

Renamed to: Harassment & Bullying Prevention Policy - December 2022



HARASSMENT & BULLYING STUDENT POLICY

Policy Type:	509 - Student	Initially Approved:	May 2014
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POLICY STATEMENT

The Meadow Montessori School Society expects all students, parents, staff, and other members of the school community to be treated with respect and courtesy, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct* to contribute to a safe and caring environment.

Any incident of harassment or bullying that comes to the attention of staff or Administration will be actively addressed, with the intent of pursuing healing and empowerment for the victim/target, and healing and accountability for the harasser/bully. Educating students to be proactive, instead of passive bystanders, is part of developing and maintaining a healthy social milieu. The physical safety, emotional wellbeing, and social connectedness of all members of the community shall be protected from all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, regardless of their gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

POLICY RATIONALE

Harassment and bullying have a negative impact on the learning environment and can leave individuals with lasting scars. The school leadership therefore takes a firm and intentional position against all forms of harassment and bullying.

At Meadow Montessori School we value respect for each other. This allows students, staff and society members to feel safe, to develop a sense of belonging, to forge friendships with peers and maintain respectful relationships. With this sense of community, teaching and learning thrive.

We wish to foster an atmosphere of grace and courtesy, and to nurture compassion as a valued personal quality.

SCOPE

The school is responsible for developing policy, procedures and programs that address all forms of harassment, bullying, discrimination, isolation, and abuse.

This policy addresses harassment and bullying of one or more student, parent, or staff by another member of the community.

For policy regarding child abuse see the *Child Protection Policy*.

For policy regarding behavioural expectations, see the Meadow Montessori Society *Code of Conduct*.

For policy regarding discipline, see the Meadow Montessori Society *Discipline Policy*

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

I. Purpose

Our policy models a respectful environment that prevents harassment and bullying from occurring and, in the event that it occurs, promotes healing and empowerment for the victim/target, and healing and accountability for the harasser/bully.

II. Awareness

Through programs, staff shall help raise awareness of the *Code of Conduct* and how students can incorporate it into their daily behaviours.

There are many underlying causes of bullying. Harassment and bullying can be blunt or subtle and may continue undetected by anyone other than the victim/target.

While the impact of harassment and bullying has generally been minimized by society in the past, research and awareness campaigns have led to a greater understanding of the impact and factors affecting those in these unhealthy relationships. There is solid science on which to base decisions and programs that promote young people's health and safety.

Through programs, staff shall help raise awareness of harassment and bullying, and strategies to combat these or seek help. Whenever staff become aware of an allegation or instance of bullying behaviour, they will inform the Administration.

III. Prevention

Our staff are leaders who nurture and model a school climate that fosters community, helps to prevent harassment and bullying, and works for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation when either of these occurs. Teachers explicitly teach the elements of healthy relationships and bullying prevention in their classrooms.

- Each class will follow the principles of related programs such as the Second Step Program and URStrong.
- Staff shall make students aware that they can safely (and confidentially) communicate complaints about harassment and bullying (and any other matter) to staff.
- Staff will prioritize student safety over reconciliation to support student security and avoid further trauma.

IV. Intervention

When responding to acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, staff may exercise their judgment to choose, depending on circumstances, whether to start intervention at Stage 1, or go directly to Stage 2 or Stage 3.

Expectations of the level of behaviour vary according to the age and development of a student.

Stage 1

In this stage, the issue is **addressed by the parties and the first member of staff who is aware of a problem.**

1. Staff shall, where appropriate, encourage students to work out issues among themselves.
2. If this does not help to resolve an issue, the staff shall give guidance.
3. Staff may inform parents/caregivers of student(s) directly involved.
4. Staff respect confidentiality and limit disclosure and communication to those with professional responsibility for the student.
5. If the staff's guidance does not resolve the difficulty, the staff shall report the matter to the Head of School or their delegate (go to Stage 2).

Stage 2

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with the involvement of the Head of School or their delegate.**

1. The Head of School or their delegate shall investigate every reported complaint or staff report about harassment or bullying. The Head of School or their delegate shall interview participants and witnesses, and review evidence, as necessary.
2. The Head of School or their delegate shall assess if the harm is harassment, bullying or child abuse. In the case of child abuse, refer to the *Child Protection Policy*.
3. The Head of School or their delegate shall consider informing parents/caregivers of student(s) involved and involve them early in the discussion.
4. The Head of School or their delegate shall lead a reconciliation process that may include the following activities:
 - Describe the harassment/bullying behaviour to the student(s) in a specific and concrete way and explain the impact on the recipient(s) in a class healing circle or small group of those affected.
 - State the school's policy on harassment and bullying, and possible action or consequences.
 - Discuss expectations in a specific and concrete way.
 - Explain options and encourage student(s) to suggest remedies.
 - Indicate when the Head of School or their delegate will check back with the student(s), staff and parents/caregivers to see if the harassment/bullying has been resolved.
5. The Head of School or their delegate shall document a summary of these events, including names, times and methods of communication, and retain a copy in administrative files.

Stage 3

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with a formal plan and may involve authorities outside**

the school. The Head of School or their delegate shall take the following action:

1. Notify student(s) and parents/caregivers involved and the Board of Directors of the Meadow Montessori Society that action will be taken.
2. Assess the need to refer to the appropriate authorities.
3. Ensure that a formal plan is prepared to address healing for the victim/target and accountability for the harasser/bully. The plan shall include specific accountabilities for monitoring and follow-up, and may include serious disciplinary action. See *Discipline Policy*.
4. Ensure that all steps in the plan are implemented in a timely manner.
5. Document a summary of these events, including names, times, and methods of communication, and retain a copy in the administrative files.

V. *Process and Timelines*

To enable timely responses to issues as they arise, the Head of School may delegate their authority under this policy for periods when the Head of School is unavailable.

Time is of the essence in dealing with harassment/bullying since the victim/target may continue to be subject to harassment/bullying while the interventions and planning are under way.

However, trauma and rekindling must be considered as victims may need time to process and recall their experience. Any reconciliation or relationship repair should consider the victim's level of comfort with the process and needs in the school environment.

Stages 1 and 2:

Proceed in a timely manner at discretion of staff and Head of School or their delegate.

Stage 3:

Once the Head of School or their delegate determines the matter requires a Stage 3 response, a plan shall be completed in 5-10 working days. This plan will be share with those affected. Staff respect confidentiality and limit disclosure and communication to those in connection with the student.

VI. *Appeals*

Parties involved may consult the *Complaints and Appeals Policy*.

VII. *Retaliation*

Staff will take all reasonable steps to prevent retaliation by a person against a student who has made a complaint of a breach of the policy.

ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

Any behaviours not listed below and that do not cause physical, emotional, social, or academic harm to another would be considered acceptable behaviours.

DEFINITIONS OF UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOURS

The following definitions are intended to enhance understanding of this policy. They are descriptive only and not intended to be used for any legal actions.

Abuse

As defined in the *Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook*, child abuse includes physical, emotional, and verbal neglect and/or abuse and sexual abuse.

Bullying

“Bullying...is a pattern of repeated aggressive behaviour, with negative intent, directed from one child to another where there is a power imbalance.”

(The most widely accepted definition from the work of leading Norwegian researcher, Dr, Dan Olweus)

This aggressive behaviour includes physical or verbal behaviour and is an intentional and purposeful act meant to inflict injury or discomfort on the other person. Olweus’ definition identifies three critical conditions that distinguish bullying from other forms of aggressive behaviours, including:

- **Power:** Children who bully acquire their power through physical size and strength, by status within the peer group, and by recruiting support of the peer group.
- **Frequency:** Bullying is not a random act. Rather, bullying is characterized by frequent and repeated attacks. It is this factor that brings about the anticipatory terror in the mind of the child being bullied that can be so detrimental and have the most debilitating long-term effects.
- **Intent to harm:** By definition, children who bully generally do so with the intent to either physically or emotionally harm the other child.

Bullying can start out in seemingly playful ways, consisting of pranks, jokes, and some “roughhousing.” The incidents soon become more hurtful, degenerating into name-calling, ridicule, personal attacks, and public embarrassment. Rough and tumble “play” gives way to punching, kicking, restraining, and beatings (Ross 1998).

Bullying often involves **physical and/or verbal aggression**. It consists of open assault on another student, slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, throwing things, jostling, or poking (Ross 1998). It can also include verbal taunts or open and overt behaviour, and takes the form of teasing, criticism, gossiping, spreading malicious rumours, threatening to withdraw friendship, **social isolation**, or exclusion from the group. Barbara Coloroso (2003, 2015) notes that girls may be more likely to engage in the latter forms, something she refers to as “emotional bullying.”

See outlines below of various forms bullying can take. Please note that this information is not exhaustive. When determining whether a specific behaviour is bullying, consider

whether or not it:

- is repeated over time
- is intended to hurt
- involves a power imbalance.

Adapted from the Ministry of Education program, “Focus on Bullying” (1998).

For more information on Bullying, please see the Ministry of Education program “Focus on Bullying. A Prevention Program for Elementary School Communities.”

Cyberbullying

The use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating, humiliating, or threatening nature.

Cyberbullying isn't as obvious as other forms of bullying – a child could be a victim of a cruel website or Facebook page, have private photos circulating as a means to humiliate them, or could be receiving threatening text messages from classmates.

Cyberbullying can also include impersonating someone else online, posting embarrassing videos of a student online, or starting “text wars” – where several people email or text the victim, which can result in an emotional and financial toll.

[Adapted from the Erase Bullying website.]

Discrimination

Racial slurs; imitation of accent; put downs about cultural differences; gender harassment; insults about appearance (weight, glasses)

Harassment

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, such behaviour that has the purpose or effect of offending or demeaning an individual or group of individuals on the basis of race, colour, size, ancestry, place of origin, nationality, religion, family status, physical or mental ability, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

Harassment can be a single incident or a series of incidents. Bullying is usually a series of such incidents. The unwelcome comment or conduct does not have to be directed at a specific person for harassment to occur. Bullying is usually directed at a particular individual. Comments or conduct that tend to ridicule or disparage a group may give rise to an offensive environment and thus to harassment. When it includes an individual who is targeted, then it can be bullying.

Intimidation

Stealing; extortion; pranks; dares (public challenge); bribery; threats; locking in a confined space; swarming; stalking; anonymous phone calls; gossip; breaking confidence.

Non-verbal Body Language

Inappropriate glaring; snickering; gestures; ignoring (silent treatment); shunning; confining; surrounding; blocking; unwelcome physical contact, such as inappropriate touching or patting.

Physical Aggression

Spitting; pushing; tripping; hitting; shoving; kicking; hair pulling; hiding personal possessions (lunch, etc.); damaging property, attacking family or friends; coercion; intimidation; threatening with a weapon; defacing property; stealing.

Social Isolation and Exclusion

Shunning; exclude from a group; rumours or malicious rumour spreading; public humiliation; undermining; embarrassing gossiping; setting up a student to look foolish; spreading rumours; inciting hatred; racist, sexist or homophobic alienation; setting up someone to take the blame; display of pornographic, racist or other offensive or derogatory material.

Verbal Aggression

Inappropriate teasing; name calling; offensive remarks, inappropriate jokes or innuendo; mocking; sarcasm; putdowns; whistling/catcalls; leaving nasty or threatening notes; threatening or **intimidating** phone calls; giving dirty looks; racist, sexist taunting; daring another to do something dangerous; verbal threats against property; verbal threats of violence or inflicting bodily harm (including by a third party); coercion; extortion. Such behaviours include all forms of communication, such as mail, e-mail, fax, voice mail, notes, or yearbook journaling.

Violent Behaviours

Behavior involving physical force and intended to cause intimidation, physical harm, or damage to property.

REFERENCES

Independent School Act

Child Protection Policy

Code of Conduct

Complaints and Appeals Policy Discipline

Policy

Harassment and Bullying Prevention Order (Inspector of Independent Schools)

Links:

We explicitly teach bullying prevention and principles of healthy relationships using the following resources and information.

SECOND STEP

ERASE <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/erase>

URSTRONG <https://urstrong.com/>

Olweus' Bullying Prevention Program

<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/index.page>

YouTube video – Dan Olweus describing the program (runs 5:24)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjHNSduFF0>

Biographic information on Dan Olweus, age 85

<http://olweus.sites.clemson.edu/history.html>

UNDER REVIEW