



## **Mount Erin College Bullying Prevention Policy**

### **Child Safe Standards**

Mount Erin College is a Child Safe School. Our College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people. We value all students as individuals and their diversity. This will be the primary focus of our care and decision making.

Mount Erin College is committed to providing a Child Safe environment where children and young people are valued and feel safe, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.

Our College takes a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to Child Safety to ensure that the safety of children is promoted, child abuse is prevented and allegations of child abuse are properly responded to. Mount Erin College has zero tolerance for child abuse.

### **PURPOSE**

Mount Erin College is committed to providing a safe and respectful learning environment where bullying will not be tolerated.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- explain the definition of bullying
- make clear that all forms of bullying at Mount Erin College will not be tolerated
- ask that everyone in our school community be alert to signs and evidence of bullying behaviour, and accept responsibility to report bullying behaviour to school staff
- ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are appropriately investigated and addressed
- ensure that support is provided to students who may be affected by bullying behaviour (including victims, bystanders and perpetrators)
- seek parental and peer group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Mount Erin College.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Mount Erin College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone
- stop the bullying from happening again
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Mount Erin College acknowledges that school staff have a Duty of Care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

## SCOPE

This Policy applies to all school activities, including Camps and Excursions.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our school's Policies including *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Respectful Relationships Policy*, *Inclusion and Diversity Policy*, *Duty of Care Policy* and *Statement of Values and School Philosophy*.

The above listed Policies are available on the College website: [www.mterin.vic.edu.au](http://www.mterin.vic.edu.au)

## POLICY

### Definitions

*Bullying* occurs when someone, or a group of people, deliberately and repeatedly upset, harass, intimidate, threaten or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying, where the bully or bullies have more power than the victim due to their age, size, status or other reasons.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, physical or verbal, and includes cyberbullying. Bullying is not a one off disagreement between two or more people or a situation of mutual dislike.

Bullying can be:

- *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* – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.

*Cyberbullying* is direct or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technology. For example, via a mobile phone, tablets, computers, chat rooms, email, social media, etc. It can be verbal, written or include use of images, video and/or audio.

*Mutual Conflict* involves an argument or disagreement between people with no imbalance of power. In incidents of mutual conflict, generally, both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the issue. 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 harassment, 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. Harassment, nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, single episodes of harassment, nastiness or physical aggression are not acceptable behaviours at our school.

Many distressing behaviours may not constitute bullying even though they are unpleasant. Students who are involved in or who witness any distressing behaviours of concern are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff.

## BULLYING PREVENTION

Mount Erin College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Bullying prevention at Mount Erin College is proactive and is supported by research that indicates that a whole school, multifaceted approach is the most effective way to prevent and address bullying. At our school:

- We have a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and wellbeing.
- Our Respectful Relations Policy promotes positive relationships across all sections of the College community.
- We strive to build strong partnerships between the school, families and the broader community that means all members work together to ensure the safety of students.
- Teachers are encouraged to incorporate the Cooperative Classroom strategies that discourage bullying and promote positive behaviour.
- A range of Year Level Assemblies incursions and programs are planned for each year to raise awareness about bullying and its impacts.
- In the classroom, our ASPIRE Program teaches students what constitutes bullying and how to respond to bullying behaviour assertively. This promotes respect, social responsibility, resilience, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The Peer Support Program and the Peer Mediation program encourage positive relationships between students in different year levels. We seek to empower students to be confident communicators and to resolve conflict in a non-aggressive and constructive way.
- Students are encouraged to look out for each other and to talk to teachers and older peers about any bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- The College Wellbeing Team and Student Support Services Team regularly evaluate the effectiveness of College Policies, Programs and Strategies aimed at enhancing positive personal relationships.

For further information about our engagement and wellbeing initiatives, please see our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **Reporting concerns to Mount Erin College**

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to their Home Group Teacher, Year Level Leader, Sub School Leader or member of the Student Services Team. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing staff, school social worker etc.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Mount Erin College should contact initially either their child's Home Group Teacher or Year Level Leader. For more serious matters they can contact either the relevant Sub School leader, Bianca Ansell, Wellbeing, or an Assistant Principal or the College Principal by phone on 5971 6000 or by email directed to [mount.erin.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:mount.erin.sc@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### **Investigations**

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. record the details of the allegations on Compass and
2. inform the relevant Year Level Leader, Student Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, or Principal as appropriate.

The Year Level Leader is initially responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Year Level Leader may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents
- speak to the parents of the students involved
- speak to the teachers of the students involved
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above
- involve either the Junior or Senior School Leader, as appropriate
- and may also seek further assistance or advice from an Assistant Principal or the College Principal
- refer a student to a member of the Student Support Services Team for support or counselling

All communications in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: [Brodie's Law](#).

### **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When the Year Level Leader, or another member of the College's Leadership Team to whom the matter has been referred, has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with the Sub School Leader, Wellbeing Team, Assistant Principal, or Principal as appropriate.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Mount Erin College will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved
- the severity and frequency of the bullying and the impact it has had on the victim student
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one to one context
- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour
- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

The Year Level Leader may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to a member of the Student Services Team or relevant outside agency.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to i.e. the Student Support Services Team or relevant external provider.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Support Services Team or relevant outside agency.
- Facilitate a Restorative Practice meeting with all or some of the students involved. The objective of Restorative Practice is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.

- Facilitate a Mediation Session between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- As appropriate, prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved, including i.e. connect affected students with an older Student Mentor, resilience programs, etc.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement Year Group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours, for example through Year Level Assemblies, the Aspire Program and Respectful Relationships Program.
- Taking appropriate disciplinary action consistent with the Department's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy

The Year Level Leader is responsible for entering relevant details on Compass and any other member of the College's Leadership Team that is involved has a responsibility for up dating the records of the investigation of and responses to the bullying behaviour.

Mount Erin College understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Mount Erin College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

## **EVALUATION**

This will be reviewed on a 1-2 year basis following analysis of school data on reported incidents of, and responses to, bullying to ensure that this Policy remains up to date, practical and effective.

Data will be collected through:

- discussion with students
- analysis of data recorded on Compass
- feedback from the MESEM Student Leadership Group
- regular student bullying surveys
- Student Forums at each Year Level
- information contained in the Attitudes to School Survey and Parent Opinion Survey
- regular staff surveys
- assessment of school based data, including the number of reported incidents of bullying in each year group and the effectiveness of the responses implemented
- input from the Student Wellbeing Team
- input from the Student Support Services Team

Proposed amendments to this policy will be discussed with MESEM, Student Forums, Parent Connect and the College Board.

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

This Policy was last updated in August 2018 and is scheduled for Review in August 2020.