

# THE MASTERS INSTITUTE OF CREATIVE EDUCATION

## **Bullying and Harassment Policy**

Harassment, intimidation and bullying are not acceptable behaviour at the Institute, by a student or staff member.

Students and staff are encouraged to report bullying and to discourage their fellow Students from engaging in such conduct.

Staff must be alert to any signs of bullying and act accordingly in such situations. Cases of bullying should be reported to the relevant parties.

By definition **bullying** is an act of aggression- physical or verbal- with the intent to cause embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another. Bullying usually involves an abuse of power by an individual or a group.

This policy seeks to:

- Develop in students and staff respect and concern for others, of all races and religious beliefs;
- Develop staff and student's critical and effective thinking and problem solving skills;
- Develop in staff and students an understanding that they must take responsibility for their own behaviour;
- Develop in staff and students life skills related to healthy life styles; and
- Develop an environment that nurtures and promotes staff and student self-esteem and self-confidence.

Bullying can take many forms, all of which cause distress. Examples of bullying include:

- Physical: fighting, pushing, shoving, gestures, standing over or invading someone's personal space;
- Verbal: name calling, offensive language, insults, teasing, putting someone down, spreading rumours;
- Non-verbal: writing offensive notes or graffiti about someone, sending offensive notes or e-mails to someone;
- Victimisation: picking on someone, making threats to 'get' someone;
- Exclusion: deliberately leaving someone out of the group, refusing to sit next to someone;
- Property: stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying another's property.

### **Implementation**

The following steps are a guide to dealing with reports of bullying or harassment.

1. The Program Manager will interview the victim, bully and any student observers individually in order to find out the details of the incident/s. It is important to determine the severity of the bullying or harassment.

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**Low severity:** examples of bullying or harassment which fall in this level are thoughtless periodic teasing, name calling, occasional exclusion.

**Intermediate severity:** students are subjected for a time to forms of hurtful and systematic bullying or harassment. Examples may include cruel teasing, continued exclusion, some threats.

**Severe** bullying or harassment: the bullying and harassment is cruel and intense, especially if it occurs over an extended period and is distressing to the victim.

2. The unacceptability of the behaviour will be reinforced by the Program Manager.
3. In the case of a low severity incident, the Program Manager will introduce more appropriate behaviours for the bully and closely monitor the situation.
4. Should the incident /s be of intermediate to high severity, the victim and the bully will be referred to professional counselling requested and organised by the school.
5. In situations of intermediate to high severity, individual interviews/conversations will be held with the parents of the bully, if the bully is under the age of 18, and the victim (Restorative Practice strategy). A joint monitoring system will be established to assess whether there is an appropriate change in the behaviour of the bully and improvement for the victim.
6. After assessing the nature and severity of the bullying or harassment, a consequence may be given to the bully, in the form of either a reprimand or school suspension.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

It is the role of **staff members** to:

- Inform the Program Manager about suspected cases of bullying or harassment;
- Stop any incident of bullying or harassment they encounter and take immediate steps to remove the source of distress without putting the victim into further risk.

**Staff and Students** are encouraged to:

- Take some positive action to stop an incident of bullying or harassment they observe;
- Report the incident of bullying or harassment to either a staff member, Program Manager or directly to the senior management;
- Make it clear to their peers that bullying or harassment is not acceptable.

## **Informing Staff and Students about Bullying & Harassment**

- Staff and Students are advised about the unacceptability of bullying during Orientation.

## **Local Public Transport**

Parliament train station is located directly across the road and trams and buses can be accessed within a short walking distance from the school.

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## **Sexual Harassment or Discrimination, Disability Harassment, Racial Discrimination or Vilification, Bullying or Victimisation**

In the most *extreme* cases inappropriate behaviour can manifest itself in conduct that becomes offensive, intimidating, violent and unlawful and is also prohibited under the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 1995, the Federal Racial Discrimination Act, 1975, the Federal Sex Discrimination Act, 1984.

Under no circumstances does the Institute tolerate:

- Sexual harassment or discrimination
- Disability harassment or discrimination
- Racial discrimination or vilification
- Bullying or victimisation

Should you be a witness or victim to such behaviour please do not hesitate to ensure such conduct is reported to Student Services / a staff member/ Program Manager immediately.