

Bullying prevention and intervention

Scope

This Policy applies to all College activities, including camps and excursions.

It also applies outside of school hours and off College premises where students have been involved and there is a clear and close connection to the College.

Bullying

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 can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or using one's physical presence, or physical bodily acts, to hurt or intimidate someone or threaten violence. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying
- **Verbal/written bullying** examples include: name-calling or insulting someone about an attribute, quality or personal characteristic
- **Social (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying)** examples include deliberate acts of exclusion, spreading rumours or sharing information to have a harmful effect on the other person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance

Cyberbullying which is the misuse of power within a relationship to repeatedly threaten or harm another person using technology. **Cyberbullying behaviour** may include:

- abusive texts and email.
- hurtful messages, images or videos
- imitating others online
- excluding others online

- humiliating others online
- spreading nasty online gossip and chat
- creating fake accounts or 'avatars' to trick someone or humiliate them.

Cyberbullying can occur on internet services, social media and electronic services that enable communication including, but not limited to, instant messaging, chat services, email communications, online games, SMS and MMS. It can be verbal or written and can include images, videos and/or audio.

These behaviours can also be an indicator of child abuse and other harm.

Bullying can be illegal if it involves intimidation, stalking, physical violence, threats of violence or damaging property.

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.

Signs of bullying or Cyberbullying

Major behavioural changes in a student may be indicative of being bullied. These 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, a school organised activity or reluctance to attend other social events
- feeling ill in the mornings
- a decline in quality of school work
- becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
- appearing lonely or distressed
- beginning to display bullying behaviour towards siblings
- unexpected changes in friendship groups
- acting unreasonably.

Students may also not disclose cyberbullying to adults through fear that the adults may overreact and make the situation worse. Signs of cyberbullying to watch out for may include one or more of the behavioural changes outlined above, and/or other signs, including a student:

- being upset after using the internet or their mobile phone
- being hesitant to go online, avoiding their phone or seeming nervous when an instant message, text message or email appears
- spending unusually long hours online or on their mobile phone
- becoming secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the College through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a class teacher), if they suspect that their child is being bullied.

These behaviours can also be an indicator of child abuse and other harm.

Our Policy

The McDonald College is committed to the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people, to acting in students' best interests and to keeping them safe from harm.

The McDonald College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the College is respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at The McDonald College.

It is our policy that:

- bullying be managed through a 'whole-of-College community' approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians
- bullying prevention strategies are 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 are tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- we establish procedures for reporting and responding to child safety concerns, including when the behaviour may be an indicator of child abuse and other harm
- 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 strategies

The McDonald 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 social and emotional competencies relating to bullying (including cyberbullying) 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.
- Appropriate sharing among staff of information about cyberbullying incidents.
- 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).
- Students are supported by their teachers, pastoral care staff and the College leadership when they report a bullying incident and during the processes that follow the submission of the report.
- 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 students who persistently intimidate or bully and/or students who are persistently bullied and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- Statements supporting bullying prevention are included in student communications.
- 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.

Reporting bullying

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 the College's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing support and 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.

Reporting Bullying Incidents to the College

Bullying incidents can be advised to the College verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

Parents and students are encouraged to report cases of bullying, depending on severity, firstly to their Year Co-ordinator, then to the Deputy Principal or Director of Junior School, Director of Performing Arts (if applicable) or the Principal. Details of how to access external help services is available on the College Website / Community / Wellbeing and Welfare.

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner About Cyberbullying Material Targeted at a Child

Making a Complaint

Where Cyberbullying Material is targeted at a child under the age of 18 years, a complaint can be made to:

- the provider of a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) -see [The eSafety Guide](#) for information about providers
- the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).

Complaints to the eSafety Commissioner can be made through [the online portal](#) by the child, their parent or guardian, or an adult authorised by the child to make the complaint. The eSafety Commissioner has the power investigate the complaint and to issue a removal notice.

For the eSafety Commissioner to investigate cyberbullying, the harmful content must have first been reported to the service or platform used to send, post or share it – at least 48 hours before it is reported to eSafety.

Cyberbullying Material

Cyberbullying material that is provided on a social media service, relevant electronic service, designated internet service (as defined in the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)) that an ordinary person reasonable person would conclude is likely to:

- be intended to have an effect on a particular child; and
- have the direct or indirect effect on the child as seriously threatening, seriously intimidating, seriously harassing or seriously humiliating the child,

can be the subject of complaint to the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act.

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 College:

- takes bullying incidents seriously
- takes seriously, and monitors single incidents of conflict or fights between students, that do not ordinarily amount to bullying, for signs of ongoing behaviour, which may be an indicator of bullying
- provides assurance to the student being bullied that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected
- ensures that teachers, pastoral care and College leadership staff support the student being bullied through the reporting process and the corresponding investigation and resolution processes
- engages a Student Council, or similar, to instigate anti-bullying initiatives
- ensures that student leaders support the College's anti-bullying policy and promote anti-bullying behaviours
- takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the student being bullied, the student who was bullying and any bystanders
- keeps parents and guardians of both the student who was bullied and the student who did the bullying, informed of the situation as and when appropriate to do so
- takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved
- maintains records of reported bullying incidents
- will escalate its response when dealing with students who persistently bully and/or for severe incidents, even if these are not necessarily repetitive
- considers whether the behaviour gives rise to concerns that the student exhibiting the behaviour and/or the student subject to the behaviour may be experiencing child abuse other harm, and, if so, follows the [College's Child Safe Program](#)

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include

- the "Method of Shared Concern" Approach (Pikas)
- the "No Blame" Approach (Maines & Robinson)

These approaches may be used to intervene in group or relational bullying situations. They are only appropriate during the initial stages. They are not appropriate for persistent or severe bullying incidents.

- notification of/consultation with parents/guardians
- offering counselling to students who persistently bully/students who are persistently bullied
- implementing effective follow up strategies

- disciplinary action, at the Principal, Deputy Principal or Director of the Junior School's discretion, including suspension and expulsion of students who persistently bully, or in cases of severe incidents.

Bullying support services

The College also provides access to the following support services:

Members of the Wellbeing team are available to provide support: Class Teacher

Year Co-ordinator (Secondary)

Director of Junior School (Junior School)

Head of Wellbeing Mentor (Years 11 and 12)

College Psychologist

Deputy Principal

Principal

Office of the eSafety Commissioner

The [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#) provides resources, advice and strategies for parents, schools and children on how to deal with cyberbullying for people under the age of 18

Staff responsibilities

All staff are responsible to

- modelling appropriate behaviour at all times
- dealing with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy
- ensuring that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately
- being vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either students who persistently bully or are persistently bullied
- considering whether the behaviour gives rise to concerns that the student exhibiting the behaviour and/or the student subject to the behaviour may be experiencing child abuse or other harm, and, if so, follows the College's procedures for Responding to and Reporting Child Safety Incidents or Concerns
- acknowledging the right of parents/carers to speak with the College if they believe their child is being bullied

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

Implementation

This Policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/carer education and information involvement of external bodies and authorities as and when appropriate
- effective incident reporting and recording 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.