



BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

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 which 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 which is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- Cyber bullying which 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.
- Harassment which is aggressive pressure or intimidation.

2 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
- One-Off Acts (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

3 SIGNS OF BULLYING

Major behavioural 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- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence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
- acting unreasonably.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the College through a trusted staff member immediately (such as the Head of School, Wellbeing Coach or class teacher), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

4 MINARET COLLEGE’S POLICY

Minaret College recognises its duty to provide a safe and positive learning environment where equity is upheld and individual differences and diverse needs within the College are respected and accepted in policy and practice.

Bullying is not tolerated at Minaret College. All students have the right to be safe and not harmed by anyone. Child Safety and Wellbeing is embedded in College leadership, governance and culture.

It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a ‘whole-of-College community’ approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians
- bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the College 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
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are implemented in a manner which recognises the importance of friendships, encourages support from peers seeks to develop a culture of participation and responds to what students say.
- Families and the College community have a say in the development and review of policies and practice of the College related to child safety and wellbeing – and bullying prevention and intervention is a part of this.

5 BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Minaret College recognises that the implementation of whole-College 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 College:

- a structured curriculum and peer group support system, 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
- regular provision of information to parents/guardians, to raise awareness of bullying as a College community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the College
- 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/guardians
- 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)
- regular risk assessments of bullying within the College are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff
- 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
- statements supporting bullying prevention are included in students' College diaries
- education of staff, students and parents/guardians on health conditions to promote understanding and to reduce stigma and fear
- anti-bullying posters are displayed strategically within the College
- promotion of student awareness and a 'no-bullying' environment by participating in events such as the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence.

6 REPORTING BULLYING

Students and their parents/guardians are sometimes reluctant to report bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

Key parts of the College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy are to:

- encourage reporting of bullying incidents; and
- provide assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/guardians) that:
 - bullying is not tolerated within the College
 - their concerns will be taken seriously
 - the College has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Anyone can report bullying they notice is affecting anyone else. Often students may tell friends about bullying before telling an adult. To encourage the reporting of bullying to the College and support responsible bystander behaviour by everyone in the College community, the College communicates this Policy via its website, and specific attention is drawn to this policy for parents when their children may be involved in, or at risk of, bullying. The College also encourages students to support their peers by raising concerns and the safety and wellbeing of their friends.

Students, parents and guardians can report bullying incidents to the College verbally or in writing through any of the following avenues:

- informing a trusted teacher
- informing the College counsellor
- informing the student's Year level coach or Wellbeing Specialist
- informing the Head of School, Head of Campus or the Executive Principal.

When a College staff member receives a report about bullying, the staff member must make a record of what they are told and how they will respond to the alleged bullying. This record should include:

- the names of students involved;
- descriptions of how and when the student may be being bullied;
- any direct quotes or words from the student, parent or guardian, or alleged bully; and
- steps discussed with the student, parent or guardian about responding to the bullying.

7 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. All complaints of bullying are taken seriously and will be responded to promptly and thoroughly.

In all circumstances the College:

- takes bullying incidents seriously
- provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their privacy will be respected
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders in order to ensure procedural fairness
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- impresses on all students the value of friendships and peer support
- gives students the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them
- maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

- The “Restorative Practice” Approach
- The “Method of Shared Concern” Approach (Pikas)
- The “No Blame” Approach (Maines & Robinson)
- notification of/consultation with parents/guardians
- offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims
- implementing effective follow up strategies
- disciplinary action, at the Head of School, Head of Campus or Executive Principal’s discretion, including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.

Where appropriate to the instance of bullying, the College will implement actions which enable students to actively participate in creating a culture that is safe for them and their peers.

8 STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff are responsible to:

- model appropriate behaviour at all times
- deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- ensure any incident of bullying 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
- acknowledge the right of the student to be safe and participate in decisions that affect them
- acknowledge the right of parents/guardians to speak with the College if they believe their child is being bullied.

9 SIGNAGE

Anti-bullying posters may be posted in strategic locations in the College to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity.

10 IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/guardian education and information
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported
- the creation of a ‘no-bullying’ culture within the College community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

11 DISCIPLINE FOR BREACH OF POLICY

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

Where a student breaches this policy, Minaret College considers this in the same manner as a breach of the Student Code of Conduct.

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