

6.5.4 BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

PREAMBLE

Concern and responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of all students is of prime importance at Mount Evelyn Christian School (MECS) and Ranges TEC. We look to God as our example, a father who nurtures his children throughout their life with his provision of love and guidance. This establishes the foundation that we are a community where all staff and parents/caregivers work in partnership to establish a safe and supportive environment for all students. Such an environment can then enhance student learning opportunities and foster academic development, as well as support students spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and mental wellbeing.

The Student Bullying Policy overlaps with the following policies: 6.4.1 Student Discipline and Behaviour Policy, 6.4.3 Mobile Phone Policy, 6.5.1 Student Welfare Policy, 6.5.5 Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, 6.10.4 Student Use of ICT Policy and 6.11.1 Inclusion Policy.

RATIONALE

All schools hold the obligation to ensure that the school environment is a safe place, free of bullying, harassment, and the isolation of individuals. To provide a safe learning environment, MECS and Ranges TEC ensures steps are taken to prevent all forms of bullying and harassment and take a strong stand that ensures all students and school staff are aware that the school does not tolerate these harmful behaviours.

POLICY SUMMARY

This policy outlines the basis on which the MECS and Ranges TEC school communities seeks to care for students within its community. The policy defines bullying and related harmful behaviours; outlines the school's commitment to prevent and minimise these behaviours, and how the school will respond when bullying occurs.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is harmful behaviour that is intimidating, threatening, or humiliating and repeated over time or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour. Bullying behaviours cause distress, hurt and or undue pressure to others including exclusion, enticing others to exclude, ganging up, teasing, harassment (sexual/physical), discrimination (appearance, ability, race, beliefs), and intimidation. Bullying can occur in various forms, leading to the creation of an unfriendly, threatening, or offensive environment.

Forms of Bullying may include:

Victimisation - The specific targeting of one person by another person or a group of persons for repeated actions or comments of an unwelcome and unwanted nature. It is often inflicted on the subject in retaliation for a stand that has been taken against a wrong action or a complaint lodged against harassment or bullying.

Harassment - Any unwanted, unsolicited, and unreciprocated behaviour or statement that offends, embarrasses, or humiliates someone. Harassment may also include engaging in intimidating behaviours whereby an individual is threatened to behave in

Sexual harassment - An individual makes an unwelcome sexual advance or an unwelcome request for sexual favours or engages in other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.

Physical abuse - Any action of an unwanted nature inflicted upon a person which incurs hurt or harm to their bodies. For example, hitting with hands or objects, slapping and punching.

Psychological and emotional abuse - Any action or comment of an unwanted nature directed towards a person which has the effect of creating fear, isolation, distress, humiliation, or affront in the victim.

Cyber bullying - The use of electronic communication to bully and harm a person, such as sending messages, videos or photos of an intimidating or threatening nature. For example, via email, text messaging and the use of social media platforms.

Bullying does not include mutual conflict situations (where there is an agreement or disagreement but not an imbalance or misuse of power), social rejection or dislike (unless involving deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude, or create dislike for others), single-episode or random acts, and occasions where bullying is genuinely perceived but is not actual.

IMPLEMENTATION

Duty of Care

Duty of Care is a legal term describing the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and protective of the students' wellbeing while under their supervision. Bullying directly impacts a student's wellbeing and the feelings of safety within the school environment. In response this, the school takes a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying. All bullying will be responded to in a manner with the aim to discontinue bullying. All reports of bullying will be taken seriously. Reports of bullying will be investigated, and immediately responded to. A relevant staff leader will oversee the situation to ensure that the bullying behaviour does not continue.

MECS and Ranges TEC is committed to:

Prevention

- Students are informed about bullying, relevant policies and processes involved.

- Providing an environment where students are free from any form of bullying, harassment and any other behaviours and situations that may cause harm.
- Supporting students to develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school community at large.
- Identifying students at risk and ensuring appropriate measures and supports are provided to address their needs.
- Encouraging an attitude of positive self-esteem and self-worth through the knowledge that each student is made in the image of God and are deeply loved and valued with unique strengths and giftings.
- Ensuring that students are appreciated and supported around *who* they are, rather than what they can do.
- Encouraging and supporting the development of self-disciplined young people.

Awareness & Response

- All staff should be knowledgeable about bullying behaviours and aware of the process and associated roles for responding to such behaviour. This includes being aware of and acknowledging all involved, perpetrator(s) and victim(s).
- All staff should participate in taking steps to prevent bullying and harassment behaviours.
- As determined by the Assistant Principals and Director of Ranges TEC, staff members shall periodically undertake professional learning designed to increase awareness of bullying in schools and to increase their skill and confidence in dealing with bullying.
- School leaders, in collaboration with relevant staff, will develop a plan to support positive behaviours and prevent bullying, which may include outlining restrictive areas of play for students (perpetrator(s) and victim(s)). Within the plan will include preventative steps, strategies for response, and actions students are encouraged to take when become distressed, including accessing wellbeing support options.
- As part of the MECS commitment to parent partnership, parents/caregivers will always be notified by the relevant staff leader if their child is either a victim or perpetrator of bullying. Parents will be invited to be part of the restorative process if deemed necessary.
- Where incidents of bullying occur, victims have the right to expect that such incidents shall be treated seriously and dealt with promptly and effectively. The health and well-being of the victims of bullying shall be of paramount importance and all reasonable measures shall be taken to support victims.
- In the case of incidents of bullying occurring outside of school hours and/or away from school premises, the school will take reasonable action within the limits of its capacity to do so.

- Each reported incident of alleged bullying shall be assessed against the definitions provided above, as not all distressing behaviours and socially unpleasant situations are examples of bullying.
- Disciplinary measures in relation to proven incidents of bullying shall be determined in accordance with our Student Behaviour Policy and other relevant policies and may include the suspension or expulsion of students.
- The Assistant Principals of MECS, and the Director of Ranges TEC will ensure that specific procedures that are age-appropriate and relevant to each section/campus of the school are developed as required.
- The Executive Leadership of the school shall ensure that the school is proactive in making members of the school community aware of helpful organisations in this that also help raise awareness of this issue and provide helpful advice and resources.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- MECS and Ranges TEC will monitor and evaluate the implementation of plans in response to bullying. Where plans are not successful, further discussion, collaboration and adjustments of the plan will occur.
- Students who have been impacted by bullying (perpetrator(s) and victim(s)) will be monitored, and where applicable, additional wellbeing support will be provided.
- The School will routinely review the current bullying processes, programs and policies to assess their effectiveness and continue to enhance and adapt where needed.

Policy Approved

By: Executive

On: June 2023

Policy to be Reviewed.

By: Executive

In: 2025