

Bullying is anti-social behaviour that can affect anyone. This behaviour is unacceptable at Northside Montessori School because every child has the right to a safe, caring and supportive school environment.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements		
4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills
4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.

PURPOSE

Positive Directions

This document supports the ethos of Montessori education where the development of the whole child is paramount. Successfully addressing bullying behaviours requires a whole service approach. Sustained change will only occur when there are common understandings, consistency of approach and unity between the staff, among students and the wider community.

This document covers all people involved in the Northside Montessori

Community – students, staff, parents/ carers and Board members. Addressing bullying is everyone's responsibility. We can minimize bullying only when everyone works together.

Purpose

The aim of this policy is to ensure that Northside Montessori is a supportive and safe environment. Every member of the Northside Montessori Community has the right to feel safe and protected. They also have the right to experience positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. The promotion of this environment is the responsibility of all members of the Northside community. Adults in this community need to be especially aware of their behaviour, as they are the role models for our children. By empowering members of our community, we hope to achieve a safe learning environment that respects and values individual differences.

This policy applies to interactions between:

- Child to child
- Parent to parent
- Parents to child
- Staff member to parent
- Parent to staff member
- Board to parent etc.

In order to succeed there must be:

- Clear definitions
- Agreed upon strategies
- Value placed upon listening
- Shared responsibility (supportive triangle)
- Ongoing and age appropriate self esteem, assertiveness, resilience and peer support education
- Respect for individual differences

SCOPE

What is bullying?

A clear definition for bullying is required so that everyone in our supportive triangle of school, parent and students has a common starting point. This will facilitate consistent and clear expectations. Good practices can only be built on a clear and common understanding of the nature and effect of bullying.

“Bullying behaviours are about an imbalance of power where there is deliberate intent to cause harm or distress. These behaviours can be verbal, social, psychological or physical. They impact on the lives of the person/people being bullied, those doing the bullying and those looking on. ”

Peer Support Foundation (1998)

“To bully is to use intimidating and/or inappropriate behaviour, or to persistently subject a person to unwanted attention. It includes behaviour that is unsolicited, unwelcome, uninvited and unreciprocated, which may cause offence or distress to a person.”

The terms ‘bully’ and ‘target’ are short-hand terms that we use because most people understand through the use of these terms the dynamic that we are addressing. We do not seek to negatively label individuals who are involved in bullying. We acknowledge that individuals that bully others are not bullies in every situation. We similarly acknowledge that targets of bullies are not targets in every situation.

Forms of bullying

Bullying can take a number of different forms.

1. Physical Bullying

This is when a person, or group of people, uses physical actions to bully, such as repeated and intentional hitting, poking, tripping or pushing.

2. Verbal Bullying

Using negative words repeatedly and intentionally to upset someone. This could include name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks etc.

3. Social Bullying

This may include lying, spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes. Repeatedly mimicking someone and deliberately excluding someone is also social bullying behaviour.

4. Psychological Bullying

This is when someone, or a group of people, repeatedly or intentionally uses words or actions which cause psychological harm. Intimidating someone, manipulating people, stalking a person are all examples of psychological bullying.

5. Cyber Bullying

This is when someone, or a group of people, uses technology to verbally, socially or psychologically bully. Cyber bullying can happen in chat rooms, through social networking sites, emails or mobile phones.

6. Sexual Bullying

This might include unwanted sexual inferences, touching or brushing against others, writing/drawing/commenting about someone's body sexually, sexual name calling etc.

7. Bullying based on prejudice

This may include discrimination of any kind based on racial, religious or sexual orientation.

Clarification of Bullying

Other forms of hurtful behaviour are often mistaken for bullying. Upsetting and harmful things happen but not all of them are bullying.

Mutual Arguments and Disagreements

Mutual Arguments or disagreements are upsetting but usually everyone involved wants to solve the problem and there is not power imbalance.

Not liking Someone

Unless you deliberately and repeatedly try to cause someone distress, exclude them or encourage others to dislike them; not liking someone is not bullying.

Random or One-off Events

Single acts of meanness, spite, conflict, rejection, exclusion, physical harm and emotional aggression hurt people and can cause great distress. However, these things are not examples of bullying unless someone is repeatedly and deliberately doing it to you.

Policy Statement

Northside Montessori School does not accept bullying. By providing guidelines on how bullying can be dealt with, and through education and support to members of the school community, matters of inappropriate behaviours that constitute bullying will be minimised.

Why do we have this policy?

At Northside Montessori School we recognize that bullying:

- Devalues, isolates and frightens
- Affects an individual's ability to achieve
- Has long term effects on those engaging in bullying behaviour, those who are the subject of bullying behaviours and the on-lookers or bystanders

We believe that teachers, students, parents, caregivers and members of the wider school community have a responsibility to work together to address bullying with a structured approach.

Students who are being bullied have the right to seek and receive help from adults and peers. A conspiracy of silence or reluctance to 'dob in' should form no part of the school's culture. The eradication of bullying will be successful to the extent that everyone seeks to find solutions, not to apportion blame.

IMPLEMENTATION

Strategies to prevent bullying

1. Implementation of a clear Anti-Bullying Policy, which is accessible to all members of our Northside Montessori Community.
2. Vigilance of all adults involved with the children to identify the various forms of bullying.

3. In-service and training for staff on strategies for dealing with bullying.
4. Parent Information Evenings focusing on resilience and related anti-bullying issues.
5. Student education through age appropriate activities including creation of a student committee to promote ownership and to encourage a 'voice', Empowerment Day, classroom activities (such as role playing, social stories etc.), Suggestion Box, map drawing of playground 'hotspots', Peer Support, invitation to outside groups (such as 'Rising Generations') to perform etc.
6. Increased awareness for our school community through our newsletter, website and library resources.
7. Staff to meet on regular basis to discuss all aspects of student welfare including bullying.
8. Our well-established Peer Support Program (Year 6 students to mentor younger students).
9. Anti-bullying discussions across many curriculum areas.
10. Protective Behaviours instruction for students.
11. Adherence to common Montessori beliefs – especially the need for adults to 'help the child to do it for themselves.
12. Emphasis on the commonality of all people and on respect for other cultures, religions and ethnic groups – rather than on differences.
13. Active gathering of information such as anonymous student surveys, monitoring of absenteeism etc.

Action

For matters where bullying is identified with children:

- Classroom teacher may speak to individual child or group
- Counsel the bully about their behaviour and its impact
- Counsel the target providing guidance and strategies to deal with bullying behaviours targeted towards them (perceived or otherwise)
- Conduct 'circle time' and other classroom activities to address the bullying behaviour
- Provide mediation with both the bully and the target
- Provide counseling/support/guidance for those involved

Students can expect to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Know that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled in a sensitive manner
- Be provided with appropriate support for both the target and the bully
- Know that severe cases of bullying will have consequences

Consequences of Bullying

Following counseling, mediation, support, and other methods, if the bullying continues the following actions may be necessary:

1. Again, questioning the child about their behaviour and their understanding of the fact that it is considered to be bullying.
2. Explaining again why the behaviour is inappropriate.
3. Final warning that the bullying is not acceptable and should cease immediately.
4. In rare cases; say, for the escalation of bullying, or for extremely serious cases, then it may be appropriate to: (in increasing order of severity)
 - a. Contact parents
 - b. Report the incident to the Principal who will provide further counseling and warnings
 - c. The Principal may suspend the student from class, from play-time or from school as suitable
 - d. The Principal may terminate the child's enrolment

Students have a responsibility to:

- Treat students, staff and parents with dignity and respect
- Behave appropriately and respect individual differences
- Refuse to bully and challenge inappropriate behaviour
- Refuse to watch, laugh or join in when someone is being bullied
- Report any bullying incident directed at self or others to their teacher and/or parent/care giver
- Help break down the code of secrecy

Staff can expect to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Receive training to deal with these issues
- Know that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled in a sensitive manner
- Be supported and protected if they are targets of bullying by members of the Northside Montessori Community

Staff have a responsibility to:

- Model appropriate behaviour in word and action
- Closely supervise students
- Identify signs of bullying and try to prevent repeat offences
- Respond quickly and sensitively to bullying reports
- Follow up and document all bullying incidents
- Assign age appropriate consequences
- Communicate to relevant parties

Parents and caregivers can expect to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Know that their concerns will be taken seriously and handled in a sensitive manner
- Be provided with appropriate support if their child is a target or a bully
- Have access to the school's Anti-bullying policy
- Have access to Parent Education Evenings
- Feel confident that the school is providing a safe and protected environment for their child

Parents and Care Givers have a responsibility to:

- Be aware of the school Anti-Bullying Policy
- Explore their children's concerns
- Be aware of signs and symptoms of bullying
- Contact the school through appropriate channels
- Under no circumstances should a concerned parent speak directly to a child who is an alleged bully or to that child's parent/caregiver

Intervention Pathways for Dealing with Reported Incidences

Members of the Northside Montessori Community are encouraged to report bullying and can do so through the Staff. All cases of bullying, if reported, will be followed up. Reported cases can be dealt with in several ways. It is recognized however that each case is different and may require a special approach. In all cases it is important to ensure that targets are believed and made safe and that the principles of natural justice and due process are followed in regard to students reported for bullying.

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