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Caboolture Montessori School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

The Caboolture Montessori School is implementing this policy to ensure that students and staff feel safe from bullying in all its forms. The policy sets out the requirements for dealing with bullying. The basic beliefs underlying the policy are:

1. Every individual has value in a community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Every conflict can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need help to solve conflict.
4. A 'No-Blame' approach is the most effective means of dealing with conflict resolution.
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
6. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Scope

Students, parents and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements.

Responsibility

Principal

Point of Contact

Principal

Definitions

- **Bullying**: is a systematic and repeated abuse of power. In general bullying may be defined as:
  - dominating or hurting someone
  - unfair action by the perpetrator(s) and an imbalance of power
  - a lack of adequate defence by the target and feelings of oppression and humiliation

  It can occur at any age, across cultures, genders and socioeconomic groups. It can happen in the playground, toilet areas, to and from school or in the classroom.

- **Physical bullying**: this is when a person (or group of people) uses physical actions to bully, such as hitting, poking, tripping or pushing. Repeatedly and intentionally damaging someone's belongings is also physical bullying

- **Verbal bullying**: repeated or systematic name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks and verbal abuse

- **Covert bullying**: such as lying about someone, spreading rumours, playing a nasty joke that make the person feel humiliated or powerless, mimicking or deliberately excluding someone

- **Psychological bullying**: for example, threatening, manipulating or stalking someone

- **Cyber bullying**: using technology, such as email, mobile phones, chat rooms, social networking sites to bully verbally, socially or psychologically

What bullying is *not*

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble or school yard fights. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is **not**.

Bullying is not:

- **Mutual conflict** where 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.

- **Social rejection or dislike**. It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

- **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation**. A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion**. However, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression will not be ignored or condoned.

Associated Legislation

Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Regulations 2001 (Qld)
Australian Education Act 2013 (Cth)
Australian Education Regulations 2013 (Cth)

Policy

Caboolture Montessori School has a zero tolerance approach to bullying.

Caboolture Montessori School is committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying does occur.

In order to prevent bullying from occurring, Caboolture Montessori School will implement the following actions:

- Raise awareness of the school community's shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people and how bullying is responded to at the school

- Develop and promote effective social skills and positive relationships amongst students

In order to respond appropriately to any incidences of bullying, Caboolture Montessori School will:

- Develop an appropriate mechanism for students and parents to report bullying

- Educate students and parents on how to respond, in the first instance, to incidences of bullying, and how to then report all incidences of bullying

- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to reports of bullying

- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying

- Take appropriate action, which might include support for targets of bullying and perpetrators and/or disciplinary measures.

Student Bullying Reporting and Response Procedures

The policy of the Caboolture Montessori School is to take a proactive approach to bullying by establishing processes to educate and inform students about bullying and procedures to follow in the event that a student is being bullied.

All students upon entry to the Caboolture Montessori School and all on-going students will be educated about the School's anti-bullying guidelines as follows:

1. Prep & Year 1 students will be taken through a formal workshop including activities and discussions on the issue of bullying.
2. Education for all other year levels will occur through the curriculum and at assemblies throughout the year.

In addition:

- parents will be included in the education process, e.g. Parent Forums and Newsletter;

- all teaching staff will be continually educated with regard to bullying at our school and more importantly, what their responsibilities are; and

- the school has a 'no-blame' approach to bullying. That is, its main aim is to stop the bullying, rather than punish the perpetrator, although that does not preclude punishment if bullying persists.

For any incidents of bullying, a member of staff/senior student will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps should be taken:

1.   Identification

A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problems to a staff member or senior student who notifies the Principal or a member of staff (who will inform the Principal) to implement the anti-bullying program.

2.   Initial interview

The Principal interviews the victim and bully separately, and records the details of the incident in writing on a standard pro-forma. The interviewer makes both parties aware of the bullying strategy and policy and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The interviewer works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome, i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame or to punish but to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the school policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

3.   Follow-up Interview

If the incident is repeated or the problem continues – both parties record the incident/problem in writing on a standard pro-forma. The Principal interviews the victim and bully together and discusses the problem; makes the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having; and makes suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict. The Principal may seek help from a qualified counsellor at any stage.

The Principal sends a letter to both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences that may flow from a repeat of bullying.

If a solution to a particular problem is not found, the school may consider the use of an outside person, such as a trained mediator, to assist in reaching a resolution.

4.   Reinforce (as above), employ sanctions

If repeated counselling by the Principal, or others, does not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- Internal Suspension
- Major fixed term suspension
- Seek help from qualified counsellor
- Permanent exclusion

The school keeps central records of all reported incidents of bullying. These are analysed on a regular basis to ascertain major areas where bullying occurs, sex and age of victims and bullies, and strategies which have been successful. A review of the school's policy is undertaken every 12 months, taking into account this annual data.

An important consideration for schools, teachers, parents and students is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. Schools need to constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and to remind students how to counteract bullying, as well as offering programs to lift self-esteem and resilience; students need to be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders; and parents need to be confident to approach the school with their concerns, and encouraged to work with schools in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

School Responsibilities

Caboolture Montessori School acknowledges its responsibility to:

- Raise awareness of bullying and how the school will respond to it
- Take action to help prevent bullying
- Implement a reporting mechanism for students and parents
- Educate students and parents on how to respond to bullying and how to report it
- Educate employees on how to appropriately respond to bullying
- Investigate and act upon all reports of bullying, including providing appropriate support and consequences

Employee Responsibilities

At CMS, employees have a responsibility to:

- Uphold and consistently apply this Policy
- Respond appropriately to reports of bullying, including by investigating and acting upon reports of bullying, and by providing appropriate support and consequences in accordance with the this Policy

Parent Responsibilities

At CMS, parents have a responsibility to:

- Encourage their child not to bully others
- Encourage their child to report bullying to themselves or others
- Encourage their child to take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Policy

Student Responsibilities

At CMS, students have a responsibility to:

- Not engage in bullying behaviour towards others
- Report bullying occurring to them or others
- Take steps to stop bullying as directed under this Policy

Policy Release Details

Date of Policy
October 2016

Approved by Principal

Signature ....Date ..../ ..../ ....

Approved by Board

Signature ....Date ..../ ..../ ....

Review Date
Every 3 years, in consultation with students, staff and parents

Related Policies and Documents

Anti-Discrimination Policy
Behaviour Management Policy
Child Protection Policy
Disability Discrimination Policy
Dispute Resolution Policy
Sexual Harassment Policy
Staff Code of Conduct
Student Code of Conduct
Workplace Bullying Policy