



# Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy and Procedure

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Staff Handbook

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## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

Bullying is an issue that all schools must be able to identify and address. Bullying is a form of abuse that can seriously affect the health, wellbeing and educational outcomes of children. This includes those being bullied, those bullying others, families and the whole school community. The impact of bullying can be tracked to adulthood in many individuals.

Georgiana Molloy Anglican School (GMAS) is committed to working with families to establish a culture that rejects bullying and harassment in all forms. Staff are entitled to perform their roles and students are entitled to learn in an environment free from humiliation, oppression and abuse, where individual differences are appreciated. GMAS will not tolerate bullying, harassment or violence, and we are committed to following a restorative pathway to prevent harm from bullying, which incorporates conflict resolution strategies rather than retributive practices.

GMAS explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment. Please see Definitions below for a description of these terms, as defined in the Guide to Registration Standards for Non-Government Schools

## **2. SCOPE OF POLICY**

This document applies to the whole GMAS community. At GMAS a whole-school approach is taken, which we believe is the most effective way of developing a positive school culture.

The majority of this document focuses on bullying behaviour exhibited by students towards other students. Claims of adults bullying students are treated as child abuse. Further information on this can be found in the Child Safe Policy and Behaviour Management Policy.

In addition, bullying can also occur in the workplace. Such bullying can occur between peers as well as between a 'supervisor' and their subordinates. Bullying in the workplace is covered by the GMAS Staff Code of Conduct.

## **3. SCHOOL COMMITMENT**

- GMAS takes a proactive stance on this issue. Once an act of bullying or harassment at the school is reported, GMAS will investigate.
- GMAS will inform parents, in a timely manner, of the action taken on the offender to the innocent.
- GMAS encourages students to speak out if they are being bullied or harassed.
- GMAS encourages bystanders to speak out if they witness an act of bullying or harassment on school grounds.
- Degrees of bullying need to be taken into account when GMAS decides its response to a bullying incident. GMAS therefore reserves the right to assess each situation on its merits and respond via the most appropriate pathway.
- The Principal reserves the right to modify a pathway response in relation to any incident.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

### **Bullying**

An ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Cyber bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies.

### **Child abuse**

Four forms of child abuse are covered by WA law:

1. Physical abuse occurs when a child is severely and/or persistently hurt or injured by an adult or a child's caregiver.
2. Sexual abuse, in relation to a child, includes sexual behaviour in circumstances where:
  - (a) the child is the subject of bribery, coercion, a threat, exploitation or violence
  - (b) the child has less power than another person involved in the behaviour; or
  - (c) there is a significant disparity in the developmental function or maturity of the child and another person involved in the behaviour
3. Emotional abuse includes:
  - (a) psychological abuse; and
  - (b) being exposed to an act of family and domestic violence.
4. Neglect includes failure by a child's parents or caregiver to provide, arrange or allow the provision of:
  - (a) adequate care for the child; or
  - (b) effective medical, therapeutic or remedial treatment for the child

### **Corporal punishment**

Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; typically involving hitting the child with the hand or with an implement; can also include, for example, forcing the child to stay in an uncomfortable position. It does not include the use of reasonable physical restraint to protect the child or others from harm. (From UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 15: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007.)

### **Degrading punishment**

Any punishment which is incompatible with respect for human dignity, including corporal punishment and non-physical punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child. (From UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 8 (2006), paragraphs 11 and 16: CRC/C/GC/8, 2 March 2007).

### **Harassment**

Unwanted, unwelcome aggressive pressure or intimidation

## 5. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE

GMAS employs restorative pathways rather than retributive justice, with the aim of inspiring a feeling of empathy and restorative action on the part of the bully/harasser and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.

The aim of GMAS is to:

- create and maintain a whole-school approach to anti-bullying that engages in dialogue and reflection with a view to develop shared understanding and responsibility
- restore a positive learning environment for all students and to avoid escalation of issues or causing more harm
- identify and address potential issues surrounding school culture which may have contributed to the situation

## 6. DUTY OF CARE

The notion of reasonable care extends to ensuring that GMAS provides a safe, non-violent environment for all students by addressing bullying. If GMAS is aware or ought to be aware that bullying behaviour is occurring and does not take steps to address it, then they will be liable if injury (which includes any mental health consequences) results. The claim that 'bullying is not a big issue at our school' is unlikely to be an example of reasonable care. Bullying is an issue to varying degrees in most, if not all, school settings.

## 7. WHAT CONSTITUTES BULLYING?

Bullying can take many forms, some examples include, but not limited to:

- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, tripping, spitting, pinching
- **Psychological/Emotional:** threatening to or taking someone's food, money or possessions, stalking, manipulation and intimidation, refusing to sit next to someone, deliberately excluding others from a group
- **Verbal:** using offensive names, spreading rumours, ridiculing, teasing, constant criticism
- **Non-verbal:** offensive notes or graffiti, rude gestures or facial expressions,
- **Cyber:** offensive emails, text messages or social media posts, threatening images
- **Property:** hiding, stealing or damaging property
- **Sexual harassment:** unwanted touching, inappropriate joking, taunting or teasing of a sexual nature; and/or exposure

## 8. WHAT IS NOT BULLYING?

Normal interpersonal conflict or differences of opinion, such as:

- Mutual conflict where there is no imbalance of power
- Social rejection where there is no deliberate, repeated attempt to cause distress
- Random 'one-off' acts of meanness, intimidation, violence

- Isolated incidents of aggression or intimidation

These issues will be dealt with through counselling and the GMAS Behaviour Management Policy and Codes of Conduct.

## **9. SIGNS OF BULLYING**

Bullying at school is different from the ordinary “rough and tumble” of children growing up in the classroom or the schoolyard. Bullying may be very hard to detect as perpetrators rarely “perform” in view or ear shot of staff. What makes it different is that there is usually a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim and that the incidents are usually persistent and deliberate.

GMAS outlines some general behavioural signs that parents/caregivers and staff should look for:

- Bruises, scratches or cuts that the child cannot explain.
- Torn or damaged clothing.
- Damaged or missing belongings.
- Headaches, stomach aches and other pains that the child cannot explain.
- Unexplained tears or depression.
- Unusual outbursts of temper.
- Refusal to attend school.
- Not seeking to socialise with peers.
- Seeking alternative means or route to / from school.
- Quality of academic work decreases.
- Seeking money without reason.
- Spending a lot of time on the computer.
- Having trouble sleeping or having nightmares.
- Mood swings after being online.

While a majority of phone and computer usage is undertaken outside of school hours, it can still have a huge impact on school life. GMAS is active in including mobile and internet usage as part of School policy and informing parents of incidents of cyber bullying.

### **What is Cyber Bullying**

Cyber bullying is the carrying on of some of the above forms of bullying (whether while in school or not) by use of electronic technologies such as email, websites, Facebook, online chatrooms, Twitter, TikTok, blogs, Snapchat, Instagram, or any other social media platform. Cyber bullying can include:

- Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures via MSN, mobile phone, the internet, or social networking sites
- Using technology to socially exclude
- Posting rude, explicit, or embarrassing images of someone on the internet
- Stealing someone’s digital identity to harm them in some way

- Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising images of themselves
- Covertly filming, recording, or taking a picture of someone and posting the images on the internet to cause hurt
- 'Outing' and disseminating confidential information about someone
- Flaming and multi-messaging to clog up a person's electronic system and to cause them distress
- Using aliases and pseudonyms in chat rooms or on social networking sites to harass and upset
- Engaging in cyber stalking and invading a person's privacy

Sexting can be another type of cyber bullying, involving taking sexually explicit pictures and making the images available for others to see via an electronic device. Sending explicit images of anyone including yourself is a crime if you are under the age of 18 years. If the person in the picture is under the age of 16 years, it can be a very serious crime, possibly resulting in charges of paedophilia.

## **10. THE BYSTANDER**

Bystanders is the name given to the group of people who are not directly involved in either the bullying or being bullied. The action taken by this group has been shown to either discourage or support the person bullying. A bystander is someone who sees the bullying happening or knows it is happening elsewhere.

Bystanders can play an important role by being supportive of the person being bullied by seeking help, asking the bully to stop, or walking away.

GMAS encourages bystanders to take action as they can also passively or actively prevent or stop bullying. The role of the bystander is becoming increasingly prominent as an effective means to counter bullying.

## **11. SPEAKING OUT**

Children who are being bullied are often initially reluctant to speak out for fear of staff and / or parents making the issue worse, or possible retribution from the perpetrator. This situation gives the perpetrator the confidence to continue the actions undetected, creating a no-win downward spiral for the victim.

Students who are subject to inappropriate behaviour that is reported to GMAS need to know that:

- They were right to have made the report, and are supported for having done so
- The report is always taken seriously and acted upon
- That something will be done to try and ensure that the problem does not recur, and the damage repaired as best as possible in the circumstances.
- All parties are informed of the action taken by GMAS.

Students need to:

- Feel believed and listened to
- Develop trust in how staff will handle issues
- Develop trust in how parents will handle issues
- Be encouraged to talk more openly about what has happened
- Be taught in the home how to resolve conflict appropriately

## **12. BULLYING PREVENTION STRATEGIES AT GMAS**

The methods used by GMAS to discourage bullying will vary from time to time and will depend on the needs of the school. The measures that are currently in place to discourage bullying include, but are not limited to:

- Involving caregivers and students in the process of developing an anti-bullying and harassment culture. Students, caregivers, teaching and non-teaching staff, and the wider school community represent all interested parties
- The policy is disseminated to the whole school through methods such as the GMAS website, student induction days, assemblies and teachers' staff meetings. It is important that communication of the policy is ongoing so that new staff and students are aware and to show the GMAS community that bullying and harassment remain an ongoing matter
- Staff undertake professional development in order to implement the policy. Staff gain an understanding of GMAS policies and procedures, an understanding of bullying and its effects on children, learn how students should be managed, and gain knowledge and skills on how to address bullying
- A curriculum that addresses social emotional learning, anti-bullying strategies and reporting of bullying incidents
- Ensuring effective pastoral support for students through the appropriate appointment of teachers, Home Room teachers, Heads of Year, Heads of School, School Psychologist, School Counsellor and other staff

The Anti Bullying Resources section provides links to external resources that provide more information on implementing bullying prevention strategies (see [Anti Bullying Website Resources](#)).

## **13. RESOLUTION OF BULLYING & HARASSMENT ISSUES AT GMAS**

### **13.1 Reflection**

Staff involved in a bullying/harassment situation should reflect on and identify how the culture of the school may have contributed to the event. If an issue surrounding the GMAS culture is identified, steps will be taken to address it, including but not limited to whole school meetings, compulsory Professional Development sessions or the implementation of bullying specific programs.



## **13.2 Restorative Practices**

Restorative practices aim to resolve conflict and repair harm. It allows those who have hurt others to acknowledge the impact of their actions and provides the opportunity to repair what has occurred. Those who have been harmed have the opportunity to have their harm acknowledged.

Restorative practice is not about condoning harmful behaviour, but holding individuals accountable for their actions.

In the GMAS environment, misconduct is seen as a violation against people and relationships in the school. The goal is for students to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Behaviour management plans that focus primarily on penalties and punishments when rules are broken have often neglected to highlight the impact of negative behaviour on others.

Restorative practice focuses less on rewards and punishments and more on acknowledgement and consequences for choices made.

## **13.3 School Based Pathways**

### **First Pathway - Open Discussion / “No Blame Approach”**

When an issue of bullying is first reported in our school, the parties involved will be interviewed separately and statements will be obtained and recorded for reference. The parties will then be allowed to communicate their position and to understand the position of the other in the presence of the interviewer. The party or parties at fault will be asked to modify their behaviour without retribution. Parents of the parties involved will be notified.

### **Second Pathway – Formal Interview (punitive response and counselling offer)**

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the first pathway will lead to a formal interview comprising a selection of the following people:

- Students involved (victim and perpetrator).
- Parents of both students.
- Class teacher/s
- Homeroom Teachers
- Head of School/Head of Year
- Deputy Principal
- Principal

Punitive measures will be implemented as deemed appropriate along with the suggestion that either internal or external counselling be sought by both parties.

### **Third Pathway – Suspension**

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the second pathway may lead to the perpetrator/s being suspended from GMAS, at the discretion of the Deputy Principal. Parents will be contacted and asked to come to the school to meet with the Deputy Principal and / or the Head of School/Head of Year.

### **Fourth Pathway – Withdrawal / Exclusion**

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the third pathway will lead to the Principal asking that the perpetrator/s possibly be withdrawn from GMAS. This decision would not be made lightly and would involve GMAS taking all reasonable steps to assist the family of the affected student pastorally in rebuilding their child's educational opportunities.

In the event of the student withdrawal from GMAS the Principal will notify the Chair of the School Council of the decision.

## **14. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS**

### **Do:**

- Involve children in decision making about what to do
- Listen to what children say
- Tell children that they understand
- Discourage children from retaliating verbally or physically
- Support the school in dealing with the issues, as education is a family / school partnership
- Take an active interest in the children's social development
- Approach the matter with kindness and respect for all parties involved in the matter
- Report incidents of bullying to their child's Home Room teacher, Head of Year or Head of School

### **Do not:**

- Let emotion and / or anger impair their thought processes
- Feel guilty or ashamed
- Make children think that the issues are not important
- Blame the children
- Blame the school
- Accuse people without knowing all of the facts
- Look for scapegoats
- Demand to know all the details at once before investigations can occur
- Look for easy solutions
- Engage in social media defamatory comments or viewpoints

## **15. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS**

- Ensure their behaviour does not intimidate or harass other students
- Stop bullying behaviour when they witness it.
- Report bullying behaviour to staff as soon as they become aware of it.
- Behave as responsible digital citizens and do not tell anyone your passwords, private details or access codes.

## **16. RESPONSIBILITIES OF GMAS STAFF**

- A staff member who observes bullying or harassment must intervene unless their safety or that of bystanders is put at risk by such action
- Educate students about bullying, and empower students to act to stop bullying if they witness it occurring.
- Offer support, by listening and responding, to all complaints of bullying.
- When bullying or harassment is reported to a staff member, they must inform relevant members of staff: the Classroom Teacher, the Home Room Teacher and/or Head of Year of the students involved; if the matter is serious or ongoing they must inform the Head of School or the Deputy Principal.
- Reports of bullying and harassment are followed up as promptly as possible and dealt with initially by the Classroom Teacher, the Home Room Teacher and/or the Head of Year; or, in serious or ongoing instances, by the Head of School or the Deputy Principal who will follow-up and inform the Principal.
- Interviews must be fully documented. Consequences must be recorded as a student profile in SEQTA.
- Students involved in bullying incidents are asked to seek counselling. This may be done informally by the staff member who has dealt with the incident or students may be offered counselling with a member of staff responsible for their pastoral care or the School Chaplain, or in other cases, through the School Psychologist or School Counsellor.

## **17. ANTI BULLYING WEBSITE RESOURCES**

[Bullying. No Way!](#)

[Friendly Schools Program](#)

[Safe Schools Hub](#)