

MATER DEI STUDENT BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Mater Dei School recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the school is respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at Mater Dei School.

It is our policy that:

- Bullying be managed through a 'whole of school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians;
- Bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the school 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 be tailored to the circumstances of each incident;
- Staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture; and
- Bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- Physical bullying which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- Psychological bullying is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- Indirect bullying is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- Cyber bullying is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

What isn't 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; or
- 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 behaviour 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;
- Feeling ill in the mornings;
- A decline in quality of school work;
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- Beginning to bully siblings; and
- Acting unreasonably.

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

PROCEDURES

BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Mater Dei School recognises that the implementation of whole school 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 school:

- A structured pastoral program that provides age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) 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;
- 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/guardian;
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below);
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate; and
- Anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within the school.

REPORTING BULLYING

Mater Dei recognises that 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 Mater Dei's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the school;
- Their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- The school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

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 psychologist;
- Informing a member of the School Executive; or
- Informing the Assistant Principal or the CEO/Principal.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances the school:

- Takes bullying incidents seriously;
- Provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;
- Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders;
- Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- Maintains records of reported bullying incidents; and
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- Notification of/Consultation with parents/guardians;
- Offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims;
- Implementing effective follow up strategies; and
- Disciplinary action at the CEO/Principal's discretion including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

SUPPORT SERVICES

•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 are a point of contact for the school community and the NSW Police Force.

Our School Liaison Police Officer is Allan Clapham. The School Liaison Police Officer can be contact on 02 46201199.

- Mater Dei School also provides access to Student Counselling Services.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees are responsible to:

- Model appropriate behaviour at all times;
- Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy;
- Ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately;
- Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims; and
- Acknowledge the right of parents/guardians to speak with school authorities if they believe

their child is being bullied.

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.

IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- 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; and
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

BREACH OF THIS CODE

Where a staff member breaches this policy Mater Dei School will take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, summary dismissal.

RELATED POLICIES/STATEMENTS

Mater Dei School Wide Positive Behaviour Expectations Matrix

Mater Dei Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures

Mater Dei Counselling Services (Student) Policy

Approved at Leadership Team YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Approved at Board YES / NO / NA	Signed	Date
Staff Briefed YES / NO	Signed	Date
Review Date February 2018		