

Anti-Bullying Policy

Creating Positive Futures Together



Anti-Bullying Policy

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Context

Margaret Jurd College (the College) is a Ministry of the Uniting Church in Australia. A registered non-government secondary special school established to support disadvantaged young people who have complex needs due to the following:

- Mental health/behavioural disorder at a level that is recognised as a disability in accordance with the Department of Education and Training criteria.
- Complex trauma history
- Autism

Margaret Jurd College is dedicated to providing students with a supportive alternative to mainstream schooling. We embrace young people who want to complete secondary schooling that live with mental health conditions that can be seen as challenging behaviours.

Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to outline the College's policy on maintaining a safe and positive environment for staff and students, making bullying less likely to occur.

Scope of the Policy

This policy covers anti-bullying within the College through any medium. It applies to all students, employees, volunteers and visitors to the College.

Policy

Margaret Jurd College maintains the rights of young people to be provided with a safe secure educational and living environment, free from bullying. Margaret Jurd College maintains a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. All bullying behaviour will be addressed through the College disciplinary procedures and the programs provided.

Definition:

What is Bullying

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of bullying, there is general consensus that bullying behaviour has the following elements:

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A desire to hurt; the perpetration of hurtful behaviour (physical, verbal or relational) in a situation in which there is an imbalance of power; the action being regarded as unjustified, typically repeated and experienced by the target of the aggression as oppressive, and by the perpetrator as enjoyable. (Ken Rigby, 2002)

Bullying is a pattern of uninvited ongoing behaviour directed by a more powerful person or group to intentionally or unintentionally hurt, injure, embarrass and/or distress a less powerful person or group. Bullying may be physical, verbal, psychological, or social.

Bullying can take many forms, all of which will cause distress.

Examples of Bullying include:

Physical: Hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others.

Extortion: Threatening to take someone's possessions, food or money.

Verbal: Teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours.

Non-Verbal: Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using email or text messaging to hurt others, rude gestures, facial gestures, consistently staring at someone and encouraging others to do the same.

Exclusion: Deliberately excluding others from the group, refusing to sit next to someone. **Property:** Stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property.

Cyber: Offensive/threatening images, offensive/ threatening/ hurtful comments, rumour spreading via emails, SMS chatrooms etc.

The key features of bullying are that it:

- Causes hurt and distress to the target and others eg family.
- Is repeated.
- Involves the use of power in an unfair way.
- Removes the feeling of safety in our College community.

Bullying is not always instigated by the older or stronger. "Bullying up" is bullying done by the smaller, the younger and the weaker, who either use anonymous means to bully, such as cyber bullying, or overt means to bully, knowing that any retaliation would make the provoked person look like they are the bully.

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Symptoms of Bullying

For behaviour to be classified as bullying, it needs to involve repeated actions that are intended to cause hurt.

There is a difference between bullying behaviour and what can be described as normal interpersonal conflict. The symptoms associated with bullying include, but are not limited to:

- Not wanting to attend the College.
- Change in friends and social activities.
- Anger.
- Sadness.
- Depression.
- Low self-esteem.
- Symptoms such as headaches and stomach aches that don't appear to have a viral cause.

Withdrawal and reluctance to “join in” can be a warning sign, as can truancy, misbehaviour and aggressive behaviour. Cuts, bruising, torn clothing, requests for extra food or money can also be clues that a student may be suffering from bullying.

Any form of bullying is unacceptable from a Margaret Jurd College student who, many times has been the victim of bullying themselves and has attended the College with an understanding that this is a community that operates free from the risk of bullying. In the same way it is against all that Margaret Jurd College stands for.

Those who are identified as bullies will be asked to accept (own) their own behaviour and, if the behaviour continues they will be dealt with firmly and may be exited from the College.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is undertaking bullying, as described above, via modern technologies such as the internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices.

Cyber bullying is a growing problem in society. Modern technologies give the individual, even the most unlikely of individuals, a huge ability to cause harm. It can be an attractive means of bullying for it can appear to be able to happen without anyone knowing who is doing it.

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Cyber bullying can be damaging because of the capacity it has to humiliate, hurt and harm a person in front of a huge “audience” and the bully can remain anonymous.

A dangerous feature of cyber bullying is that it can be done quickly and easily which is why it may seem like an attractive option for a potential bully.

A further problem with cyber bullying is that the bully is often unaware of the extent of the harm they are causing because cyber bullying seldom occurs face-to-face. No-one sees what happens to a “victim” in their own home so it appears that the bully is protected from an understanding of their bullying behaviour.

The College’s anti-bullying policy will still be enacted when the bully uses technology. Some examples of cyber bullying, which are unacceptable at any time, whether at or away from College are listed below. In extreme cases, this kind of bullying may be referred to the federal or local police.

- Sending a text message to another student containing threats or insults or inciting anti-social behaviour.
- Sending or forwarding on an email containing a destructive rumour about another student.
- Creating a social media profile impersonating another student.
- Impersonating another person on social media.
- Filming a teacher or another student and uploading the footage on YouTube.

Sexting

Another expression of cyber bullying is sexting. Sexting is taking sexually explicit photos and making them available for others to see via a carriage service such as mobile phone or computer.

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 16 years, it can be a very serious crime possibly resulting in charges of paedophilia. If sexting involves the distribution of images of a person under the age of 16 then the College may choose to involve the NSW police.

Mobile Phones and Cyber Bullying

Using mobile devices to bully (also known as cyber bullying) and threaten other students is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. In some cases it can constitute criminal behaviour. Students are reminded that it is a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to bully, harass or offend another person and all calls, text messages and emails can be traced at the request of the College (through Telstra/ Optus or Vodaphone etc).

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Mobile phones or other mobile devices must not be used to take photos/video of any other students or teachers without their consent. It is also prohibited to upload photos/video of other students/teachers to social media websites or email photos/videos to others if doing so would embarrass, humiliate or cause discomfort to the subject of the photo/video. Students are reminded that the use of mobile phones in toilets or changing rooms is strictly prohibited and may end in police involvement. If a staff member at the College becomes aware that their image has been uploaded by a student without their consent then this may warrant police involvement.

Student Guidelines

Due to new social media available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences outside the classroom or the College. This means that everyone has a greater level of responsibility and accountability.

Below are guidelines students should follow when using internet tools in the classroom or during College activities. Students should follow these guidelines anytime they post material that could identify themselves, others or their relationship to the College.

1. Be aware of what you post online. Social media venues are very public. What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Even if you post to sites like *Snapchat* that have the appearance of immediate deletion this does not actually happen and remains accessible for those who know how to retrieve it. Do not post anything you wouldn't want friends, parents, other family members, teachers, or a future employer to see.
2. Follow the College's code of conduct when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. Make sure that criticism is constructive and not hurtful or abusive. What is inappropriate in the classroom or at the College in general is inappropriate online.
3. Be safe online. Never give out personal information, including, but not limited to, last names, phone numbers, addresses, exact birthdates, and pictures. Talk to College staff (specifically your caseworker) if you feel you have been unsafe or have been asked to share information that you feel may make you unsafe.
4. How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity. This can be thought of as fraud or slander and may be dealt with by the police.
5. Know that the most frequent use of the internet is for illegal activities such as scams, pornography and gambling.
6. If you are concerned about something on the internet or social media that makes you feel uncomfortable, or is not respectful, inform staff or parents/carers right away.

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Cyber Anonymity

Students need to remember that something sent electronically can never be entirely removed even with a press of the “delete” button. The image or statement or contents of a chat group may emerge at any stage in their future life and lead to serious consequences. Using pseudonyms, passwords and avatars does not protect the identity of a cyber bully. Technologies exist to identify those who miss-use modern technologies to harm others.

When using a social-networking site, the College recommends that you set your profile to private and only allow access to people you personally know and trust. Do not upload any personal details that could lead to your identification by strangers. If taking pictures it is advised that you turn off your location settings particularly if you intend to post those pictures online.

How does Margaret Jurd College discourage Bullying?

Margaret Jurd College is a Uniting Church school and, as a College founded on Christian values; it encourages all members of the College community to establish relationships which are grounded in equity, compassion, reconciliation and justice. These values dictate that we do not accept ideas, beliefs and behaviours that victimise people.

The College encourages the development of positive strategies for socialising with one another.

Procedures

If you believe that you or someone that you know are being bullied you are encouraged to report your concerns immediately.

The report should be made to your class teacher, caseworker, teachers aid, psychologist, parent/carer or any adult with whom you feel comfortable.

- The person receiving the complaint will report it to the Campus Coordinator for action.
- Any reported bullying incident will be followed up and actions taken and documented.

The reporting of anti-social behaviour is one way Margaret Jurd College students can defend and protect their peers and the College’s safe environment.

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Intervention

Margaret Jurd College, through the wellbeing program and the use of outside support and facilitators, continues to develop and implement programs for bullying prevention.

Early intervention support is available for students who are identified as having previously experienced bullying or engaged in bullying behaviour.

The College, depending on the situation, will work closely with the Police College Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Jalam Glossop.

Constable Glossop will assist with mediation, education and advice on effective intervention strategies for the College.

Other Methods of Intervention

1. **PD/HEALTH/PE Class** incorporating education programs focusing on assertive behaviours, anger management, self-esteem, rights and responsibilities, what is bullying and self-responsibility.
2. **Wellbeing programs** targeting the above-mentioned categories on an individual basis as well as focusing on the individual issues faced by the students in a one on one confidential setting.
3. **Referral** to specialist agencies eg, mental health professionals, counsellors, medical practitioners etc.
4. **Family work** where possible to incorporate all parties in behavioural change strategies.

Responsibilities and Delegations

College staff have a responsibility to:

- Respect and support students.
- Model and promote appropriate behaviour.
- Have knowledge of Margaret Jurd College's and departmental policies relating to bullying behaviour.
- Respond in a timely manner to incidents of bullying.

In addition, all staff have a responsibility to:

- Provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports students to develop an understanding of bullying and its impact on individuals and the broader community.

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Students have a responsibility to:

- Behave appropriately, respecting individual differences and diversity.
- Behave as responsible digital citizens.
- Follow the College anti-bullying philosophy.
- Behave as responsible bystanders.
- Report incidents of anti-social behaviour immediately.

Parents and Carers have a responsibility to:

- Support students to become responsible citizens and to develop responsible online behaviours.
- Be aware of the College anti-bullying plan and assist their students in understanding bullying behaviour.
- Support their students in developing positive responses to incidents of bullying consistent with the College's anti-bullying plan.
- Report incidents of College related bullying behaviour to the College.

Margaret Jurd College reserves the right to alter the means and ways by which it discourages bullying. If any member of the College community would like to suggest an improvement in the way bullying might be discouraged at Margaret Jurd College, they are invited to send their suggestions to the Principal.

What should you do if you are being Bullied?

If you are being bullied, it is important that you talk to an adult who is in a position to help you. There can be a reluctance to report bullying because of a fear of being labelled a “dobber” and going against an unwritten code of student behaviour. This concern is understandable but must not prevent a student from reporting bullying behaviour. Most students dislike bullying and would support your attempts to stop it.

Some students may not want to report bullying because they feel it might only make matters worse. Again, this fear is understandable, but most teachers and mentors are trained in ways to help victims of bullying in a manner that protects the victim.

It can take courage to challenge the bully, to expose them for who they are and to play a part in improving our community by ridding it of bullying behaviour. Margaret Jurd College expects its students to show this courage and not tolerate bullying as a bystander or as a victim.

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Everyone at Margaret Jurd College should be committed to making the College a safe and happy community.

If you are being bullied, you must tell a responsible adult who has the capacity to help.

Options include:

Parent/carer, guardian or adult relatives.

Teacher, caseworker or teachers aid.

Psychologist, chaplain.

Principal, Campus Coordinator, Wellbeing Coordinator, Teaching and Learning Coordinator.

If needed, further help can be obtained from:

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800

Lifeline – 131 114

Salve Youth Line – 9360 300