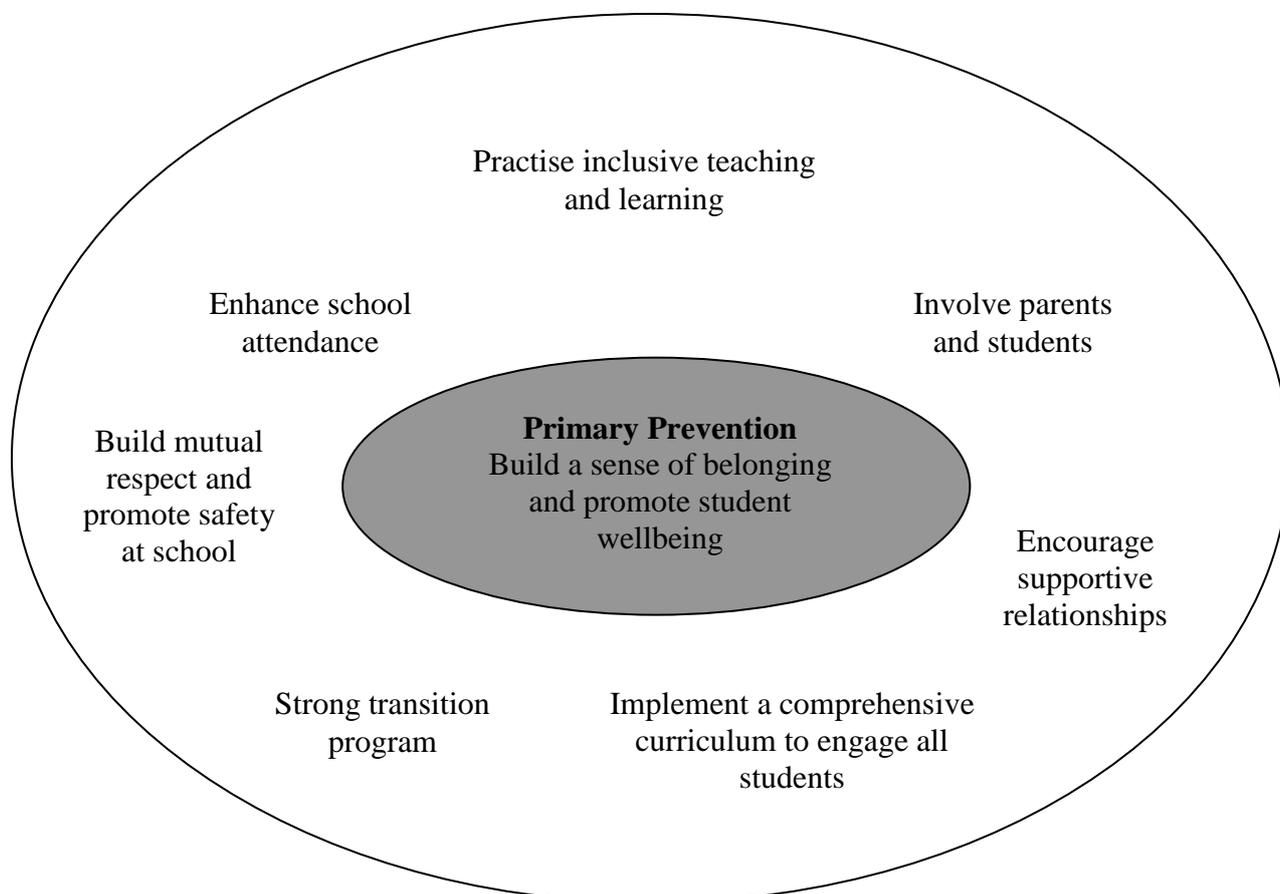
Mount St Bernard College

Rationale:

Central to a school's duty of care is the provision of safe and supportive conditions for student learning and wellbeing. When parents/carers send their children to school they expect that they will be able to learn in a secure and supportive environment and that the school will safeguard their emotional, social and physical wellbeing.

Mount St Bernard College has in place a range of primary prevention strategies that aim to ensure that students understand their rights and responsibilities and allow them to develop resilience.

To effectively prevent bullying, schools need to take a whole school approach that focuses on wellbeing and safety. Such issues need to be viewed not as a separate policy, but rather as a central component of an effective school.



Definition of Bullying

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

Bullying involves

- a desire to hurt
- a hurtful action
- repetition of the behaviour
- an unjust use of power
- evident enjoyment by the aggressor
- a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.

Types of Bullying

There are three broad categories of bullying.

- **Direct physical bullying** e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **Indirect bullying** - This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:

- lying and spreading rumours
- playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking
- encouraging others to socially exclude someone
- damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
- social exclusion including ostracism, ignoring, alienating etc.
- cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

What Bullying is Not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

1) Mutual conflict

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

2) Social rejection or dislike

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

3) Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.

Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying & Harassment

In terms of the whole school approach to effectively prevent bullying, a range of primary prevention strategies are referred to in the diagram on the first page of this document. Such strategies are linked to enhancing student wellbeing and connectedness.

Procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying reflect the values referred to in the school's Student Diary. All students will be made aware that bullying is unacceptable behaviour and that there are procedures in place for dealing with the issue - Student Planner, Pastoral Care programs, assemblies, student leadership forums, Peer Support leaders, multimedia performances.

Staff should be active in identifying bullying behaviour while on yard duty, on excursions and in classrooms. Staff will be in-serviced on the Restorative Justice Policy and Anti-bullying Policy.

Incidents of bullying will be handled according to the following procedure:

- Teachers who observe bullying incidents or have this reported to them by a student will send a written report to Pastoral Leaders (middle or senior school) complete an entry in the Student Search on staff Portal - Notes for the student who is believed to be the aggressor. This information is communicated to the appropriate Pastoral Leader and AP - Mission.
- Following investigation of the incident it is the school's preferred option to conduct a restorative meeting (when appropriate) and come to an agreed resolution of the issues. A written agreement, depending on the nature of the incident (contract of shared concern) will then be signed by both parties. The aggressor will be reminded of the school policy on bullying and parents informed of the incident. It may be appropriate for some form of punishment to be issued but this will be at the discretion of the Pastoral Leader, AP –Mission or Principal.
- Students who are reported a second time for bullying will be issued with an lunch or after school detention, be required to attend counselling sessions at lunchtime and be required to take part in a meeting with their parents/carers (or by phone) and AP- Mission or Head of Boarding where it will be outlined to them that any further infringement of the Anti –Bullying Policy will amount to a 'serious offence' as outlined in our behaviour management policy.
- Under the procedures outlined for dealing with 'serious offences' and depending on the circumstances of the bullying incident it may also be necessary to exclude the student responsible for the bullying behaviour from the classroom for an agreed period of time. The student's automatic re-enrolment at Mount St Bernard College may also be discussed. This decision would be made by the AP- Mission in consultation with the Principal.

Strategies for Parents/Carers:

How do I know if my child is being bullied?

Some of the signs that a child is being bullied may include:

- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- wagging school
- doing poorly in their school work/performing below their usual standard
- becoming withdrawn and lacking in confidence
- asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
- refusing to talk about what's wrong
- having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- beginning to bully other children e.g. younger students at school or siblings
- becoming aggressive and unreasonable

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Step 1: Listen carefully to your child and show concern and support.

Step 2: Give sensible advice – don't encourage your child to fight back, this will most likely increase the bullying.

Step 3: Assist your child to develop positive strategies including:

- saying *leave me alone* and calmly walking away

- avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying
- making new friends.

Step 4: Ask your child the following questions to understand if there is a repeated pattern:

- What, where and when did the incident happen?
- Who was involved on each occasion?
- Did anybody else see it, and, if so, who?
- What solutions have been tried so far?
- The names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Step 5: Work with the school to solve the problem. As a school we take our responsibility in relation to bullying behaviour very seriously and have more success when parents work with the school to solve the bullying problem.

You should:

- Make an appointment with your child's teacher and make notes of the points you want to discuss before the meeting.
- Try to stay calm at the meeting and present information in a way that makes it clear to the school that you and the school are working as partners in trying to fix this problem.

The school will need time to investigate and to talk to teachers and, perhaps, other students.

Step 6: You can make a follow-up call to see what has been done or alternatively ask the school when you can expect them to get back to you.

Step 7: Work with the school to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Before you leave, ask for clarification about the next steps in the plan.

Step 8: If needed, ask for the school counsellor to become involved.

Step 9: Encourage your child to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

What I should NOT do if my child is being bullied?

- Do not directly approach any other student who you believe may have been involved in bullying your child.
- Do not try to sort the issues out with their parents. This usually doesn't work and makes the situation much worse.

What if my child is bullying others?

- Respond calmly and non-defensively, and commit to working with the school to manage the problem in a helpful way.
- See the situation as an opportunity for your child to learn important developmental lessons.

What I can do to reduce bullying at school?

- Report all incidents of bullying to the school, not just incidents that happen to your own child.
- Let your child know how much you disapprove of bullying and why.
- Any type of bullying at home should be avoided, and respect for others should be modelled and encouraged.
- Talk to your child about the qualities associated with caring friendships and discourage them from staying in 'friendships' where they are mistreated or not respected.

Cyberbullying

What does cyberbullying look like?

Children can cyberbully each other in a number of ways including:

- Abusive texts and emails
- Hurtful messages, images or videos
- Imitating others online

- Excluding others online
- Nasty online gossip and chat

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone, however often the children involved in cyberbullying are also involved in other kinds of bullying. One in 10 young people have experienced cyberbullying (Cross, 2009)

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to bully a person or group. Bullying is repeated behaviour by an individual or group with the intent to harm another person or group.

Cyberbullying can involve social, psychological and even, in extreme cases, physical harm. It can cause shame, guilt, fear, withdrawal, loneliness and depression.

Because children and young people are often online it can be hard for them to escape cyberbullying. Nasty messages, videos and gossip can spread fast online and are hard to delete. Sometimes the attackers can be anonymous and hard to stop. This can make it harder for adults to see and manage.

How teachers can help at MSB

Research shows students often don't tell adults about cyberbullying. They fear we will disconnect them from supportive friends and family and may overreact and make the situation worse. There are some signs you might be able to pick up at school that indicate a child may be the target of cyberbullying or struggling for other reasons. Look for:

- changes in personality, e.g. more withdrawn, anxious, sad or angry, tears
- appearing more lonely or distressed
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- less interaction with students at school
- possible peer rejection
- decline in school work
- excessive sleepiness or lack of focus
- higher levels of absenteeism
- increased negative self-perception
- a decline in physical health
- Suicidal thoughts—this should be reported to the administration and the parents/carers immediately for appropriate action.

Responding to cyberbullying

If you notice a child in your class or the school yard showing any of the above signs, or other worrying and out of character behaviours, tell them you are worried and want to help. If they won't open up to you ask others to talk to them (another teacher, Pastoral Leader or school counsellor). Keep a close eye on their interactions and ask other relevant staff to do the same, particularly at recess and lunchtime. If they seem disconnected from others encourage them to join lunchtime groups and recruit kind and supportive students to look out for them. If other students appear to be targeting them or excluding them enact appropriate consequences as per the school's pastoral care procedures.

Any significant concerns should be discussed with the student and their parents or carers. Students will be provided with options for psychological support including conversations with pastoral care leaders, other relevant staff, school counselling or anonymous counselling through outside organisations.

Safe schools like MSB address cyberbullying before it happens

Safe schools have robust policies in place to address bullying and cyberbullying and develop an open, supporting and connected school culture.

Strategies our school can put in place now

- Ensure every student, particularly those at risk, has a staff member they feel connected to, activities they feel a part of and that they feel valued as a member of the school community.
- Encourage this connection in Homeroom and Professional Development classes.
- Encourage all students to be active bystanders by safely speaking up and telling teachers and other adults if they see or hear of bullying.
- Implement a cybersafety curriculum using the Cybersmart lesson plans or similar. Eg cybersmart.gov.au
- [View Let's Fight It Together](#), a short film about cyberbullying from the UK that has a teacher guide and character reflections adapted for Australian schools.

Process for assistance:

All students are encouraged to be confident and upfront with their teachers to encourage them to communicate any issues of harassment or bullying. Students are informed by the Pastoral Care teachers of the process involved in the form of communicating concerns:

- Students encouraged to discuss with relevant class teacher immediately if an incident occurs in that class
- If a playground incident – report to the teacher on duty
- Discuss incident with their Pastoral Care teacher (Homeroom Teacher)
- If necessary – the PC teacher will discuss with the corresponding Pastoral Leader. Parents will be contacted at this level.
- If required to escalate the issue – the Pastoral Leader will discuss with the AP- Mission. Parents contacted at this level.
- If not resolved at this level – the matter will then be passed on to the Deputy Principal and finally the Principal.
- In most cases, it is unlikely to reach this stage.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they believe their son or daughter is subject to bullying and harassment so the matter can be resolved quickly and professionally and Pastorally.

Social Networking

Social networking refers to the use of an online service, platform or website that enables users to build social networks among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections.

Popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, AirG. On social networking sites, users can post information, share photos and videos and/or play games. Online games, like World of Warcraft, also enable direct interaction between players. According to research, over eighty per cent of children in secondary school report having a social networking page of some description.

The benefits of social networking include being able to stay connected with friends and family. This is particularly beneficial for socially or physically isolated individuals, such as those with a physical disability or those from rural or remote areas. For many children and young people (as well as some adults), social networking is no different to their offline interactions with people.

Online, users can identify who they share information with and what level of information and interaction they have with others.

However, they can't control what their friends might do with their information, which may be shared more broadly than anticipated. For example, friends may copy and share photos from each other's social networking sites without permission.

Risks of social networking

For students, the risks in using social networking sites include:

- sharing too much information—for example, photos from a party might be okay for close friends to see but can become an issue if shared more widely
- not protecting personal information—account details and location information can be used inappropriately by others to find young people or access their online accounts
- treating online friends as real friends—it's easy for people to lie online, including those who are seeking children and young people for more than a social relationship.

Managing the risks

Schools can help students manage the risks of social networking by implementing a cybersafety program into their curriculum. This includes:

- Integrating the Cybersmart teacher resources into the school's ICT or wellbeing curriculum to equip students with critical cybersafety skills and knowledge – available from the resources below.
- Resources of particular relevance for teachers are the Cybersmart Units of Work for primary and secondary students, the Tagged video and lesson plans for secondary students.
- Booking a Cybersmart Challenge activity—Cybersmart Networking for lower secondary students will enable them to experience a live, online social networking scenario and to develop strategies to interact safely on social networking sites.
- Students who are particularly vulnerable while social networking include those with social, academic or mental health difficulties. These students may benefit by being referred to student support services, the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800, or the Cybersmart Online Helpline to discuss issues of concern anonymously or by accessing the schools resources and appropriate teachers. These students should be identified early and any concerns discussed with the appropriate staff.

Teacher & Parent Resources

The resources below provide information suitable for parents and teachers that cover all areas associated with bullying, harassment and cyberbullying:

- <http://www.slideshare.net/informaoz/tag/childonline>
- <http://www.headspace.org.au/>
- <http://cybersafetysolutions.com.au>
- <http://reachout.com>
- <https://www.esmartschools.org.au/Pages/default.aspx>
- <http://cybersmart.gov.au>
- <http://education.vic.gov.au/bullystoppers>
- <http://peersupport.edu.au>
- <http://bullyingnoway.gov.au>

Policy Development and Review

This policy was developed by the Principal and College Leadership Team and ratified by the College Board in August 2015 and will be reviewed as needed as and not later than 2015.

POLICY UPDATES

This policy and associated procedures may be updated or revised from time to time. The College will not notify you each time the policy or procedure is changed. If you are unsure whether you are reading the most current version, you should contact the Principal's Personal Assistant.

This policy was last ratified by College Board in....

August 2015

