

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

1. POLICY

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and the bystanders.

Bullying can take many forms including:

- **Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.
- **Psychological bullying** is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.
- **Indirect bullying** is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.
- **Cyber bullying** is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur on social network sites, through emails, chat rooms or on mobile phones.

1.1 WHAT BULLYING IS NOT

There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:

- **Mutual conflict situations** which arise where there is a disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation; or
- **One off Acts** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of as loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

1.2 SIGNS OF BULLYING

Major behaviour changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

- Persistent crying at night, trouble sleeping and having nightmares;
- Refusing to talk when asked “what’s wrong?”;
- Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches;
- An unwillingness or refusal to go to school;
- Feeling ill in the mornings;
- A decline in the quality of school work;
- Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;
- Beginning to bully siblings or other friends; and
- Acting unreasonably.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the School through either their Tutor Group Teacher, Year Co-ordinator / Head of School /Head of Campus or School Counsellor, if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

2. PROCEDURE

Fintona Girls' School recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the School are respected and accepted.

Bullying is not tolerated at Fintona Girls School.

It is our policy that:

- Bullying be managed through a whole school community approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians;
- Bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the School on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/guardians to recognise bullying and respond appropriately;
- Bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident;
- Staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture; and
- Bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice and school wellbeing survey data.

2.1 BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Fintona Girls' School recognises that the implementation of the whole School prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying in our community.

The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no bullying' culture within the School:

- A structured Life Skills Program that provides and includes age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying and appropriate inclusive behaviours;
- Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies;
- Use of the school newsletter, parent portal and Year Co-ordinator / Head of School / Deputy Principal letters and information nights to raise parent/guardian awareness of what is and isn't considered bullying, as well as providing clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly within the School;
- Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/guardians;
- Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/guardians;
- Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/guardians and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below);
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate;
- Anti-bullying and *R U Ok?* posters are displayed strategically in within the School;
- Year Level Meetings, House Meetings and Assemblies are used to remind students of the inclusive nature of the School and the anti-bullying stance.

2.2 REPORTING BULLYING

Students and their parents/guardians are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of Fintona Girls' School's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well as providing assurance to students who experience bullying or feel bullied (and parents/guardians) that:

- Bullying is not tolerated within the School;
- Their concerns will be taken seriously; and
- The School has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the School verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

- Informing the students Tutor Group Teacher;
- Informing a trusted teacher;
- Informing the School Counsellor;
- Informing a student's Year Co-ordinator / Head of School /Head of Campus; or
- Informing the Deputy Principal or Principal

The School requests that parents/guardians support and encourage their girls to report to their chosen School representative as soon as possible.

2.3 RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

In all circumstances the School:

- Takes bullying incidents seriously;
- Provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;
- Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders;
- Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;
- Maintains records of reported bullying incidents in confidential student files; and
- Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents as per the Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures.

Actions will also include:

- Meeting with and discussing incidents with parents/guardians of both the victim and the bully;
- Offering ongoing counselling with the School Counsellor to persistent bullies/victims;
- Implementing effective follow up strategies; and
- Taking disciplinary action at the Principal's discretion including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, in cases of severe incidents, as per the Behaviour Management Policy and Procedures.

2.4 SCHOOL LIAISON POLICE AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

School Liaison Police are Victorian Police Officers who work with schools to reduce crime, violence and anti-social behaviour. School Liaison Police are a point of contact for the school community and the Victorian Police Force. Our students are encouraged to contact the School Liaison Police Officer if they have any concerns.

The local School Liaison Police Officer for the Boroondara can be contacted via:

Telephone: (03) 8847 3663 | Mobile: 0448 382 368

In the case of cyber bullying issues families are encouraged to utilise the services of the Australian Government E Safety Commissioner. The E Safety Commissioner receive complaints via <https://www.esafety.gov.au/reportcyberbullying>

Other support services include the School Counsellor (see School Counselling Services (Student)).

2.5 STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

All staff members are responsible to:

- Model appropriate behaviour at all times;
- Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy;
- Ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them is, is recorded appropriately with the students Year Co-ordinator / Head of School /Head of Campus
- Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims; and
- Acknowledge the right of parents/guardians to speak with the School authorities if they believe their child is being bullied.

2.6 SIGNAGE

Anti-bullying posters will be posted in strategic locations in the School to promote appropriate behaviour and encourage students to respect individual differences and diversity. Posters will be developed by the students for the students via a biannual Anti Bullying Poster Competition run by the Senior Student Leaders.

R U OK? posters will also be regularly displayed around the School.

2.7 IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is implemented through a combination of:

- Staff training;
- Student and parent/guardian education and information via regular parent seminars;
- Effective incident reporting procedures;
- Effective management of bullying incidents;
- The creation of a 'anti bullying' culture within the School community;
- Effective record keeping procedures;
- Initiation of corrective actions where necessary; and
- Successful development of positive relationships and a wellbeing/lifeskills program that focuses on developing girls who are inclusive and innovative.