

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

1. Preamble

Mount Ridley P-12 College students have the right to a safe, supportive and caring environment which promotes learning, personal growth and positive self esteem. Students will act respectfully and positively towards each other in acceptable and non-threatening ways. As part of the National Safe Schools Framework and the implementation of frameworks developed by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, the College is committed to addressing bullying and harassment issues.

Bullying and harassment can be committed by an individual or by a group and can cause long lasting harm to an individual's personal development and well-being if no action is taken. Victims of bullying or harassment may:

- feel frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- have difficulty with their school work, concentrating, sleeping and eating
- experience difficulties when interacting with family and friends
- display emotional behaviours that indicate vulnerability (e.g. look sad, anxious or angry easily), demonstrate a lack of resilience and be non-assertive
- feel confused and not know what to do about the problem.

2. Rationale

While it is acknowledged that various forms of bullying and harassment occur in schools and the broader community, Mount Ridley P-12 College adopts a 'zero-tolerance policy'. This means that all reported cases of bullying and harassment will be followed up accordingly through student management strategies, including disciplinary action. A range of preventative programs will also be implemented.

Department of Education and Training (DET) identifies 4 types of bullying – physical bullying, verbal bullying, covert bullying and cyber bullying. Bullying is defined as a pattern of repeated aggression that is directed towards a specific student by someone with more power and is intended to cause harm, distress and/or create fear. These acts can be planned and organised, or can be unintentional.

Conflict or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying. Bullying behaviour does not include children not getting along well, a situation of mutual conflict or single episodes of nastiness or random acts of aggression or intimidation. However, these concerns will be dealt with utilising the necessary student management practices.

3. Guiding Principles

- At Mount Ridley P-12 College it is the right and responsibility of staff, students and parents to report bullying and harassment incidents.
- Staff are required to:
 - be role models in word and action at all times;
 - be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying;
 - make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by active patrolling during yard duty;
 - arrive at class on time and move promptly between lessons;

- take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk;
 - act on incidents of bullying and harassment or report suspected incidents to the appropriate Team Leader and Mini-School Principal;
 - formally record all bullying and harassment incidents on the College's student management data base;
 - treat all reports of bullying and harassment seriously; and
 - be consistent and assertive in dealing with all forms of bullying.
- Students are required to:
 - refuse to be involved in any bullying and harassment situation;
 - report any incident or suspected incident of bullying and harassment; and
 - use cameras or other digital devices to record audio and visual material as part of the school curriculum program appropriately.
- The School Administration will:
 - provide activities, programs and policies which promote a safe school environment and healthy relationships;
 - ensure, on an ongoing basis, that all students, parents and staff are aware of their rights and responsibilities in regard to bullying and harassment;
 - review the effectiveness of the Healthy Relationships Policy on a regular basis;
 - where appropriate, liaise with appropriate bodies such as the School Council, (Department of Education and Training) and other relevant committees in regard to incidents of bullying and harassment;
 - address issues of bullying and harassment, including racial and sexual harassment, through curriculum programs; and
 - formulate and implement policies which are inclusive of all students, and which recognise and encourage diversity.
- Parental support plays a key role in promoting a safe learning environment. The school recommends that parents:
 - watch for signs of distress in their child;
 - take an active interest in their child's social life and acquaintances;
 - advise their child to tell a staff member about any bullying or harassment incident;
 - inform the school if they suspect their child is being bullied or is bullying others;
 - encourage their child to return to school after the College is made aware of the situation;
 - do not encourage their child to retaliate;
 - communicate to their child that parental involvement with the school, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation;
 - be willing to attend interviews at the school if their child is involved in any bullying incident;
 - be willing to inform the school of any cases of suspected bullying even if their own child is not directly affected; and
 - be involved in strategies implemented by the school to address bullying and harassment.

4. Implementation

Students are required to report a bullying or harassment incident to a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to, or directly to the Classroom Teacher, Yard Duty Teacher, a Team Leader, or the Director of Student Engagement and Wellbeing.

When a student has harassed or bullied another student, options will be discussed with the student and action will be taken to ensure that future breaches of the Healthy Relationships Policy are avoided. The incident will be dealt with as soon as possible after a report has been made. All incidents will be referred on to the Team Leader for follow up.

1. Where the incident is the first offence

One or more of the following procedures will be implemented:

- (a) going over the Healthy Relationships Policy with the offending student and ensuring the student understands why their behaviour is unacceptable;
- (b) mediation or other restorative practices in line with our Positive Behaviours and Relationships Model (PBR Model);
- (c) a verbal warning;
- (d) sending a letter home;
- (e) monitoring through student diary; and
- (f) referral to the Student Counselor or Mini-School Principal.

The Team Leader handling the incident will check the College's student management data base for any previous incidents regarding the same student. The outcome of the incident is recorded on the data base.

Where necessary, the student who has been harassed or bullied will be referred to the Student Services team. His/Her parents will be informed about the incident and steps will be put in place to support that student.

2. Where the incident is the second offence

Steps will be taken to ensure the bullying does not continue. The Team Leader will, in addition to making contact with the student's parent/s or guardians and referring the offending student to the Student Services team for counselling, implement one or more of the following procedures:

- (a) reminding the offending student about why their behaviour is unacceptable;
- (b) issuing appropriate consequences to the offending student;
- (c) monitoring through student diary;
- (d) removing the offending student's yard privileges for a period of time; and
- (e) mediation or other restorative practices in line with the PBR Model.

The Team Leader handling the incident will record the action taken on the school's student management data base.

The student who has been harassed or bullied will be referred to the Student Services team for counseling and additional support. His/Her parents will be informed about the incident.

3. Further breaches of the Healthy Relationships Policy

The consequences for ongoing bullying or harassment is at the discretion of the school. These breaches will be considered to be extremely serious. Parents will be contacted, and the student who has been harassed or bullied will be referred to the Student Services team, and his/her parents notified of the outcome of any action taken. A formal meeting will be organised with the offending student and his/her parents, the Team

Leader and Mini-School Principal. One or more of the following procedures will be implemented:

- (a) reiterating why the offending student's behaviour is unacceptable;
- (b) issuing a formal suspension;
- (c) removing a number of the offending student's school privileges;
- (d) restricting the offending student's movement around the College;
- (e) initiating a change of class;
- (f) completion of the necessary management and incident plans; and
- (g) seriously considering the future enrolment status of the offending student.

The offending student will be required to undertake a counselling program organised through the Student Services team.

It should be noted that disciplinary action will be taken against any person making a false accusation, as this in itself constitutes a form of harassment.

Evaluation

The Healthy Relationships policy alone will not stop bullying. Bullying is an aspect of life that can only be reduced through raising awareness and appropriately empowering all members of the school community.

As part of the College review cycle this policy will be reviewed every three years, however data from the Attitude to School Survey and Parent Opinion Survey will be evaluated annually to assist in improved student management practices.

Date policy ratified: 2016

Date of next review: 2019