

Mount Ridley Prep – 12 College

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Preamble:

The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requires Victorian schools to have policies which provide students with a safe learning environment where the risk of harm is minimized and they feel physically and emotional secure.

This Anti-Bullying Policy should be read in conjunction with the College's Student Engagement Policy and Healthy Relationships Policy.

Rationale:

Mount Ridley P-12 College aims to create a safe and respectful environment for all of our students. We work hard on teaching students how to interact in a safe and respectful way by promoting the College values of Respect and Tolerance, Honesty and Trust, Personal Success and Responsibility. In line with these values, Mount Ridley P-12 College adopts a zero-tolerance policy on bullying. This means that teachers, staff, families, students and the wider community have a responsibility to notice and report incidences of bullying.



Guiding Principles:

Bullying is the misuse of power by one group and/or an individual over another individual and/or group over an extended period of time. Bullying behaviour can cause someone to feel threatened, frightened, hurt or want to injure themselves or someone else.

Types of Bullying

There are a number of different types of bullying that can occur in schools. This list is not exhaustive and many of these bullying practices may exist together.

- **Physical Bullying**
Any Intentional and unwelcome use of physical contact or deliberate property damage
- **Verbal Bullying**
Use of language to threaten, humiliate, offend or hurt.
- **Exclusion Bullying**
Deliberately leaving someone out of a friendship group or activity to cause feelings of non-acceptance
- **Racial/Religious Bullying**
Antagonism or prejudice directed towards someone based on his or her race and/or religion.
- **Sexual Bullying**
Any unwelcome comments, attention, contact or behaviour of a sexual nature that is humiliating, offensive or intimidating.
- **Gesture Bullying**

Use of non-verbal signs to intimidate or threaten someone.

- **Cyber Bullying**

Use of technological devices and social media to spread rumours, intimidate, defame, hurt, sexually harass or spread fear. For example, defamatory social media posts, emails and text messages; or trolling blogs and chat rooms.

What bullying is not (taken from DET's Building Respectful and Safe Schools Resource):

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.

- **Mutual conflict:** involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- **Social rejection or dislike:** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts:** of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned, as these are unacceptable behaviours.

Implementation:

- At Mount Ridley P-12 College, we believe that bullying behaviour is not to be ignored.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to act when bullying occurs.
- Students are required to report alleged bullying incidents to a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to, or directly to the classroom teacher, yard duty teacher, Team Leader, Student Manager, Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing, or a Student Wellbeing Counsellor.
- Students have a responsibility to avoid bystander behaviour and speak up for those not in a position to do so.
- Staff have a responsibility to report all alleged cases of bullying to their relevant Team Leader, Student Manager or Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing as soon as possible. It is then the responsibility of the Team Leader, Student Manager and/or Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing to investigate the incident further.
- Students who require support in the development of effective social skills (e.g. resilience and anger management) are provided with opportunities to participate in small group programs provided by the Student Wellbeing team.
- The College recognises that Parents/Guardians are the first educators of our students. Mount Ridley P-12 College encourages parents/guardians to model and teach students about respectful and safe relationships.
- Mount Ridley P-12 College encourages parents/guardians to reinforce positive behaviours and anti-bullying messages at home.
- At Mount Ridley P-12 College, responses to allegations of bullying are based on a Restorative Practices Model, whereby students are encouraged to understand the implications of their actions and consider ways to change their behaviour.

First Incident

- Where the incident is the *first offence* students will be spoken with about their behaviour, ensuring that the student understands why their behaviour is unacceptable. Restorative Practices will frame these discussions. Contact with parents/guardians may be made and the student incident referred to the Team Leader, Student Manager, Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing or MiniSchool Assistant Principal, depending on the nature of the incident. Consequences at this point could include:
 - Redemptions
 - Mediation Sessions
 - Parent Correspondence via Bullying Notification Letter

- Where necessary, the student who has been bullied will be referred to the Student Wellbeing team and their parents/guardians will be informed about the incident.

Second Incident

- Where the incident is the *second offence*, steps will be taken to ensure the bullying does not continue.
- Students involved in bullying behaviours will receive a 40-minute after school redemption. Parents/Guardians will be notified via phone and/or through a second Bullying Notification letter, depending on the nature of the bullying incident.
- The student who has been bullied will be referred to the Student Wellbeing team to discuss emotional wellbeing strategies and their parents/guardians will be informed about the incident.

Third Incident

- When the incident is a *third offence*, students will be issued with a 70-minute after school redemption.
- Parents/Guardians will be requested to attend a Student Support Group to discuss the ongoing nature of the bullying.
- Students involved in the bullying will be referred to the Student Wellbeing team for ongoing support.

Ongoing Incidences

- The consequences for ongoing bullying are at the discretion of the College and may include, but are not limited to:
 - suspension
 - restricting the offending student's movement around the College
 - initiating a change of class or seriously considering the future enrolment status of the offending student
- These breaches of the student code of conduct will be considered extremely serious.
- Parents/Guardians of the offending student will be contacted, and the student who has been harassed or bullied will be referred to the Student Services team and their parents/guardians notified of the outcome of any action taken.
- A Student Support Group will be organised with the offending student and their parents/guardians, the Student Manager, Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing and Mini School Assistant Principal.
- The offending student will be required to undertake a counseling program organised through the Student Wellbeing team.

How do I know if a student is being bullied?

Some of the signs that a student is being bullied or harassed may include:

- An unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- Doing poorly in their school work
- Becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence
- Asking for money or starting to steal
- Refusing to talk
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts and scratches
- Beginning to bully other students
- Becoming aggressive, emotional and unreasonable
- Hiding mobile phones or social media conversations

Strategies for students

The following information can apply to students who are bullied and students who are involved in bullying behaviour.

- Mount Ridley P-12 College believes that all students have the right to be safe and happy at school. We are all responsible for making this happen.
- All students involved in bullying need to understand that it is not acceptable behaviour at school. Other more acceptable ways of being empowered include getting involved in leadership roles, peer support, school projects.

- Students need to learn to ‘tune out’ or ignore silly or low level bullying behaviour. If the bully is not rewarded by a response to their bullying behaviour, it may be prevented.
- Students can walk away from the situation so they can work out how to react later. They should not deal with it when they are angry, as this immediate response is not often effective.
- When safe and appropriate, students can be assertive and stand up for themselves and peers. This means speaking in a firm way. For example “You need to stop what you are doing as I don’t like it”
- Students should not bluff. If you say you are going to speak to a teacher, you must.
- Students should not incite others such as friends and family members to ‘fight their battles’, as this may lead to more conflict and possible injury. Inciting of others, especially from outside the school, may result in very serious consequences.

Evaluation:

As part of the College review cycle, this policy will be reviewed every three years.

Date policy ratified 20.06.17

Date of next review: 2020

Links and Appendices:

Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyber bullying) will comply with the College’s Healthy Relationships and Student Engagement Policies. The College Principal, Mini-School Assistant Principal, Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing and other appointed nominees will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education and Training’s (DET) guidelines.

Links that are connected to this Policy:

DET’s Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/engagepol.aspx>

•

DET’s Creating Respectful and Safe Schools

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/participation/Pages/conduct.aspx>

Bullying

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/advicebullying.aspx>

DET’s Suspension Guidelines

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/participation/Pages/suspensions.aspx>