



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

## PURPOSE

Mountain Gate Primary School is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

At all available opportunities, Mountain Gate Primary School will work with students and parents to develop the school ethos which encourages pro-social behaviour and the value of the differences of individuals.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ensure that all students have the right to a safe and caring environment which promotes learning, personal growth and positive self-esteem
- explain the definition of bullying so that there is shared understanding amongst all members of the Mountain Gate Primary School community
- make clear that no form of bullying at Mountain Gate Primary School will be tolerated
- outline the strategies and programs in place at Mountain Gate Primary School to build a positive school culture and prevent bullying behaviour
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including targets, bystanders and students engaging in bullying behaviour)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Mountain Gate Primary School

When responding to bullying behaviour, Mountain Gate Primary School aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Mountain Gate Primary School acknowledges that all school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

## SCOPE

This policy addresses how Mountain Gate Primary School aims to prevent, address and respond to student bullying behaviour. Mountain Gate Primary School recognises that there are many other types of inappropriate student behaviours that do not meet the definition of bullying which are also unacceptable at our school. These other inappropriate behaviours will be managed in accordance with our *Student Code of Conduct* and *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy* and *Inclusion and Diversity policy*.

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps, excursions and sports.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

## Definitions

### **Bullying**

In 2018 the Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the following definition of bullying for use by all Australian schools:

*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 has three main features:

- It involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- It is ongoing and repeated, and
- It involves behaviours that can cause harm.

Bullying can be:

1. *direct* physical bullying – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. *direct* verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. *indirect* bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

**Cyberbullying** is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example via a mobile device, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written and include images, video and/or audio.

### **Other distressing and inappropriate behaviours**

Many distressing and inappropriate behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing and inappropriate behaviours should report their concerns to school staff and our school will follow the Mountain Gate Primary School Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy/Student Code of Conduct.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

**Mutual conflict** involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

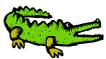
**Social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

**Single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour. Mountain Gate Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression.

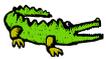
**Harassment** is language or actions that are demeaning, offensive or intimidating to a person. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.

Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated at Mountain Gate Primary School and may have serious consequences for students engaging in this behaviour.

**Mountain Gate Primary School will use its Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy to guide a response to students demonstrating harassing behaviour, unless the behaviour also constitutes bullying, in which case the behaviour will be managed in accordance with this Bullying Prevention Policy.**



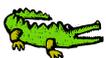
The Anti Bullying Policy and Cyber Bullying Policy are designed to protect us.



Gators don't support bullying of any kind.



If I see bullying I can support the person being bullied and encourage them to do something about it



Be assertive towards a bully - not aggressive.



Report bullying to your teacher or an adult.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

## BULLYING PREVENTION

Mountain Gate Primary School has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Mountain Gate is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effect way to prevent and address bullying.

At our school:

- we will be pro-active in its approach to bullying by promoting the notion that it is “OK to tell” of incidents of bullying, and by providing appropriate curriculum, literature and resources which support the school ethos
- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- A range of year level incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts. **Eg Tribes , Values for Life, Wellbeing Week, Back to School Week, National Day Against Bullying, Kids Matter initiative**
- In the classroom, our social and emotional learning curriculum teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate classroom management strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- The Junior School Council will be involved in supporting positive behaviour by liaison with individual students and classes, and by assisting in the selection of awards such as Gater of the Month.
- Students will support positive behaviour by selecting Student of the Week Awards
- Buddy programs and Tribes sessions encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- We participate in the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence each year.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy/Student Engagement Policy.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

## INCIDENT RESPONSE

- Reporting concerns to Mountain Gate Primary School
- Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.
- Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.
- Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students and/or parents and carers reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Mountain Gate are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.
- We encourage students to speak to their class teacher, Tribes Teacher, Assistant Principal, Principal or any other person they trust.
- Parents or carers who develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Mountain Gate Primary School should contact their child's class teacher, the Assistant Principal (Lissa Jackway) or Principal (Cheryl Sampson) by phone 97582811 or by email direct to the school at [mountain.gate.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:mountain.gate.ps@edumail.vic.gov.au) with attention to the staff member they wish to contact

## INVESTIGATIONS

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Note the details of the allegations
2. Inform staff involved, Year Level Coordinator, Assistant Principal and Principal.

The class teacher and Assistant Principal are initially responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner by:

- speaking to the those involved in the allegations, including the target/s, the students allegedly engaging in bullying behaviour/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

- Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

## RESPONSES TO BULLYING BEHAVIOURS

When there is sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with parents, teachers, student wellbeing team, Assistant Principal, Principal, and if deemed necessary Specialist staff eg school psychologist.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Mountain Gate Primary School will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the target student
- whether the student/s engaging in bullying behaviour have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context
- whether the students engaging in bullying behaviour demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

**Mountain Gate Primary School may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:**

- Contact the families of students involved and keep them informed of situation.
- Offer counselling support/program to the targeted student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSO, or external provider].
- Offer counselling support / program to the students engaging in bullying behaviour, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSO or external provider].
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the target student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSO, or external provider].
- Facilitate a restorative practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of restorative practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance. Mediation is only suitable if all students are involved voluntarily and demonstrate a willingness to engage in the mediation process.



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

- Facilitate a process using the Support Group Method, involving the target student(s), the students engaging in bullying behaviour and a group of students who are likely to be supportive of the target(s).
- Implement a Method of Shared Concern process with all students involved in the bullying.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare an Individual Management Plan] restricting contact between target and students engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including providing referral for students to Student Support Services where it is deemed necessary in order to gain specialist assistance in personal development eg. anger management, assertiveness training etc.
  
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, Tribes/You Can Do It.
- **Monitor the behaviour of the students** involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the students engaging in bullying behaviour, which may include removal of privileges, alternative recess, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- Track student behaviour (via notes and Sentral) and inform all staff of situation, outcomes and future expectations.

Mountain Gate Primary School understands the importance of monitoring and following up on the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Where appropriate, school staff will also endeavour to provide parents and carers with updates on the management of bullying incidents.

Mountain Gate Primary School is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy
- Parent Complaints policy
- Duty of Care Policy
- Gater Shared Agreements



# Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Kids Matter](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#)

## EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed on a 2 year basis], or earlier as required, following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to bullying to ensure that the policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- Discussion and consultation with students and parent/carers
- Discussion through Tribes Community circles and activities
- Assessment of other school-based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- Student Attitudes to School Survey
- Staff School Climate Survey
- Tracking student incident data in Sentral
- Parent Opinion Survey

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with Education Committee, staff and students where appropriate.

**This policy was last updated in May 2019 and is scheduled for review in May 2021**