

EREA Marlene Moore Flexible Learning Network Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

Marlene Moore Flexible Learning Network's (MMFSN) Flexible Learning Centres (FLCs) operate from a philosophy of Common Ground, where all young people and staff members are valued for their unique contribution to the school community. Safe and respectful relationships provide an essential platform for community members to engage fully and equally in the school community. Any form of bullying is contrary to the rights of the individual, weakens community spirit and interferes with the effectiveness of the work and learning environment. Bullying can be extremely detrimental to the health and wellbeing of those involved, including bystanders and can constitute a criminal offence.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline how MMFSN and its schools will establish learning communities in which everybody feels valued and safe, and where individual differences are understood, accepted, and appreciated. MMFSN endeavours to ensure that young people and staff members enjoy their time at school and work, free from bullying and harassment. This policy is informed by the National Safe Schools Framework (NSSF).

Policy

MMFSN and its schools will work to prevent and address bullying by implementing educational activities to inform the community about the importance, development and maintenance of healthy relationships, as well as implementing protocols that sensitively and immediately manage incidents of reported bullying or harassment. In any such instance, the Network and its schools will provide support for the victim and perpetrator to avoid the escalation of issues, restore relationships and re-establish safety and respect in the learning community.

Authorisation



Matthew Hawkins
Principal of MMFSN
August 2022



Responsibilities

It shall be the responsibility of the **Principal** (or a delegated authority) to implement this policy and to monitor its performance.

It is the responsibility of the **Head of Campus** to ensure that:

- They are familiar with anti-bullying policies and procedures, and that they follow them accordingly.

It is the responsibility of all **MMFSN team and FLC staff members** to ensure that:

- They are familiar with anti-bullying policies and procedures, and that they follow them accordingly;
- They engage with other members of MMFSN and flexi school communities in ways that are safe and respectful;
- They work with colleagues and young people to prevent and respond to bullying in line with this policy.

It is the responsibility of the **Principal** to ensure that:

- All **Heads of Campus** are aware of their responsibilities in regard to preventing and responding to bullying;
- **Heads of Campus** are given continuous support and guidance to implement uphold the MMFSN Anti-Bullying Policy.

Anti-Bullying Procedures

Definitions

The Australian Government's *Student Wellbeing Hub* defines **bullying** as follows:

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. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert).

Bullying behaviours may occur in person or online (cyberbullying) and can include, but are not limited to:

- name calling, teasing, ridiculing;
- physical violence;
- putting down others and their achievements;
- spreading rumours;
- throwing objects;
- demands for money or possessions;
- damaging, removing, hiding belongings;
- any threatening behaviour;
- making racist comments;
- glaring and menacing gestures;
- deliberately leaving someone out of activities;



- making/using inappropriate comments/language about another person that are of a sexual nature;
- making negative or offensive comments about family members of others;
- inappropriate and unwanted use of digital technologies such as nuisance phone calls/emails/text messages/private online messages.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. However, these incidents may still need to be addressed using restorative and collaborative practices. Behaviours that do not constitute bullying include:

- mutual arguments and disagreements (where there is no power imbalance);
- not liking someone or a single act of social rejection;
- one-off acts of meanness or spite;
- isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

In addition, the [Edmund Rice Education Australia Code of Conduct](#) defines **workplace bullying** as:

Repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person, or a group of persons, that causes a risk to health and safety. Unreasonable behaviour means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, may consider unreasonable, for example because the behaviour is victimising, humiliating, undermining or threatening, and may include:

- *putting workers through "initiation rituals";*
- *verbal abuse, threats, sarcasm or other forms of demeaning or intimidating language or communication;*
- *constant unwarranted negative criticism or "nit-picking";*
- *threatening to take unjustified action against a person unless they comply with unreasonable requests;*
- *deliberately isolating a worker by refusing to talk to or interact with them.*

Reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable manner is not workplace bullying.

Guidelines

Each FLC will implement a range of **preventative measures** to establish and maintain safe and respectful work and learning environments. These include:

- Offering a wide range of curriculum-related activities and materials that encourage healthy relationships.
- Employing non-teaching staff (such as Youth Workers or Social Workers) and establishing relationships with community services in order to meet the wellbeing needs of young people.



- Providing a range of supportive mechanisms for staff members, including professional supervision (internal and external as required), professional development and opportunities to build collegiate relationships.
- Providing information on developing healthy relationships, the impact of bullying and the warning signs for staff, young people and parents.
- Ensuring adequate supervision of students is in place during school days and activities.

Each FLC will also implement measures to **respond to allegations of bullying** among young people and staff members. These include:

- Providing staff and young people with information about their rights and options in response to bullying.
- Provide staff with training, skills and strategies to address bullying among students through supportive and restorative practices,
- Develop and implement clear and just procedures for responding to bullying.
- Act upon all reported cases of bullying and respond appropriately to incidents of bullying in line with the policy.
- Treat very seriously any case of retaliation against a person for reporting bullying or any case of deliberate false accusation of bullying.

All MMFSN team and FLC staff members will:

- Model appropriate behaviours that enable development of positive relationships.
- Use classroom strategies that include all young people in the learning process.
- Address issues of bullying as soon as they become aware of an incident.

What to do if you are being bullied:

- Remember that bullying is not okay, and you are not blame.
- If you feel safe and comfortable to do so, speak to the person who is bullying you and explain your concerns.
- You may also choose to:
 - Speak to a trusted colleague, ~~Contact Officer~~ or a school leader.
 - Contact the Access Employee Assistance Program.
 - Contact the Police or the Fair Work Commission.

What to do if you observe bullying behaviour:

- If staff members observe bullying behaviour between young people, they have a duty of care to respond in ways that maintain the safety of the learning community and in line with the Four



Principles of Operation. This might involve speaking to the young people involved at the time of an incident, or separately following an incident, and facilitating a restorative process. More information is available below under the section titled, '*what to do if a young person tells you they are being bullied*'.

- If a staff member observes bullying behaviour between colleagues, they may choose to:
 - Express their concerns to the colleague who is being bullied, or the colleague who is perpetrating the bullying.
 - Seek advice from a school leader
 - Contact the Access Employee Assistance Program or your Supervisor if the incident was distressing.

What to do if a young person tells you they are being bullied:

- Take the matter seriously and be supportive.
- Find a space to speak confidentially and sensitively with the young person.
- Listen non-judgmentally while the young person tells you the whole story. When they have finished ask further questions if necessary, to determine when, where and how the bullying occurs.
- Reassure the young person that the bullying is not okay, and it is not their fault. Thank them for their honesty and willingness to talk to you about the bullying.
- Listen to what they want to do to address the bullying and help them work out their options. These can include:
 - Supporting the young person to develop their own strategies to respond to the bullying, such as ignoring the behaviour, avoiding the perpetrator or speaking to the perpetrator.
 - Working with staff members to develop a Safety & Support Plan (Appendix 1).
 - Participating in a Collaborative Problem Solving conversation with a staff member and the perpetrator.
 - Asking a trusted staff member to speak to the person who is bullying. The staff member might work with the person who is bullying to develop a Safety & Support Plan to enable them to be safe and respectful at school.
 - Reporting the bullying to a school leader and asking them for advice or to follow it up.
- Document the conversation in the notes section on the young person's TASS file.
- If a young person has told you that they are being bullied, it is important to inform their guardian(s) and discuss how the school, guardian(s) and young people involved can work together to address the bullying.
- If you have significant concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a young person, it may be necessary to report these to the relevant State based authorities to help vulnerable families, youth and children, such as Child Protection/Safety or the Police. In this instance, you should inform your **school leader and/or Marlene Moore Flexible Learning Network Child Safety Officer** and discuss whether a notification is appropriate.

What to do if a staff member tells you they are being bullied:

- Take the matter seriously and be supportive.
- Find a space to speak confidentially and sensitively with the staff member.
- Listen non-judgmentally while the staff member tells you their concerns.
- Reassure the staff member that bullying is not ok and it is not their fault.
- Listen to what they want to do to address the bullying and help them work out their options.

These can include:

- Supporting the staff member to develop their own strategies to respond to the bullying, such as ignoring the behaviour, avoiding the perpetrator or speaking to the perpetrator.
- Making a time to meet with their Supervisor, school leader or contacting Access EAP for further advice and support.
- Documenting the incidents of concern.
- Participating in mediation or a restorative conversation with the perpetrator.
- Making a formal complaint to the Head of Campus or Principal and asking them for advice or to follow it up.
- Reporting the bullying to the Police, if appropriate.

Related documents

[Edmund Rice Education Australia Code of Conduct](#)

[Australian Government National Safe Schools Framework](#)

[Australian Government Bullying No Way website](#)

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Principal of MMFSN
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