Northern School
for Autism

"Learning for Life"

Promote Child Empowerment
and Participation and Bullying Prevention POLICY
Child Safe Standard 7

Rationale
- Northern School for Autism (NSA) understands that bullying has a negative impact on everyone involved; the target, the bully and the bystanders. It has been suggested that children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be particularly vulnerable to bullying and social exclusion and may find it difficult to maintain friendships. Contributing factors include difficulties with verbal and non-verbal communication, narrow interests and rigid behaviours, sensory sensitivities and reduced social skills compared to their peers.
- Bullying in all its forms, must be stopped because schools should be safe places for everyone. The NSA school community makes our school safe by:
  - Speaking up when others need help,
  - Appreciating others and being a good friend,
  - Being empowered to do what's right,
  - Encouraging people around us to <u>Make a Stand</u> and <u>Lend a Hand</u> against bullying,
  - Pledging to stand up for each other and stop bullying in our school.

This Policy supports the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006, which outlines the basic human rights of all Victorians, including the right to recognition and equality, freedom from discrimination, cultural rights and right to protection of families and children.

Aims
- To create a safe and respectful school environment and prevent bullying, cyber bullying and other unacceptable behaviours.
- To ensure the Northern School for Autism complies with DET policy and guidelines.
- To further empower children who are key stakeholders within our organisation.
- To ensure the school has in place strategies to enhance compliance with the Child Safe Standards 2, 4 and 7.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

Definition
Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour, displayed by a person or group, directed towards a less powerful person or group. This behaviour is intended to cause harm, distress or fear. Types of bullying behaviour include:
  - verbal or written abuse - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters,
  - violence - including threats of violence,
  - sexual harassment - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation,

- homophobia and other hostile behaviour towards children relating to gender and sexuality,
- discrimination including racial discrimination - treating people differently because of their identity,
- cyberbullying – either online or via mobile phone.

Cyberbullying is direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviour using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome and which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.

<u>What is not bullying?</u>
There are some behaviours, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing and often require teacher intervention, are not bullying, including:

- mutual conflict - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly
- single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. However, this does not mean that single episodes should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.
- social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Implementation

- NSA has **zero tolerance of bullying and of harassment in any form.**
- The wellbeing of every child at the school is our highest priority.
- The school encourages all children to speak up when bullying or harassment is encountered.
- The school will
  - Promote and support safe and respectful learning environments where bullying is not tolerated
  - Provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying, including descriptions of the different subtypes of bullying
  - Teach students the school rules which promotes a safe learning space for all students
  - Put in place whole-school strategies and initiatives as outlined in DET's anti-bullying policy
  - Involve children (if applicable) staff and parents in updating the Student Engagement Policy.
  - Take a whole-school approach focusing on safety and wellbeing
  - Consistently respond to all incidents of bullying that have been reported to the school and ensure that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents
  - Ensure that support is provided to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour
  - Provide regular updates, within the bounds of privacy legislation, to parents or caregivers about the management of incidents
  - Address cyber bullying as part of its *Internet / Social Media Policy*

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- The school will ensure the policy is easily accessible within the school community and published on the school's website.
- NSA has a Student Engagement Policy which includes strategies to promote positive student behaviour, a safe and inclusive environment, prevent bullying and anti-social behaviour and encourage respect, compassion and cooperation.
- NSA seeks to prevent bullying by offering:
    · Professional development for staff to identify, intervene and prevent incidence of bullying,
    · Family support groups focused on school strategies and how to identify and support children at home,
    · H&HR programs to focus on positive and negative aspects of relationships,
    · Access to a Cyber Safety app (developed by NSA) to identify Cyber bullying and take appropriate action.
    · Participation in the Bully Stoppers Program and eSmart Program,
    · Connections Program to support young people who are at risk,
    · Strategically organised class groups and yard rosters,
    · School Wide Positive Behaviour Support.
  · The Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) teaching and learning materials (Foundation to Year 12), designed to deliver on this requirement, address:
  · all strands of the Personal and Social Capability curriculum
  · the Personal, Social and Community Health Strand of the Health and Physical Education curriculum.
  ·
- When bullying occurs the school responds in an effective, proactive, and supportive manner for all parties involved, including:
    · Student reporting systems – children are given three key people they feel comfortable to report to
    · Teacher reporting system via Sharepoint Incident Reports – monitored by the principal class team
    · Investigation of bullying allegations is completed by members of the leadership team
    · Parent contact to ensure parents/carers are able to support their child (whether the victim or instigator of bullying)
    · Counselling and support for the victims of bullying
    · Education programs and support for the instigators of bullying
    · Victoria Police Youth Resource Officer (YRO) access if appropriate
    · Provision of Kids Helpline information for children if appropriate.

Policy Communication

The community including parents/carers, staff members, children and the wider community will be made aware of the schools position on bullying via professional learning programs, parent support group meetings and publication of this policy on the school website.

Education programs will support the whole school community to recognise and respond appropriately to bullying, harassment and victimisation when they see it.

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Parents/carers are also provided with a copy of the Complaints Policy as a reference should they be dissatisfied with the school's management of a bullying incident.

- If circumstances warrant, the school may consider using Bullying No Way! and the National Safe Schools Framework.
- For further information, including information on sexual diversity, the school will refer to the DET resources at the website below.
- Please refer also to the school's *Duty of Care Policy,* the *Student Engagement Policy,* the *Gender Identity Policy* and the Child Safe Standards.

Policy Evaluation and Review
NSA will review this policy annually to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the policy and make adjustments when needed. An annual review complies with DET guidelines for preparing the Annual Report.

References:

ww.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/bullying.aspx

*Sheryl A. Hemphill et al, Longitudinal Predictors of Cyber and Traditional Bullying Perpetration in Australian Secondary School Students (published 2012)

Evaluation

- This policy will be reviewed annually as part of preparing the Annual Report or if guidelines change (latest DET update late April 2017).

This policy was first ratified by NSA School Council the 2nd of November 2017

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