



# Anti-Bullying (including Anti-Cyberbullying) Policy

## Rationale

Bullying is described as an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. It can occur in person or online, and is either repeated or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Single incidents, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying (National Centre Against Bullying).

Prior to students' commencement at the school, they and their parents are made aware that the School will not tolerate bullying or harassment in any school-controlled situation. The School is committed to providing a safe environment, and will support and help any student and/or parent who is genuinely suffering as a result of bullying or harassment. Students, teachers and parents must feel confident that they can report incidents in confidence, that action will be taken, and that staff will act sensitively and discreetly. Confidentiality can be possible even if information is known by a group or the whole staff. The person who receives information may need to tell others, but in a way that, as far as possible, does not breach confidentiality.

Reminders of the School's philosophy in relation to bullying and harassment will be made through morning meetings, class discussions and in official communications to parents and students.

**Harassment** is behaviour (through words or actions) that is unwanted, unasked for, unreturned and likely to make school an unfriendly or uncomfortable place by:

- humiliating (putting someone down)
- seriously embarrassing
- offending (hurting someone's feelings) or
- intimidating (threatening someone so they behave in a certain way)
- physically interfering with someone
- exposing someone to crude behaviour or remarks
- using another person's identity, particularly in a way which denigrates them or leaves them exposed to ridicule or harm to their reputation.

**Examples:** name calling, stereotyping jokes and offensive comments.

**Sexual harassment** is an unwelcome sexual advance; request for sex or any other sexual behaviour that a reasonable person would know or expect would offend, humiliate, seriously embarrass or humiliate another.

**Examples:** unwanted touching, unwelcome sexual innuendo or jokes, displaying sexually explicit material (posters, emails, internet sites).

### **STAFF AWARENESS**

Staff will be regularly reminded of the policy, with regular checks that the school continues to be a safe environment for all.

### **STUDENT AWARENESS**

Awareness of bullying and harassment will be raised in morning meetings as appropriate. Students will be asked to discuss issues such as the need for immediate action when someone is in distress, the danger that non-intervention can imply support for bullying and harassment, the knowledge that social exclusion can bring about changes in bullies, the benefits of rewarding non-violent behaviour, the indicators of racial and sexual and similar harassment, the importance of making newcomers feel welcome, the correct responses when bullying is seen.

### **PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTS OF BULLYING AND/OR HARASSMENT**

For first and relatively minor incidents, students should be given an appropriate caution and a warning that formal action will be taken next time. Other staff should be notified that this warning has been given.

For a serious incident, or repeated incidents of bullying and/or harassment, the following procedure is one that may be followed:

- a) The bullied pupil records the events in writing.
- b) The alleged bully also records the events in writing.
- c) Discussion/s with the relevant parties.
- d) Consequences in line with the discipline system should then be applied e.g. Suspension until the parents can be interviewed, or expulsion.

Any written reports are to be placed in the pupil's files.

### **STRATEGIES FOR THE BULLIED**

Given that some victims of bullies are loners, students with low self-esteem, or students with poor social skills, plans are to be made where relevant with teachers of the bullied student to raise his/her self esteem through participation in school activities, and support and encouragement inside and outside the classroom. Long-term strategies to improve socialisation may need to be implemented.

### **STRATEGIES FOR THE BULLY**

Students who bully are often well aware that their behaviour is unacceptable, and are often well aware why it is unacceptable. In such cases interviews with the students may be sufficient to put a stop to the behaviour and to achieve a different relationship with the person who has been the target of the bully. In other cases, students who bully, and their families, may be asked to come to an interview where the school policy is outlined, and where the school's policies and strategies are outlined. Professional help will be sought if necessary.

Under certain circumstances, however, the student will be asked to leave the school. These circumstances include the prolongation of the bullying behaviour **and/or** an apparent inability in the person responsible for the bullying to appreciate the nature of his or her behaviour or to respond adequately and appropriately **and/or** other poor behaviour indicating values that are at odds with those of the school **and/or** strong indications that the continued presence in the school of the person responsible for the bullying is likely to cause such discomfort to the victim of the bully as to markedly affect his or her welfare. One consideration in coming to such a conclusion in relation to this last point is evidence that the victim of the bully is contemplating leaving the school as a result of the bullying behaviour or a single act of bullying/harassment.

### **Who and what this policy covers**

This policy covers the whole school community, including staff, students, parents, contractors and volunteers.

This policy applies to:

- education (e.g. teaching and learning, enrolment, student management, student services, curriculum development and delivery)
- the provision of goods and services (e.g. extracurricular activities, camps, sleepovers, excursions, parent–teacher interviews, access to facilities)
- school sport and recreation
- employment at the school (recruitment, allocation of duties, employment conditions, access to benefits such as training, promotion and leave).

### **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is defined as the causing of hurt via modern technologies such as the Internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smartphones and other mobile devices.

Cyberbullying is a growing problem in society. Modern technologies empower the individual, even the most unlikely individuals, with an immense capacity to cause harm. It can be an attractive means of bullying for it can, under certain conditions, be carried out with relative anonymity.

Cyberbullying can be particularly damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge “audience” and because the bully can often remain anonymous.

A dangerous feature of cyberbullying is that it can be done quickly and easily. On an impulse, a person can create emotional havoc for another and do so before the voice of reason hints at the inappropriateness of the action.

A further problem with cyberbullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm he/she is causing because cyberbullying seldom occurs face-to-face. The feedback is

muted by distance so that the bully is protected from an understanding of the true nature of the behaviour.

The School's Anti-bullying Policy is equally applicable when using technology. Some examples of cyber-bullying, which are unacceptable at any time, whether at or away from school are listed below. In extreme cases, this kind of bullying may be referred to the Federal or Local Police.

- Sending a text message to another student containing threats or insults or inciting anti-social behaviour.
- Creating or forwarding an email or social media message containing a destructive rumour about another student.
- Creating a social media profile impersonating another student.
- Sending through email or mobile phone, without their consent, a picture or video of two people kissing or interacting intimately.
- Threatening or swearing at an opponent via online games.
- Impersonating another person on social media.
- Filming a teacher or another student and uploading the footage on YouTube without their consent.

### **Sexting**

Alice Miller School recognises that there are differences in federal and Victorian law regarding sexting between teenagers.

If a student is under 18, it is no longer illegal under Victorian child pornography laws for them to take or keep sexual photos or videos of themselves or someone else who is under 18, as long as:

- nobody in the photo or video is more than two years younger than the student
- the photo or video does not show a crime being committed against someone else; and
- the student does not share or distribute the photo or video of someone else who is under 18 or threaten to do so (even if they consent).

However, under federal child pornography laws it is still illegal for under 18s to take, keep, share or send sexual images of someone under 18, including images of themselves, by phone or online.

Alice Miller School educates students on the risks of sexting, including those posed by the distinctions between federal and state law, as well as damage to a student's 'digital reputation'. The School also emphasises to students that in sharing or distributing a video or image of another person, regardless of whether or not they consent, they are carrying out a serious act of cyberbullying which may result in charges being laid under both or either Victorian and federal law.

### **Mobile Phones and Cyberbullying**

Using mobile devices to bully (also known as cyberbullying) and threaten other students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. Students are reminded that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person and almost all calls, text messages and emails can be traced. Mobile phones or other mobile devices must not be used to take photos/video of any other student or teacher without their consent. It is also prohibited to upload photos/video of other students/teachers to social media websites or email photos/videos to others if doing so would embarrass, humiliate or cause discomfort to the subject of the photo/video.

### **Student Guidelines for Cybersafety**

Due to the wealth of new social media tools available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences far beyond the classroom. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone.

Students need to remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed even with a press of the “delete” button. The image may emerge at any stage in the future and lead to serious consequences.

Below are guidelines students should adhere to when using Internet tools in the classroom or in any way related to classroom or School activities. Students should follow these guidelines anytime they post material that could identify them or their relationship to the School.

1. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for potentially all to see. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, parents, other family members, teachers, or a future employer to see.
2. Follow the school's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, it needs to be done in a courteous and respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
3. Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Do not share your password with anyone besides Alice Miller staff and your parents.
4. Be aware of user policies and how they can change over a period of time.
5. Linking to other websites to support your thoughts and ideas is recommended. However, be sure to read the entire article prior to linking to ensure that all information is appropriate for a school setting.
6. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.

7. Know that a very frequent use of the Internet is for activities such as scams, pornography and gambling.
8. If you run across inappropriate material that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, inform staff or parents right away.
9. Make sure your privacy settings on social media platforms are as restrictive as possible.
10. Do not 'friend' or accept friendship requests on social media from individuals that you don't know.
11. Do not upload any personal details that could lead to your identification by strangers.

### **Cyber anonymity**

Using pseudonyms, passwords and avatars does not protect the identity of a cyber bully. Technologies exist to identify those who misuse modern technologies to harm others.

John Marsden

revised, January 2023

next revision, January 2025