



# Maitland High School

## Procedure

### Anti-Bullying



Education

#### **Purpose**

This document explains how we provide a safe, supportive and responsive learning environment for students and how we address conflict and bullying behaviours. It also outlines how we teach, model and respond to conflict and bullying.

#### **Applicability**

These procedures apply to all members of the school community – students, parents/carers and staff.

#### **Defining Bullying behaviour**

Bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence are all interpersonal behaviours that can create or contribute to negative social situations and school environments. Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

#### **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.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. Other behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance)
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection
- one-off acts of meanness or spite, and
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

-Bullying No Way!

However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved. Bullying can have a lasting impact on everyone involved, including those who witness it, so it is important to work together to create safe school communities for everyone.

#### **Behaviour Expectations**

Maitland High School does not tolerate bullying behaviour in any of its forms. All students have a right to be free from anti-social, aggressive or threatening behaviour in the playground. Students will not engage in harassment or conflict with other students. All people in the Maitland High School community are expected to care for people and property: students are expected to behave in a respectful and considerate manner towards others and seek non-aggressive ways to deal with interpersonal conflict.

Students at MHS are expected to actively discourage bullying behaviours in peers and report all instances of bullying behaviours to a member of staff. All students at MHS are aware that transgressing the basic rights of fellow students is not tolerated and our response to transgressions is timely and thorough, based on the fair and transparent application of: The Behaviour Code for Students; Student Discipline in Government Schools; Suspension and Expulsion of School Students DoE policies and procedures. Teachers educate students on the impact of bystander behaviour, promote anti-bullying and respond to all allegations of harassment and conflict.



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##### **Anti-bullying school culture**

Preventing bullying involves everyone talking together openly and respectfully. The school community recognises that there are individual and shared responsibilities of students, parents/caregivers and teachers when dealing with bullying behaviour. At our school, the culture enables students to feel able to seek help from: the nearest teacher; their year adviser, deputy or principal and any incidences of anti-social behaviour are acted on swiftly so that the negative behaviour is stopped.

Ensuring a shared definition of bullying is important. Our Wellbeing initiatives, weekly communications to students at Assembly, Student Representative Committee, Prefecture, Peer Support Leaders and classrooms are all utilized to promote an understanding of prosocial behaviours and an understanding of what bullying is and what we can do about it individually and collectively as a school. One of the biggest and best-supported days on the school calendar is 'Pink Day' where all students participate in visibly demonstrating their stand against bullying.

##### **Proactive Wellbeing Programs**

The school's Wellbeing and Positive Behaviour for Success programs explicitly target the teaching of expected behaviours and the interpersonal skills needed to support these. Additionally, Wellbeing lessons in Year 7 cover a range of social and interpersonal skills development; a strong focus on developing empathy, tolerance, understanding and universal respect, as well as; resilience, positive peer interventions and self-regulation practice. These lessons are conducted by the Head Teacher Wellbeing and are often supported by the School Counsellor and one of our Educational Support Dogs.

##### **Maitland High School Anti-bullying Plan**

Maitland High School's Anti-Bullying Plan engages the whole school community in developing an effective and cohesive set of strategies to ensure that bullying is addressed using a proactive and preventative foundation through targeted education and intervention. This involves educating the school community about what constitutes bullying. This is done through year group meetings, staff meetings and via electronic media, such as the website, Facebook and newsletters.

##### **Preventing Bullying is everybody's responsibility**

All MHS staff must be active in attempting to reduce harassment and conflict by: reporting via Sentral and; dealing with harassment and conflict between students when they are notified, or when they see an incident. Students are actively encouraged by staff to report incidents of harassment and conflict. This means that whenever someone in the school community feels they are not able to handle a situation by themselves, or it has been ongoing, they should ask for help. If any student sees someone else in a similar situation, they should also ask for help from a staff member. Teachers are the first people who have a responsibility to help students reporting incidences of harassment and conflict.



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#### Addressing identified bullying behaviour

If bullying behaviour is identified, Wellbeing staff (i.e. the Head Teacher Wellbeing, School Counsellor, Student Support Officer) and Senior Executive (i.e. Principal and Deputy Principals) may use:

- a range of Restorative Justice approaches to mediate conflict and to develop understanding and empathy
- parent interviews
- Student Support Officer or School Counsellor support around self-regulation, self-esteem and anxiety
- Formal Caution of Suspension (Senior Executive), and
- the Principal may implement disciplinary consequences, such as suspension.

The Senior Executive determine if there is a sustained record of harassment which constitutes bullying behaviour and if evidence indicates that this is the case, the principal will suspend the offending student. In the return from suspension process, the student will be required to demonstrate through restorative justice reflection and personal commitment, that they no longer pose a threat to the wellbeing of others. At times, this may also include the development of a Risk Management Plan and/or a Safety Plan to manage risk, and the safety and wellbeing of the victim of bullying behaviour.

The anti-bullying procedures at MHS implement the DoE's Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy PD20060316 in a timely, transparent and considered manner.

These processes are transparent and regularly communicated to the school community to sustain our positive learning environment. They are addressed weekly on Assembly, through Newsletter and across classrooms. Educative, preventative and Restorative Justice processes are implemented to ensure bullying behaviours and their harmful effect on others, are minimised.

#### People with special responsibility for student wellbeing and support

**The Principal** is a member of the Learning & Support Team. The Principal also conducts Learning & Support meetings with students and parents/carers. She conducts return-to-school meetings when students are returning from long suspensions, mediates conflicts with students, prepares conflict management and return from suspension plans and ensures that disciplinary action around conflict and harassment is managed promptly and fairly.

**The Head Teacher Wellbeing** coordinates the Learning and Support Team, and conducts weekly team meetings. This HT also receives referrals from teachers and allocates an appropriate case manager. S/he works with teachers, parents and student to formulate a plan to support the student, implemented by all teachers. The Head Teacher Wellbeing can coordinate support for students involved in conflict or who have experienced harassment through The Wellbeing Centre.

**Year Advisers** are members of the Learning & Support Team. They can meet with parents/carers and students to review and update any learning support plans. They can act as mentors and touch-base person for students who are involved in or are victims of harassment and conflict.

**Deputy Principals** belong to the Learning & Support Team. They also conduct Learning & Support Team meetings with students and parents/carers to review and update any learning support plans. The Deputy Principals can conduct return-to-school meetings following short suspensions. They can allocate mentors and a 'check in' person for students



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who are involved in, or impacted by, harassment and conflict. The Deputy Principal informs parents and discusses how the school has responded to redress the impact and manage the safety and wellbeing of the victim.

**The School Counsellors** provide counselling for students. These students can be referred by the Learning & Support Team, by parents or they can self-refer. Parent/carer permission is required unless a student self-refers. Our counsellors can provide strategies around resilience for students who are victims of harassment and conflict.

**The Student Support Officer (SSO)** provides individual advice on resilience, friendship, anti-bullying, cyber-bullying and general wellbeing issues. The SSO coordinates programs such as *Love Bites*, *Youth Mental Health First Aid*, *Drug & Alcohol Awareness* and small group activities such as friendship, hygiene and body image as well as anti-bullying behaviours.

**The Learning Centre** conducts a withdrawal learning space for students whose behaviour or mental health prevents them from attending a regular class for short periods. These teachers also support students to self-manage and transition back to their regular classes.

**The Learning & Support Team** is coordinated by the Head Teacher Wellbeing, and consists of the Principal, both Deputy Principals, Head Teacher: Support, PLC Teacher, Year Advisers, LaSTs, SSO and Counsellors. The team meets weekly to discuss the wellbeing of students.

#### Reporting bullying behaviour

**Teachers** will respond to all incidents of harassment and conflict by:

- Actively listening to the student reporting the incident, ensure the immediate safety of the student and provide appropriate support.
- Determine a course of action depending on the nature of the incident and ensuring that bullying behaviour and harassment is brought to the immediate attention of the Deputy Principal responsible for the year group.
- The teacher may discuss the situation with the student(s) involved as soon as practical and as a priority. This should occur on the same day as the student reports harassment or conflict where possible. The teacher will assist the student to identify strategies they could use to overcome conflict and/or develop an action plan to use to avoid further conflict.
- The teacher must record the details of the incident on Sentral. The referral must be forwarded to the appropriate Deputy Principal if it involves serious or protracted conflict. Physical aggression or verbal abuse should be immediately reported to the appropriate deputy principal or to the principal.
- Where the student report involves less obvious but ongoing harassment which may have escalated over time, the intervention of the Deputy Principal should be sought. The Deputy Principal should inform the parents about the harassment and of how the school has responded.
- Where teacher intervention has determined that the situation could be resolved through implementing an action plan and assisting the victim to use a variety of strategies, the responsible teacher should monitor the situation for 4-5 school days and make contact with the student at the end of the agreed time to determine if the situation has been resolved. Details of the follow up with the students involved should be recorded on Sentral. Where further action is required, the Sentral report should be referred to the Deputy Principal for further action under the discipline procedures.



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- Where a student exhibiting bullying behaviours has been identified by the Senior Executive, the student may be supported through interventions from the Student Support Officer or the School Counsellor. Senior Executive may make contact with the parent via a phone call or letter or may request a parental interview.
- Where bullying of a significant or physical nature is identified by the Senior Executive, timely contact with the parent and disciplinary consequences, in line with the MHS Discipline Policy, may be implemented.

These reporting procedures are also contained in the New Student Handbook, the Year 7 Information Booklet, and the New Staff Handbook. They are also publicised in newsletters, at parent meetings and through the P&C meetings.

#### Parent/carer support and actions

Parents and carers are encouraged to contact the school early if they feel their child is experiencing difficulty in their peer group or is being targeted and bullied by others. If a parent /carer is wondering whether they should contact the school, the answer is always 'yes'. A problem is much easier to address while it is small or nascent than it is once it has become entrenched and significant. It is important for all adults to remember that issues that may appear trivial to an adult can have a big impact on a young person if timely support is not provided. Sometimes reassurance of support, understanding and the knowledge that adults will act to alleviate and address anxieties and issues is enough to prevent increasing anxiety. If the matter is a minor one or involves a student struggling with peer friendships, the year adviser is an appropriate person with whom to discuss concerns. If the issue involves bullying, parents should contact the deputy principal of the year group, or the principal as soon as possible.

#### Link to policy

Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy. Reference Number : PD/2010/0415/V01

The [Student Discipline in Government Schools - Support Materials \(PDF 439.04 KB\)](#) offers guidance and support. You can go to [detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoriesaz/stuwelfare/studiscipline/index.htm](http://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/lists/directoriesaz/stuwelfare/studiscipline/index.htm)

Mindmatters: <http://www.mindmatters.edu.au>

Kidsmatter: [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)

Cybersmart: [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au)

National Coalition Against Bullying: [www.ncab.org.au](http://www.ncab.org.au)

Bullying. No Way!: [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

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