



MANDURAH
BAPTIST COLLEGE

Bullying Prevention Policy



Mandurah Baptist College aims to address the problem of bullying and aims to provide highly effective support structures for victims of bullying. All staff, parents and students of the College have a duty of care to each other, ensuring a safe and non-threatening environment for all.

Definitions

Bullying

The national definition of bullying for Australian schools says:

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). Online (cyber) bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies, e.g. the internet or mobile devices. Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

In short, bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships involving a pattern of harmful verbal, physical or social behaviour.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. However, these conflicts still need to be addressed and resolved.

Covert bullying

Covert bullying is a subtle type of non-physical bullying which usually isn't easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight of, and often unacknowledged by adults. Covert bullying behaviours mostly inflict harm by damaging another's social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem. Covert bullying can be carried out in a range of ways (e.g. spreading rumours, conducting a malicious social exclusion campaign and/or through the use of internet or mobile phone technologies).

Covert bullying includes social exclusion and intimidation. The term 'covert' highlights the fact that not all bullying is physical or obvious to others. Covert bullying can have the same harmful impacts as more obvious bullying, as it can be more isolating, can go on for longer before other people become aware of it, and can be more easily denied by the other person.

Cyber Bullying

Involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, text messages, instant messaging and websites to engage in the bullying of other individuals or groups. Cyber bullying is covert bullying as it is not easily seen and involves repeated hostile behaviour that is intended to cause harm and distress. This type of bullying provides an alternative means for verbal, relational and psychological bullying.

Types of Bullying

Physical

e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, bumping, shoving, scratching or tripping someone repeatedly, throwing objects with the intent to injure or annoy.

Verbal

e.g. constant teasing in a sarcastic and offensive manner, name-calling and offensive nicknames, swearing to unsettle or upset others, homophobic comments to cause distress, racist or sexist comments.

Emotional

e.g. being excluded from group conversations and activities, making up or spreading rumours to facilitate dislike for someone, being ignored repeatedly, purposeful misleading or being lied to (or about), making stories up to get others into trouble.

Property

e.g. interfering with someone's belongings, damaging other's personal items, repeatedly hiding someone's possessions.

Cyber

e.g. spreading gossip and rumours through email or text/instant messages, sending offensive text/phone or email messages, abusive phone calls, posting personal information on internet sites without permission to cause distress and humiliate.

Conflict and Teasing

Not all aggressive or potentially harmful behaviour between people is bullying. Conflict, teasing and fighting amongst peers may represent the normal dynamics of a particular friendship and children need to have the skills to deal with these situations.

Conflict

Conflict and bullying are the symptoms of aggression between people. In a conflict two people of equal power are in dispute and may feel that their needs are not being met. Bullying occurs when one person or group tries to overpower another person in such a way that abuses their rights. If handled well, conflict is considered to be an opportunity for personal growth. Conflicts and aggressive behaviour threatening the safety of a student will be dealt with in accordance with the College's Discipline Policy.

Teasing

"I was just joking!" is a common response when someone is confronted with questions about their behaviour. Joking is reciprocal. The intention is to create humour and fun; usually between friends. Teasing is not reciprocal. It is a one-sided exchange that provokes anger, resentment and/or confusion. Some children seem to enjoy joking. What children often don't know is when to stop. Something that appears to be good natured and fun can turn into feeling uncomfortable for the receiver. It is at this point that the receiver needs to be able to ask for the teasing to stop. If it continues, this may be considered bullying.

"Something that appears to be good natured and fun can turn into feeling uncomfortable for the receiver."

Prevention Strategies

The key to preventing bullying from occurring is to create a culture at the College where students respect each other and enjoy learning together in a safe and supportive environment. There are several ways to ensure this happens:

1. Culture and Expectation

All students at Mandurah Baptist College are aware of the expectations that we have of them regarding their behaviour through the Student Code of Conduct. Most of our students live up to these expectations. Both student leadership and staff leadership make an ongoing contribution towards building a positive school culture. The College anti bullying policy, student code of conduct policy and the behaviour policies are clear and followed.

2. Education

At Mandurah Baptist College, our students participate in structured Social and Emotional Learning programs called, "You Can Do It" or the "Friendly Schools Plus" curriculum. Key foci include: anti-bullying, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, bystander behaviour, social decision-making, resilience, confidence, persistence, getting along and organisation.

As part of this program, students are encouraged to deal with conflict in constructive ways, to communicate in more effective ways and to examine their thinking processes in order to find more rational ways of dealing with difficult situations or people. This helps to "up-skill" both the bully and the victim. Staff professional learning in how to best manage bullying scenarios and how to build a positive culture is ongoing.

3. Positive Environment

The College campus is designed with safe spaces in mind for students. Staff actively supervise students during all breaks including before and after school. Classroom physical environments, seating plans and learning environments are designed to provide safe spaces for learning.

4. Peer support

Students are provided with training that teaches them how to mentor and provide support for each other. Bystander behaviour is taught to students, and student leaders are involved in setting a positive culture. Peer mentors are trained in restorative justice techniques and are available to all students during recess and lunch times.

5. College-Family-Community partnership

The College is committed to communicating clearly with families as bullying and behaviour issues arise. This involves support for victims and communication, feedback and support for bullies. The College also utilises links to relevant health, education and community agencies that provide services to students and their families.

Intervention Strategies

Despite preventative strategies, bullying behaviours do sometimes occur. Mandurah Baptist College's approach falls into two categories: early-intervention and intensive-intervention.

1. Early-intervention

Report teasing or bullying behaviours early by talking to a Teacher or Head of Year. College staff will work with parents/guardians and students with flexibility in approach when choosing the most appropriate early intervention strategy.

- **Meeting with staff member**

In many instances it is appropriate for a staff member to meet with the bully to speak through the issue. Some students exhibiting bullying behaviour have issues in their own life they need support with. While this does not excuse the bullying behaviour, having a staff member talk to them about their behaviour can be a very effective strategy in stopping the bullying and sorting the issue. Several staff at the College are able to run these meetings including the Deputy Principal and Head of Year.

- **Restorative conferencing**

When bullying is identified, rather than impose punishment on the bully, which may lead to further repercussions for the victim, we may organise for the victim and the bully to meet together with the Deputy Principal or Head of Year to discuss the problem and find ways to restore the broken relationship. Without the threat of punishment hanging over the bully, students will usually find a way to resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of all involved.

- **Student By-Stander behaviour**

Students are encouraged to act on behalf of a victim if they notice a student being bullied. This may include talking to the bullies, reporting it to a teacher and providing support to the victim. Student leaders play an important role in this regard.

- **Motivational Interviewing**

This process involves a staff member meeting with an identified bully to build intrinsic motivation to change their bullying behaviour.

- **Record keeping**

All bullying incidents are documented and recorded on SEQTA so that we can track students who are the victims or perpetrators of bullying incidents. Parents are contacted when bullying takes place.

2. Intensive-intervention

If bullying continues after an early intervention strategy or if bullying is severe and early intervention strategies are not appropriate then intensive intervention is used. This involves:

- **Intervention Plan**

Creation of an intervention plan involving the bully, their parents/guardians, the Deputy Principal and/or Pastoral Care staff.

- **Sanctions**

For involvement in on-going bullying after a recorded formal early intervention strategy, the student would be suspended for one day. Any further bullying would result in further suspensions or their exclusion from the College in line with the Discipline Policy.

- **Support**

Victims will be offered support from our Pastoral Care Team. The College Psychologist, Counsellors, Chaplain and Head of Year are staff members who are able to assist. Many intervention plans will also involve separate support for the bully. This could include motivational interviewing, mentoring or counselling support.



Cyber Bullying

With other forms of bullying that take place at school, students receive some respite from it when they leave the school grounds and enter the safety of their own home. Cyber bullying is far more invasive than other forms of bullying as victims can be exposed to it whenever they have their mobile phone on or are using the internet. This can potentially expose students to cyber bullying 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mandurah Baptist College's approach and response to cyber bullying:

1. College Policies

- Cyber bullying forms part of the Bullying Prevention Policy, along with raising awareness, supervision and programs in place to educate students.
- The Discipline Policy will apply to students who engage in cyber bullying.
- Student Code of Conduct outlines standards of expected behaviour

2. Curriculum

- As cyber bullying occurs in on-line environments where there are rarely responsible adults present, students are taught to independently prevent cyber bullying and to address the underlying issues.
- The College's curriculum programs incorporate social skills and values education as part of:
 - Health Education
 - ICT classes
 - "You Can Do It" or "Friendly Schools and Families" program in Primary School
 - Friendly Schools Plus curriculum for Years 7 - 9 in Senior School
 - Program delivery as part of the Protective Behaviours Curriculum

3. Professional Development

Teachers delivering specific programs are trained to instruct students about cyber bullying.

4. Parent Education

The College provides parent/guardians with information about cyber bullying concerns, how to prevent, detect and intervene if their child is being cyber bullied, about how to prevent their child from participating in cyber bullying.

- **Parent Resources:**
 - Parent's Guide to Online Safety:
<https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/resource-centre/brochure-parents-guide-to-online-safety>
 - Bullying. No way!:
<https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>
 - Student Wellbeing Hub:
<https://www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/>

5. Peer Support Program

Peer support programs, buddy programs and transition programs help to develop an ethos of support in the school community.

6. College Processes

- Students and Parents/Guardians are required sign the 'Computer and Internet Conditions of Use' Agreement upon enrolment.
- Effective supervision and monitoring for deterring cyber bullying.
- Effective intervention for detecting, investigating and responding to incidents of cyber bullying.



Response to Bullying that occurs off-campus

If a student or students who attend Mandurah Baptist College engage in bullying behaviour towards other students from the College outside school this will have a negative impact on the victim's relationship with those students whilst at the College. For this reason Mandurah Baptist College reserves the right to apply the Bullying Prevention Policy including imposing formal sanctions

when any act takes place on or off-campus that causes or threatens to cause a substantial and material disruption or interference with the rights of students to feel safe and secure. This includes bullying or intimidation at shopping centres, on buses, on the internet or via mobile phones. These sanctions may include suspension or exclusion from the College in line with the Discipline Policy.

Advice for Students and Parents/Guardians

What can students do if they are bullied?

1. If it is minor and doesn't bother you, ignore it.
2. If the bullying continues, tell the bully that you do not like what is happening and you want it to stop. Use an assertive confident sounding voice. Find a safe place to have this conversation.
3. If the bullying continues past this point, tell your Teacher or Head of Year. They will support you through the issue. They will use the early intervention strategy.
4. If the bullying continues, tell your Teacher or Head of Year. They will notify the Deputy Principal and after speaking with you an intensive strategy may need to be used.
5. Any bullying that continues after this needs to be reported immediately to the Deputy Principal.

What can students do if they see bullying happening?

1. If you feel able, ask the bully to stop.
2. Provide support for the victim by staying with them and encouraging them.
3. Bystanders must report bullying behaviour to the Teacher or Head of Year. You may wish to offer to do this with the victim.
4. Keep an eye out for any more bullying incidents that may occur. Talk to the Teacher or Head of Year if you have concerns.

What can parents/guardians do?

As parents/guardians you are the most influential role models for your child

1. Take an active interest in what your child does at school and in their social life.
2. Foster a tolerant home life by:
 - Encouraging your child to bring friends home
 - Accept and tolerate differences within others
 - Set firm but fair boundaries
 - Demonstrate care and consideration for others.
3. Discuss bullying:
 - Talk about the school's expectations
 - Advise that retaliation does not solve the problem
 - Report instances of bullying to the Teacher or Head of Year
 - Support the school's early intervention and intensive intervention strategies
 - Explain what to do if your child witnesses bullying occurring to others.

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