Mid North Education Centre

Making a difference by engaging and empowering

Bullying Prevention Policy

Purpose and Scope

Mid North Education Centre is committed to creating a safe, inclusive, respectful and accessible environment for all students, staff, families and community members. This policy explains how the site prevents, reports, responds to and reviews bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination and violence.

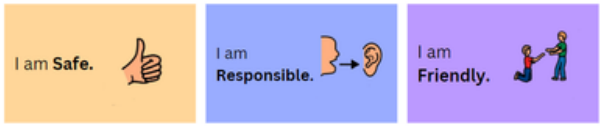
This policy applies in classrooms, yards, transport arranged by the site, excursions, community-based learning, online environments where there is a reasonable connection to the site, and other site-led activities.

Mid North Education Centre is a special school context. Many students may have complex disability, communication, sensory, developmental, health, trauma and regulation needs. Responses to bullying must therefore be accessible, developmentally appropriate and matched to each student's communication profile, support needs and individual plans.

This policy should be read alongside the Mid North Education Centre Behaviour Support Policy and PBL Statement of Practice. Bullying responses must also be consistent with Protective Practices and relevant Department for Education procedures and guidelines.

Our Values

Our school values guide behaviour and relationships across all settings:



These values are explicitly taught, modelled, practised and reinforced through Positive Behaviour for Learning. Students are supported to understand and use these values in ways that are accessible to them, including through visuals, AAC and other communication supports.

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Definitions

Bullying

Mid North Education Centre adopts the national definition of bullying. Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical, social and/or online behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or group misusing power, or perceived power, over one or more people who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying has 3 main features:

- it involves a misuse of power in a relationship
- it is ongoing or has the potential to be repeated over time, including through digital sharing
- it causes harm, or is intended to cause harm.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying through digital technologies such as social media, messaging, gaming, websites, apps or sharing images and recordings online.

Harassment, Discrimination and Violence

Harassment, discrimination and violence are also not acceptable and will be responded to. These behaviours may be linked to disability, race, culture, religion, sex, gender, sexuality, gender diversity, care status, socioeconomic background or other aspects of identity.

What is Not Bullying

Single incidents of conflict, arguments or fights between people of equal power are not defined as bullying, although they still require a school response. Accidental hurtful behaviour is also not bullying, but may still need teaching, support and repair.

Disability-Related Behaviour and Communication

Some behaviours may arise from communication differences, disability-related needs, sensory overload, dysregulation, trauma responses, pain, fatigue, health issues or unmet support needs. These behaviours should not automatically be labelled as bullying. Staff will consider the context, intent, power imbalance, repetition and communication profile of the student before deciding whether behaviour meets the definition of bullying.

Prevention

We prevent bullying through a whole-school approach that promotes safety, belonging and inclusion.

- Explicitly teach respectful relationships, expected behaviour, bullying prevention and help-seeking across the school.
- Use Positive Behaviour for Learning, the Behaviour Matrix and consistent whole-site language.
- Teach online safety, respectful communication and cyberbullying prevention in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Use Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum and other wellbeing learning where appropriate.
- Support students to recognise bullying, tell a trusted adult and act as safe bystanders.
- Use AAC, visuals, Easy Read, social stories and supported practice so prevention messages are accessible.
- Provide staff professional learning about bullying prevention, disability-aware practice, inclusive education and Protective Practices.
- Work with families, Governing Council, service providers and the wider community to strengthen prevention and inclusion.
- Review supervision, routines, environments and transitions to reduce bullying risks.

Student Voice and Accessibility

Students must be able to raise concerns and participate in responses in ways that are accessible to them. At Mid North Education Centre, student voice may be expressed through speech, AAC, visuals, gesture, behaviour, supported choices, observation and key communication partners.

- Staff will not rely only on spoken or written language when seeking student views.
- Students will be supported to report concerns, describe what happened and identify what helps them feel safe.
- Information about bullying, reporting and support will be provided in accessible formats where needed.

Roles and Responsibilities

Students

- Treat others in ways that are safe, respectful and inclusive, with support as appropriate.
- Tell a trusted adult if they experience bullying, see bullying or feel unsafe, using their own communication system.
- Support peers to seek help when it is safe to do so.
- Take part in reflection, reconnection and repair with support, when ready and in ways matched to their communication and regulation needs.

Staff

- Model respectful, inclusive and non-discriminatory behaviour.
- Teach students how to recognise, prevent, report and respond to bullying and cyberbullying.
- Take all reports or concerns seriously and respond promptly.
- Gather, document and store information in line with site and Department requirements.
- Use fair, visible, developmentally appropriate and least exclusionary responses.
- Support students who experience bullying, students who engage in bullying behaviour, and bystanders or witnesses.
- Communicate with families as appropriate while respecting privacy and confidentiality.
- Seek leadership support for complex, repeated, serious or unresolved bullying matters.

Leaders

- Ensure this policy is implemented, reviewed and made available to the school community.
- Support staff to respond consistently, safely and effectively to bullying incidents.
- Monitor bullying data and trends and use this information to strengthen prevention and response strategies.
- Ensure serious incidents, criminal matters and complaints are managed in line with Department requirements.
- Provide access to professional learning, consultation and specialist support where needed.

Parents and Carers

- Model respectful, safe and inclusive relationships.
- Report concerns promptly and work with the school to support resolution and safety.
- Support their child to understand bullying, help-seeking and safe online behaviour.
- Take part in planning, review and support processes where appropriate.
- Use the site and Department complaints processes if concerns remain unresolved.

Community Members

- Contractors, volunteers, visitors and service providers are expected to behave respectfully and comply with this policy, site procedures and Protective Practices requirements.

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How we Respond to Bullying

Responses to bullying will be planned, timely, fair and matched to the needs of the students involved.

- **Immediate Safety:** make sure students and staff are safe, supervised and supported.
- Gather information: speak with those involved, consider communication needs and collect relevant information or evidence.
- **Decide on the Response:** consider whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying and what support and intervention are required.
- **Intervene and Support:** use teaching, restorative approaches, supervision changes, safety planning, family communication and other strategies as needed.
- **Document and Record:** record incidents and actions taken in line with Department requirements and site systems.
- **Monitor and Follow Up:** check in with students and families, review whether the bullying has stopped and adjust supports if needed.

Responses may include explicit reteaching, restorative conversations, increased supervision, environmental changes, parent/carer meetings, individual planning, wellbeing support, timetable or transition adjustments, and school-based consequences where appropriate.

Consequences, if used, will be proportionate, visible, fair, developmentally appropriate and consistent with the Behaviour Support Policy. Suspension or exclusion may only be considered as a last resort and in line with Department procedures.

Support and Restoration

The school will support:

- students who experience bullying
- students who engage in bullying behaviour
- students who witness bullying or are otherwise affected by it.

Support may include counselling or wellbeing support, planned check-ins, regulation support, adjustments to supervision or routines, family collaboration, targeted teaching, social support, and review of individual plans. Relationships will be repaired and restored where this is safe, appropriate and in the best interests of those involved.

Serious Incidents and Criminal Behaviour

Some incidents may involve serious threats, assault, violence, image-based abuse, stalking, sexualised behaviour or other criminal conduct. These matters will be escalated to leadership immediately and managed in line with Department requirements. Criminal matters will be referred to South Australia Police where required.

Complaints and Unresolved Concerns

If a student, parent/carer or community member is not satisfied with the steps taken by the school, they can raise the matter with the Principal or site leader. If concerns remain unresolved, the Department for Education complaints process can be used.

Monitoring, Review and Publication

Leadership will review bullying prevention and response using incident data, student voice, family feedback, staff feedback, supervision information and observations of practice. In a special school context, review will also consider communication access, disability-related needs, sensory and regulation supports, online safety and the effectiveness of adjustments and individual plans.

- Bullying data and trends will be reviewed regularly to identify priorities and improve prevention.
- Students, families and staff will be invited to contribute feedback in accessible ways.

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