



POLICY TITLE:	Anti-Bullying Policy
DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:	February 2011
DATE TO BE REVIEWED:	May 2015
DATE NEXT TO BE REVIEWED:	February 2016

Purpose of the Policy

The Montessori International College is implementing this policy to ensure that students and staff feel safe from bullying in all its forms. The policy sets out the requirements for dealing with bullying.

The basic beliefs underlying the policy are:

1. Every individual has value in a community.
2. Every individual has the right to feel safe from bullying or harassment in all its forms.
3. Every conflict can be resolved. Victims and bullies both need help to solve conflict.
4. Every individual in a community is responsible for the safety of other individuals in that community.
5. Every individual in a community is responsible for ensuring that other individuals in that community can reach their potential in a supportive and non-threatening environment.

Scope

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents/carers/students, and people visiting the school site.

Responsibility

Principal

Point of Contact

Assistant Principal

Definitions

“Bullying is **repeated** oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person and occurs when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, or their property, reputation or social acceptance.”

Bullying involves a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + (typically) repetition + an unjust use of power + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.



There are three broad categories of bullying.

- **Direct physical bullying** e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
- **Direct verbal bullying** e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
- **Indirect bullying** - This form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
 - lying and spreading rumours
 - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
 - provoking a food-allergic reaction
 - mimicking
 - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
 - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
 - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

Cyber-bullying, or e-bullying, is a reasonably recent type of bullying which involves the use of information and communication technologies such as email, (mobile) phone and text messages, instant messaging (SMS), chat rooms and video internet sites e.g. YouTube. It can be particularly harmful because it can happen anywhere and at any time. Thus young people who are the victims of cyber-bullying have no place where they feel safe. If the bullying is of a serious and threatening nature then obviously it becomes a legal issue and students and parents should seek advice by reporting the matter to the police.

If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in the school's Child Protection Policy then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

What bullying is *not*

Bullying is different from ordinary teasing, rough-and-tumble or school yard fights. What makes it different is that the incidents are ongoing, and there is usually an imbalance of size, strength and power between the students involved. In formulating an effective approach to dealing with bullying it is helpful to note what bullying is **not**.



Bullying is not:

- **Mutual conflict** where there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- **Social rejection or dislike** – It is not feasible to think that every student must like every other student. Refusing to play with a particular child or, for example, not inviting them to a birthday party is not bullying, provided social rejection is not directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- **Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation.** A single episode of nastiness, physical aggression, verbal abuse or an occasional push or shove is not bullying, neither is nastiness or physical aggression directed towards many different students. The difference is that bullying is, by definition, action that happens on **more than one occasion**. However, since schools have a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive school environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should not be ignored or condoned.

Policy

The policy of the Montessori International College is to take a proactive approach to bullying by establishing processes to educate and inform students about bullying and procedures to follow in the event that a student is being bullied.

All students upon entry to the Montessori International College and all on-going students will be educated about the College's anti-bullying, including cyber-bullying, guidelines as follows:

1. Grace and courtesy lessons in Early Years and Primary.
2. Civility discussions during community meetings held each week in the Adolescent Community and Senior Phase.

In addition:

- parents will be included in the learning process. e.g. Parents evenings/sessions and Newsletter;
- all teaching staff will be continually educated with regard to bullying at our school and more importantly, what their responsibilities are; and



Some characteristics of successful programs

Successful programs seem to have the following characteristics in common:

- a whole school approach
- the school begins by identifying the extent of the problem, e.g. by using a whole school survey, perhaps developed by students
- the school involves all members of the school community in developing their anti-bullying policies
- the school institutes a program of promotion/public relations/awareness so that bullying is not something that is 'hidden'- e.g a poster competition, presentations at school assembly, role-plays, drama presentations, using the formal curriculum to lift awareness (e.g. choice of novels), introduction of assertiveness training
- peer support/buddy schemes are in place
- students, staff and parents are involved in an effective educational program to train and support them in identifying and preventing bullying
- a clear written policy is available to the whole school community and outlines how the school will deal with incidents of bullying
- the policy includes a complaints procedure
- the policy includes support for both victim and perpetrator
- the policy is applied consistently
- the school has developed a crisis intervention procedure
- staff awareness is raised so that there is a high level of vigilance, but not over-reaction
- supervision is high in known problem areas
- an extensive activities program is available to students during school breaks
- the schools anti-bullying program is evaluated regularly, and records are kept of reported incidents of bullying and how each incident was handled. Which strategies worked and which didn't are documented and used to improve the program.



One policy approach for dealing with bullying

The school has a 'no-blame' approach to bullying. That is, its main aim is to stop the bullying, rather than punish the perpetrator, although that does not preclude punishment if bullying persists.

For any incidents of bullying, a member of staff/senior student will deal with the problem on the spot, in order to defuse the immediate conflict. Once the immediate issues have been dealt with, the following steps should be taken:

1. Identification.

A student, parent or staff member reports bullying incidents/problem to a staff member or senior student who notifies a member of staff identified as a Bullying Contact Person to implement the anti-bullying program.

2. Initial interview.

The Contact Person interviews the victim and bully separately, and records the details of the incident in writing on a standard proforma. The interviewer makes both parties aware of the bullying strategy and policy and discusses the issues surrounding the particular incident. The interviewer works with the students to devise strategies for conflict resolution. The interviewer attempts to reach a position where both parties are satisfied with the outcome; i.e. the victim feels secure and the bully is prepared to modify his/her behaviour in future. The victim understands that any further bullying must be reported immediately.

The strategy at this stage is not to apportion blame, or to punish; but to support the victim and make the perpetrator aware of the school policy and of the consequences if behaviour does not change.

3. Follow-up Interview

If the incident is repeated or the problem continues - both parties record the incident/problem in writing on a standard proforma. The Contact staff member interviews the victim and bully together and discusses the problem; makes the bully aware of the feelings of the other person and the effects the conflict may be having; and makes suggestions of strategies for the resolution of the conflict. The Contact Person may seek help from a qualified counsellor at any stage.

The Contact Person sends a letter to both sets of parents explaining the situation, outlining the strategies that have been determined and reinforcing the consequences that may flow from a repeat of bullying.

If a solution to a particular problem is not found, the school may consider the use of an outside person, such as a trained mediator, to assist in reaching a resolution.



4. Reinforce (as above), employ sanctions

If repeated counselling by the Contact Person, or others, does not stop the bullying, sanctions may be imposed. These could include, but are not confined to:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Detention
- Exclusion from certain areas of the school premises
- Internal Suspension
- Major fixed term suspension
- Seek help from qualified counsellor
- Permanent exclusion

The school keeps central records of all reported incidents of bullying. These are analysed on a regular basis to ascertain major areas where bullying occurs, sex and age of victims and bullies, and strategies which have been successful. A review of the school's policy is undertaken every 12 months, taking into account this annual data.

An important consideration for schools, teachers, parents and students is that overcoming bullying is neither simple nor quick. Schools need to constantly reinforce the fact that bullying is not acceptable and to remind students how to counteract bullying, as well as offering programs to lift self-esteem and resilience; students need to be made aware of their responsibilities not to bully and not to condone bullying by being silent bystanders; and parents need to be confident to approach the school with their concerns, and encouraged to work with schools in a non-blame situation so that their children are protected.

School and Staff Responsibilities

The school will:

- Involve students, staff and parents in the development and review of its Anti-Bullying Policy, including its policy on cyber-bullying.
- Identify one or more members of staff as a Bullying Contact Person.
- Ensure all staff members are familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy and provide appropriate professional development on a regular basis, including at the time of induction of new staff members.
- Ensure that all accessible areas of the school are patrolled thoroughly.
- Establish, and widely publicise an e-mail address for students/parents to anonymously report bullying.



Staff members will:

- Watch for early signs of distress in students. This could be evident in any aspect of school life.
- Ensure they are familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy.
- Where bullying is observed, intervene immediately to stop the bullying.
- Offer the victim immediate support and help and outline what will now happen.
- Educate all students with regard to their responsibilities as bystanders to a bullying incident.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with students, parents or other staff members.

Student Responsibilities

Students should:

- Report all incidents of bullying to a trusted senior student, teacher or year level coordinator or other staff member **or**, anonymously, via the school's anti-bullying email address.
- Actively support students they know are being bullied.
- Refuse to become involved in bullying, including as a bystander.

Parent Responsibilities

Parents should:

- Watch for signs of distress in their child, such as, unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches or stomach aches, equipment that has gone missing, request for extra pocket money, damaged clothing or bruising. Early contact is essential at this point.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life.
- Report to the school's Bullying Contact Person or any other member of school staff if they know, or think, their child is being bullied.
- Keep a written record if the bullying persists: Who, What, Where and When?
- Advise their child to tell a trusted teacher.
- Tell their child that there is nothing wrong with them.
- NOT encourage their child to hit back or respond verbally.
- Ensure they do not model bullying behaviour in interactions they have with the school staff and administration.



Cyber-bullying

The Internet, mobile phones and other communication technologies have resulted in a new form of bullying, commonly called cyber-bullying. This involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group to hurt others. Cyber-bullying may include the sending of nasty emails or text messages by one person to another. It may also include defamatory personal Web sites where one person establishes a website which includes unkind comments and photographs about another person.

Cyber-bullying is different from other forms of bullying because:

- it is often difficult for adults, who are not as technologically savvy as their children, to detect;
- it is often outside the reach of schools as it happens on home computers or via mobile phones; and
- hurtful messages can be communicated to a very wide audience, around the world, with remarkable speed.

It is also a particularly cowardly form of bullying because the cyber-bully can effectively hide behind the anonymity of the Internet and is able to reach the victim at home. Thus, the home is no longer a refuge for students bullied at school.

As for other forms of bullying, there is no one approach that will always work for cyber-bullying. Schools need to educate students and families about cyber-bullying and about a range of Internet safety approaches to provide the best overall protection against cyber-bullying. Schools might supply parents with the following advice:

- For younger children parents might consider the use of filters, labels and safe zones so they can restrict the sites their child can access or the materials they can receive (see the CyberSmart site at <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/> for advice about filters and other ways to restrict access to dangerous materials).
- For younger and junior secondary school students parents should consider keeping the computer in a public area of the house, such as the family room, so they can see what sites are being accessed and the type of messages their child is receiving.
- For all young people, parents should be advised to talk to their children about the ways they can protect themselves when using information technologies. For example:
 - to be careful who they give their telephone number to or their online handle;
 - never give out or share personal information numbers (PINS);
 - don't believe everything you read online – just because someone tells you they are fifteen, it doesn't mean they are telling the truth;
 - never send a message to others when you are angry. Remind them that what they write becomes available in cyberspace and cannot be taken back;



- never open a message from someone they don't know;
- be polite in all online or text message dealings; and
- **never** arrange to meet someone they have met online unless they take their parents or (for older children) a trusted friend with them.

If a child reports he/she is being bullied on-line parents should advise them:

- not to respond to cyber-bullying messages as this is only likely to encourage the bully. Bullies **want** them to respond;
- to report the bullying to parents and to their teachers;
- not to erase or delete messages from cyber-bullies even if they really don't want anyone else to see what is written – these messages may reveal clues about who has written them;
- never be ashamed to tell someone if they receive a frightening message. **It's not their fault** that there are some very strange people in the world; and
- to report that they have received a bullying message to their ISP (Internet Service Provider). If the message is forwarded to the provider, it may be able to trace the sender.

The role of the school

Because cyber-bullying often occurs outside of school it is difficult for schools to control. In most cases, however, cyber-bullying should be treated similarly to other forms of bullying. The most important thing schools can do is to educate students about cyber-bullying and the dangers online **and** talk about inappropriate online behaviour in the context of the school's values policy.

The Australian Government NetAlert site gives the following advice to young people about dangers online:

- Always be alert when on the internet. While there are some excellent sites to visit there are also some bad ones like pornography, animal cruelty and hate sites.
- If something appears on your screen that disturbs you, tell your friends, a teacher or parent, or contact NetAlert on 1300 669 024 or by email to netaalert@acma.gov.au for advice on what to do.
- Remember, you will not get into any trouble by letting people know what you have stumbled across.
- If you hear or see your friends getting into places that look unsuitable, remind them of the potential dangers and advise them on how to get out of the site.
- Keep all personal information to yourself (including photos, your name, the name of your school, the name of your family members and your phone number). Strangers might use your personal information in a way that you never intended them to.



- Chat rooms are great ways to talk to people but be aware that some people in them are not who they say they are. If someone or something disturbs you in a chat room, leave and find another one where there are people you like. Talk to your parents, carers or teachers about advice on how to deal with stranger danger.
- Not everything you read on the internet is true. Be smart and make decisions for yourself on what you think is right and wrong.
- Be careful downloading free games or files. People can trick you into clicking on a link that sends you to an unsafe zone or makes your computer download a virus.
- Only give your mobile phone number to your family and friends and if you start getting upsetting or annoying text messages, tell a teacher or parent.
- Always seek help from adults or friends. Parents might not know as much about the internet as you, but they know about life and together you can work out any problem that you might encounter when online.

A new resource published by the Queensland Police Services (QPS) on cybersafety and technology, *Who's Chatting to Your Kids*, was released at the beginning of September 2009. The resource contains an easy-to-read information booklet and 45 minute DVD designed to support parents and guardians to establish with their children appropriate conditions of internet use within the home and elsewhere. The information booklet (and family internet safety agreement) is available to be downloaded from the police website at:

<http://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/personalSafety/childProtection/default.htm>.

More information about cyber bullying and other forms of bullying is available on the Queensland Schools Alliance against Violence (QSAAV) website at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/studentServices/behaviour/qsav/>

Schools should also access the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) website at: <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/> for further information about how to develop a cyber safe school culture and cyber safe policies.



Values

Despite the best efforts of parents and schools, young people are likely to overcome attempts to restrict or censor their use of the internet. Teaching students about ethical and legal use of technology is, therefore, essential. Please refer to the Computer Use Policy for more information about the legal requirements in regard to internet use.

Related Policies and Documents

Child Protection Policy

Allergies Policy

Anti-Harassment Policy

Behaviour Policy

Behaviour and Problem Solving Guidelines

Positive Relationships with restoration practice

This policy and associated procedures may be updated or revised from time to time. The College will not notify you each time the policy or procedure is changed. If you are unsure whether you are reading the most current version, you should contact the Assistant Principal.