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# **Pacific Montessori Society HARASSMENT AND BULLYING PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT POLICY**

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**Effective Date: April 20, 2009**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Pacific Montessori Society expects all students, staff and other members of the Pacific Montessori Society to be treated with respect and courtesy, in accordance with the *Code of Conduct*.

Any incident of harassment or bullying that comes to the attention of staff or Administration will be actively addressed, with the intent of pursuing healing and justice for the victim/target, and healing and accountability for the harasser/bully.

## **POLICY RATIONALE**

Harassment and bullying have a negative impact on the learning environment, and can leave individuals with lasting scars.

The school leadership therefore takes a firm and intentional position against all forms of harassment and bullying.

At Selkirk Montessori School we value respect for each other. This allows students, staff and society members to feel safe, to develop a sense of belonging, to forge friendships with peers and maintain respectful relationships. With this sense of community, teaching and learning thrive.

## **SCOPE**

The school is responsible for developing policy, procedures and programs that address all forms of harassment, bullying, discrimination, isolation and abuse.

This policy addresses harassment and bullying of one or more students by one or more other students. Incidents involving one or more staff or members of the Society are also covered.

For policy regarding child abuse see the *Child Protection Policy*.

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### ***I. Purpose***

Our policy models a respectful environment that prevents harassment and bullying from occurring and, in the event that it occurs, promotes healing and justice for the victim/target, and healing and accountability for the harasser/bully.

## **II. Awareness**

Through programs, staff shall help raise awareness of the *Code of Conduct* and how students can incorporate it in their daily behaviours.

There are many underlying causes of bullying.

Harassment and bullying can be blunt or subtle, and may continue undetected by anyone other than the victim/target.

Myths about harassment and bullying often make it difficult to address the underlying issues. Examples of these myths which must be debunked are:

- Bullying or harassment is “no big deal”
- We all survived it, so...
- It doesn't happen because kids come from good homes.
- Racist or sexually inappropriate jokes are not harassment or bullying; they are just a little off.
- Name-calling and verbal aggression is not bullying, because “sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me”.
- Power struggles and pecking order issues are not important issues, as they've always been in schools.
- Kids can work it out on their own.
- Teachers, parents/caregivers and administrators understand what is really going on in the school all the time.
- Teaching conflict resolution or anti-bullying in the curriculum alone resolves the problem.
- Students excluded from social groups are not the school's concern.

Through programs, staff shall help raise awareness of harassment and bullying.

## **III. Prevention**

Our staff are leaders who nurture and model a school climate that fosters community, prevents harassment and bullying, and works for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation when either of these occur.

- Each class will follow the principles of related programs such as the Second Step Program.
- Staff shall make students aware that they can safely (and confidentially) communicate complaints about harassment and bullying (and any other matter) to staff.

## **IV. Intervention**

Staff may exercise their judgment to choose, depending on circumstances, whether to start intervention at Stage 1, or go directly to Stage 2 or Stage 3.

### Stage 1

In this stage, the issue is **addressed by the parties and the first member of staff that is aware of a problem.**

1. Staff shall, where appropriate, encourage students to work out issues among themselves.
2. If this does not help to resolve an issue, the staff shall give guidance.
3. Staff may inform parents/caregivers of student(s) involved.
4. Staff shall maintain confidentiality.
5. If the staff's guidance does not resolve the difficulty, the staff shall report the matter to the Academic Head (go to Stage 2).

### Stage 2

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with the involvement of the Academic Head.**

1. The Academic Head shall investigate every complaint or staff report about harassment or bullying. The Academic Head shall interview participants and witnesses, and review evidence, as necessary.
2. The Academic Head shall assess if the harm is harassment, bullying or child abuse. In the case of child abuse, refer to the *Child Protection Policy*.
3. The Academic Head shall consider informing parents/caregivers of student(s) involved, and involve them early in the discussion.
4. The Academic Head shall lead a reconciliation process that may include the following activities:
  - Describe the harassment/bullying behaviour to the student(s) in a specific and concrete way and explain the impact on the recipient(s).
  - State the school's policy on harassment and bullying, and possible action or consequences.
  - Discuss expectations in a specific and concrete way.
  - Explain options and encourage student(s) to suggest remedies.
  - Indicate when the Academic Head will check back with the student(s), staff and parents/caregivers to see if the harassment/bullying has been resolved.
5. The Academic Head shall document a summary of these events, including names, times and methods of communication, and retain a copy in administrative files.

### Stage 3

In this stage, the issue is **addressed with a formal plan and may involve authorities outside the school.** The Academic Head shall take the following action:

1. Notify student(s) and parents/caregivers involved and the Board of Directors of the Pacific Montessori Society that action will be taken.
2. Assess the need to refer to the appropriate authorities.
3. Ensure that a formal plan is prepared to address healing for the victim/target and accountability for the harasser/bully. The plan shall include specific accountabilities for monitoring and follow-up, and may include serious disciplinary action. See *Discipline Policy*.
4. Ensure that all steps in the plan are implemented in a timely manner.
5. Document a summary of these events, including names, times and methods of communication, and retain a copy in the administrative files.

## V. *Process and Timelines*

To enable timely responses to issues as they arise, the Academic Head may delegate his/her authority under this policy to the Administrative Head or another teacher for periods when the Academic Head is unavailable.

Time is of the essence in dealing with harassment/bullying, since the victim/target may continue to be subject to harassment/bullying while the interventions and planning are under way.

### Stages 1 and 2:

Proceed in a timely manner at discretion of staff and Academic Head.

### Stage 3:

Once the Academic Head determines the matter requires a Stage 3 response, a plan shall be completed in 5-10 working days.

## VI. *Appeals*

Parties involved may consult the *Complaints and Appeals Policy*.

## DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are intended to enhance understanding of this policy. They are descriptive only and not intended to be used for any legal actions.

### *Abuse*

As defined in the *Child Protection Policy*.

### *Bullying*

*“Bullying...is a pattern of repeated aggressive behaviour, with negative intent, directed from one child to another where there is a power imbalance.”*

(The most widely accepted definition from the work of leading Norwegian researcher, Dr, Dan Olweus)

This aggressive behaviour includes physical or verbal behaviour, and is an intentional and purposeful act meant to inflict injury or discomfort on the other person. Olweus' definition identifies three critical conditions that distinguish bullying from other forms of aggressive behaviours, including:

- Power: Children who bully acquire their power through physical size and strength, by status within the peer group, and by recruiting support of the peer group.
- Frequency: Bullying is not a random act. Rather, bullying is characterized by frequent and repeated attacks. It is this factor that brings about the anticipatory terror in the

mind of the child being bullied that can be so detrimental and have the most debilitating long-term effects.

- Intent to harm: Children who bully generally do so with the intent to either physically or emotionally harm the other child.

Bullying can start out in seemingly playful ways, consisting of pranks, jokes, and some “roughhousing”. The incidents soon become more hurtful, degenerating into name-calling, ridicule, personal attacks, and public embarrassment. Rough and tumble “play” gives way to punching, kicking, restraining, and beatings (Ross 1998).

Bullying often involves **physical and/or verbal aggression**. It consists of open assault on another student, slapping, hitting, punching, kicking, throwing things, jostling, or poking (Ross 1998). It can also include verbal taunts or open and overt behaviour, and takes the form of teasing, criticism, gossiping, spreading malicious rumours, threatening to withdraw friendship, **social isolation**, or exclusion from the group.

See outlines below of various forms bullying can take. Please note that this information is not exhaustive. When determining whether a specific behaviour is bullying, consider whether or not it:

- is repeated over time
- is intended to hurt
- involves a power imbalance.

Adapted from the Ministry of Education program, “Focus on Bullying” (1998).

For more information on Bullying, please see the Ministry of Education program “Focus on Bullying. A Prevention Program for Elementary School Communities”.

### ***Discrimination***

Racial slurs: imitation of accent: put downs about cultural differences; gender harassment; insults about appearances (weight, glasses)

### ***Harassment***

Harassment includes, but is not limited to, such behaviour that has the purpose or effect of offending or demeaning an individual or group of individuals on the basis of race, colour, size, ancestry, place of origin, nationality, religion, family status, physical or mental ability, age, gender, or sexual orientation.

Harassment can be a single incident or a series of incidents. Bullying is usually a series of such incidents. The unwelcome comment or conduct does not have to be directed at a specific person for harassment to occur. Bullying is usually directed at a particular individual. Comments or conduct that tend to ridicule or disparage a group may give rise to an offensive environment and thus to harassment. When it includes an individual who is targeted, then it can be bullying.

### ***Intimidation***

Stealing; extortion; pranks; dares (public challenge); bribery; threats; locking in a confined space; swarming; stalking; anonymous phone calls; gossip; breaking confidence.

### ***Non-verbal Body Language***

Inappropriate glaring; snickering; gestures; ignoring (silent treatment); shunning; confining; surrounding; blocking; unwelcome physical contact such as inappropriate touching or patting.

### ***Physical Aggression***

Spitting; pushing; tripping; hitting; shoving; kicking; hair pulling; hiding personal possessions (lunch etc); damaging property, attacking family or friends; coercion; intimidation; threatening with a weapon; defacing property; stealing.

### ***Social Isolation and Alienation***

Shunning; exclude from a group; rumours or malicious rumour spreading; public humiliation; undermining; embarrassing gossiping; setting up a student to look foolish; spreading rumours; inciting hatred; racist, sexist or homophobic alienation; setting up someone to take the blame; display of pornographic, racist or other offensive or derogatory material.

### ***Staff***

Any individual who is employed by the Pacific Montessori Society, including an independent contractor who has entered into an agreement with the Society.

### ***Verbal Aggression***

Inappropriate teasing; name calling; offensive remarks, inappropriate jokes or innuendo, mocking; sarcasm; putdowns; whistling/catcalls; leaving nasty or threatening notes; threatening or **intimidating** phone calls; giving dirty looks; racist, sexist taunting; daring another to do something dangerous; verbal threats against property; verbal threats of violence or inflicting bodily harm; coercion; extortion; includes all forms of communication including mail, e-mail, fax, voice mail, notes, or yearbook journaling.

## **REFERENCES**

*Independent School Act*

*Child Protection Policy*

*Code of Conduct*

*Complaints and Appeals Policy*

*Discipline Policy*