



Northern School for Autism

"Learning for Life"

INCLUSION & DIVERSITY POLICY *[Includes Equal Opportunity & Sexual Harassment]*

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to explain Northern School for Autism's commitment to making sure every member of our school community, regardless of their background or personal attributes, is treated with respect and dignity. This policy should be read alongside the following Department of Education and Training policies:

- [Equal Opportunity and Human Rights - Students](#)
- For staff, the [Respectful Workplaces](#) policies (including [Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination](#), [Sexual Harassment](#) and [Workplace Bullying](#)) as these whole of Department policies apply to all staff at Northern School for Autism.

POLICY

Definitions

Personal attribute: a personal characteristic that is protected by State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. These include: race, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious belief or activity, political belief or activity, age, intersex status, physical features, pregnancy, carer and parental status, breastfeeding, marital or relationship status, lawful sexual activity, employment activity, industrial activity, expunged homosexual conviction or personal association with anyone who is identified with reference to any protected attribute.

Direct discrimination: unfavourable treatment because of a person's protected attribute.

Indirect discrimination: imposing an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice that disadvantages a person or group of people with a protected attribute.

Sexual harassment: unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature towards another person which could reasonably be expected to make that other person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. It may be physical, verbal, visual or written.

Disability harassment: an action taken in relation to the person's disability that is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress the person.

Vilification: conduct that incites hatred towards or revulsion or severe ridicule of a person or group of people on the basis of their race or religion.

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Victimisation: subjecting a person or threatening to subject them to detrimental treatment because they (or their associate) has made an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected attribute (or asserted their rights under relevant policies or law).

Inclusion and diversity

Northern School for Autism strives to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive school environment for all students and members of our school community which values the human rights of all students and staff.

At Northern School for Autism we are committed to support all students in the Autism Spectrum and their families. We adapt our curriculum and learning activities to acknowledge the vast cultures and diverse beliefs included in our school community.

Northern School for Autism is committed to providing teaching and learning environments that are free from discrimination in all forms, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexuality and religion. Anti-discrimination extends to the school’s dress code so that children are treated equally with the rights of individual children balanced against the best interests of the school community as a whole when developing and implementing the dress codes.

Northern School for Autism is committed to creating a school community where all members of our school community are welcomed, accepted and treated equitably and with respect regardless of their backgrounds or personal attributes such as race, language, religious beliefs, gender identity, disability or sexual orientation so that they can participate, achieve and thrive at school.

Northern School for Autism acknowledges and celebrate the diversity of backgrounds and experiences in our school community and we will not tolerate behaviours, language or practices that label, stereotype or demean others. At Northern School for Autism we value the human rights of every student and we take our obligations under anti-discrimination laws and the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities seriously.

Northern School for Autism will:

- actively nurture and promote a culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity
- ensure that students are not discriminated against (directly or indirectly) and where necessary, are reasonably accommodated to participate in their education and school activities e.g. sporting events and performing arts events, on the same basis as their peers
- acknowledge and respond to the diverse needs, identities and strengths of all students
- encourage empathy and fairness towards others
- challenge stereotypes that promote prejudicial and biased behaviours and practices
- contribute to positive learning, engagement and wellbeing outcomes for students
- respond to complaints and allegations appropriately and ensure that students are not victimised

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Bullying, unlawful discrimination, harassment, vilification and other forms of inappropriate behaviour targeting individuals or groups because of their personal attributes will not be tolerated at Northern School for Autism. We will take appropriate measures, consistent with our *Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy* and *Bullying Prevention & Response Policies* to respond to students who demonstrate these behaviours at our school.

Students who may have experienced or witnessed this type of behaviour are encouraged to speak up and to let their teachers, parents or carers know about those behaviours to ensure that inappropriate behaviour can be addressed.

Promoting Inclusion

The school values diversity and will be inclusive to all children and families. In particular, the school will establish a culture that supports:

- cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, for example by working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Aboriginal community controlled organisations if applicable
- cultural safety for children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, for example by using inclusive language and images in policy documents, and communications such as the website and newsletters
- the safety of children with a disability, for example by ensuring our organisation is accessible to everyone and ensuring appropriate training and supervision of staff and volunteers working with children with a disability
- children who are vulnerable.

The school understands that for Aboriginal people, culture is about family networks, Elders and ancestors. It is about relationships, languages, dance, ceremony and heritage. Culture is about spiritual connection to lands and waters. It is the way stories are passed on and knowledge given to babies and children. It is how people are greeted. It is looking for connection. It is about all the parts that bind us together.

The school recognises that creating a physical environment that is respectful of Aboriginal culture is an important first step. Symbols and images that surround a place send an important message about respect. By acknowledging the Country in which the school is located, we are demonstrating our willingness to learn, understand and respond to the diversity of Aboriginal cultures. As part of the policy review process, the school will consider whether or not 'Acknowledgement of Country' should form part of its ceremonies.

The school recognises that cultural safety is living in an environment that is safe for people, where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening.

The school recognises that promotion of cultural safety of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds involves:

- ensuring the school clearly demonstrates a zero tolerance of discrimination
- being respectful, inclusive and welcoming of families from a range of backgrounds

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- recognising times of importance to different cultures
- ensuring the physical environment has a positive image of a range of cultures, in terms of decoration and artwork
- employing staff that are representative of the local community
- actively seeking out and talking to families about how they would like to be involved
- asking about the best way to provide information to children and families

The school recognises that promotion of the safety of children with a disability involves:

- acknowledging that children with a disability are particularly vulnerable and ensure risk assessment processes considers their needs
- ensuring the school clearly demonstrates a zero tolerance to discrimination and actively welcomes all children
- making sure the environment does not pose access difficulties
- being responsive to families regarding specific measures that may be required to ensure the safe participation of a child with a disability
- supporting staff, other children and their families to understand and be inclusive of people with a disability
- thinking about how the school can encourage participation and feedback from children with a disability and their families

The school's definition of 'disability' extends to children with a medical condition such as diabetes, epilepsy, anaphylaxis or blood-borne viruses and has developed policies to support these children. Please note that all students at Northern School for Autism are on the autism spectrum.

The school recognises that respecting diversity means:

- valuing and respecting people's beliefs
- building responsive relationships
- communicating openly and honestly to find out how best to be inclusive and respect cultural needs
- examining our personal ideas, customs and beliefs and
- respecting that the beliefs of one person may not be the same as another
- acknowledging and respecting that others can hold different beliefs of equal significance

Children who are vulnerable are referred to throughout this policy. NSA acknowledges that children may be vulnerable for a wide range of reasons. NSA will take into account the inclusion and diversity of all children including those who are vulnerable.

Reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities

Northern School for Autism also understands that it has a legal obligation to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities. A reasonable adjustment is a measure or action taken to assist students with disabilities to participate in their education on the same basis as their peers. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with disabilities in consultation with the student, their parents/ carers,

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their teachers and if appropriate, their treating practitioners. Our school may consult through Student Support Group processes and in other less formal ways. For more information about support available for students with disabilities, and communicating with us in relation to a student's disability, please refer to our school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement* policy or contact the Principal for further information.

Equal opportunity

Equal opportunity law aims to promote everyone's right to equal opportunities; eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation; and provide redress for people whose rights have been breached.

NSA will refer to the Department of Education's Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Policy.

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/equal-opportunity/policy-and-guidelines>

Sexual Harrassment

The Department is committed to providing safe, inclusive and respectful workplaces, which are free from sexual harassment.

NSA will refer to the Department of Education's Sexual Harrassment Policy

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/sexual-harassment/overview>

Workplace bullying

The Department is committed to providing a safe working environment without risks to health where all employees are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying will not be tolerated in any of the Department's workplaces.

NSA will refer to the Department of Education's Workplace Bullying Policy

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/workplace-bullying/policy>

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at annual staff briefings/meetings
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

REFERENCES:

Please refer to the school's *Student Wellbeing and Engagement Policy*, *Bullying Prevention & Response Policy*, the *Koorie Education Policy*, the *Student Dress Code Policy* and the Child Safe Policies or contact the Principal for further information.

School Policy and Advisory Library:

- [Students with Disability](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/students-disability/policy)
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- [Koorie Education](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/koorie-education/policy)
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/koorie-education/policy>
- [Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/koorieculture.aspx)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/multicultural/Pages/koorieculture.aspx>
- [Safe Schools](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx?Redirect=2#link8)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/safeschools.aspx?Redirect=2#link8>
- [Supports and Services](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additional-needs/Pages/autism-school-support.aspx?Redirect=1)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additional-needs/Pages/autism-school-support.aspx?Redirect=1>
- [Program for Students with Disabilities](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/learningneeds/Pages/psdhandbook.aspx>

Other references:

https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/default_eo.aspx
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/SexualHarassment.aspx>
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/respect.aspx>
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/safetyhw/Pages/workplacebullying.aspx>

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	September 2024
Consultation with School Council	12 th September 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	September 2027 (<i>noting that the recommended minimum review cycle for this policy is 3 – 4 years</i>)

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