

# Anti-Bullying Procedure

Mahindra International School- Internal Procedure  
Updated: June 2024  
Version: 3.0  
Next update in 2027

## Rationale

At Mahindra International School, every person has a right to feel safe and secure. Any person who bullies another is denying them that right. MIS is committed to ensuring a safe and caring community and building a culture of mutual respect. Aggression, violence, threats, intimidation, and isolation compromise the ability of students and staff to learn, work, and to perform to their full potential in school. This statement outlines positive strategies and protocols to ensure the school remains a safe place for all. Following this policy is one of the ways we live our mission of 'Foster Responsibility'. These expectations reflect our values as a community and are complemented by our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion statement.

We recognize that bullying behaviors adversely affects the following fundamental rights that are protected by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

- The right to your identity
- The right to choose your own friends and join or set up groups, as long as it isn't harmful to others.
- The right to privacy.
- The right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind.
- The right to a good quality education.

(United Nations)

While we understand that bullying behaviors may exist between and among adults, this procedure is focused on students. Expectations for adults are covered in the personnel policies.

## Definition:

***'Bullying is repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm, intimidate, or dominate someone perceived as vulnerable. It includes physical, verbal, emotional, and cyber abuse, creating distress and a power imbalance between the bully and the victim' (Wikipedia)***

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference may be size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, diverse learning needs, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, and/or race.

Bullying may present itself in different forms, including, but not limited to, physical assaults or aggression, verbal and/or physical threats, and intentional exclusion from a group, spreading rumors, menacing gestures or faces, or repeated name calling.

Note that sexual harassment is considered a separate category of offense and is addressed in the Child Safeguarding Policy. Sexual harassment between adults and children or between two children is a crime under the POCSO Act of 2012.

## Anti-Bullying Procedure

Updated: August 2020  
Version: 2.0  
Next update in 2027

Bullying is an aggressive and typically repeated behavior by an individual where:

- a) the behavior is intended to have the effect of, or it is reasonable to expect that the behavior would be likely to have the effect of:
  - i. causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation, or harm to the individual's property.
  - ii. creating a negative environment at school for another individual.
  - iii. producing a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the perpetrator and the individual.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. Forms of cyberbullying include, but not limited to:

- a) online threats and mean, aggressive, or rude texts, tweets, and posts.
- b) spreading rumors or false information about someone online.
- c) Sharing private or embarrassing photos or videos without consent.
- d) Impersonating someone to damage their reputation or relationships.

Cyberbullying may be **persistent** because the use of technology is available continually, **permanent** because digital footprints are difficult or impossible to remove and **hard to detect** because it may take place outside of regular school hours and away from parent supervision.

MIS recognizes that while bullying is distinct from teasing, the line between the two is often unclear depending on perspective. MIS is committed to investigating all incidents with a high degree of care.

Typical child or adolescent behavior – Inappropriate but not bullying	Unacceptable Behavior with characteristics of bullying
Teasing, joking	Systematic and repeated harassment, targeting a particular individual
Comments on appearance or attire	Frequent harassment or discrimination related to physical appearance, clothing, status
Not getting invited to a party	Never being included in any social event that typically, others in the class/grade are included in
Being sent a rude social media message	Having others deliberately impersonate a student and sending inappropriate messages as if they come from that individual
Sitting alone at lunch	Refusing to sit with a particular student every day at lunch, overtly moving away from a student to cause isolation

## Prevention

The first course of action to maintain a bully-free school environment is prevention. Prevention at MIS takes many different forms;

- Establishing shared values and purpose as a community
- Creating a positive, safe, trusting school climate
- Monitoring by adults in learning spaces and social spaces
- Active anti-bullying education through our CORE (Advisory) and Personal-Social-Education (PSE) programmes
- Training of bystanders to act in preventative ways

## Anti-Bullying Procedure

Updated: August 2020

Version: 2.0

Next update in 2027

## **Developing Anti-Bullying Skills**

In all grades in the PSE (Personal-Social Education) and CORE (Advisory) programmes, age-appropriate targeted instruction is provided to reduce the incidents of bullying. This instruction includes support for understanding the causes of bullying, identifying bullying behaviors, skills of addressing bullying for those being bullied, skills of intervening for bystanders, and skills for reporting bullying when needed.

MIS is committed to maintaining a climate where reporting inappropriate behavior is a safe and appropriate action to take. If a student has been bullied, intimidated, or threatened or has witnessed such behavior, he/she needs to confide in an adult at the school. If the school is not aware of an incident, it cannot act. A student is not tattling by contacting an adult; he/she is, in fact, upholding MIS's core values and demonstrating courage by appropriately standing up for himself/herself. No one has the right to bully, intimidate, or threaten another person. It takes courage to stop such behavior in a mature and responsible way.

## **Responsibility of a Bystander**

Most bullying behaviors happen in the presence of witnesses and actively seek to establish power in the view of the witnesses. Bystanders or witnesses may not be taking an active role in the bullying behavior, but their participation as 'audience' members is contributory to the behavior.

If a student witnesses an act of bullying, intimidation or threats, he/she is a bystander and is expected to act in principled ways, taking responsibility to promote a safe school environment.

### ***Passive actions***

- Actively including those likely to be bullied in social interactions, walking with or sitting with vulnerable individuals.
- By removing the 'audience' a bystander can remove the power dynamic being used in bullying behavior. This can be as simple as walking away, changing where you are standing, or involving others by invitation in the group dynamic. These actions are effective in reducing bullying but do not result in conflict or directly confronting the behavior.
- Causing a distraction can be effective at the moment that bullying is occurring. This could include changing the topic of conversation or suggesting a new activity. A simple statement like 'Let's go to the tuck shop' could be all that is needed to prevent the behavior from continuing.
- Monitoring your own response. Don't watch and laugh. That encourages the behavior. Make sure you are not part of the problem.

## **Active resistance**

- Don't be a silent witness. Speak-up and defend the targeted individual. This is a brave way to support a positive school climate. You would want someone to have your back if you were the one getting bullied.
- Question the bullying behavior, openly stating your objection.
- Encourage the person being targeted to get help from someone, like a counselor, teacher, or other adult who can help. Help them name the behavior as inappropriate.
- Be an ally. If someone needs help to report the behavior to an adult, you can accompany them as a silent supporter. Sometimes just having a friend along is a huge help.
- If you are unsure if the behavior is bullying, it is ok to ask an adult to discuss it with you and seek advice.

## **Intervention**

All members of the school community, including the Director, Principals, teachers and other staff members, students, and parents, have an obligation to comply with the standards of behavior outlined in this policy. Each member of the school community has the responsibility to work to correct bullying behavior.

Anyone who experiences or observes bullying and harassment should approach an adult for help. This can be the Homeroom teacher or any member of staff with whom you feel comfortable. You may also approach the Principal or School Counselors.

**The tattling/telling dilemma:** Tattling is reporting on someone so that they get in trouble. Telling is getting yourself or others out of trouble, seeking help, preventing further harm. Reporting bullying behaviors means sharing important information with an adult with the purpose of creating a safer and better school environment. You can ask the adult you are speaking with to help you figure out if the behavior should be reported. If they determine that it is 'tattling', they will instruct you.

When bullying has taken place, all the students involved will be supported, individual interventions will be provided:

- Support is provided to the students who are being bullied: The students are coached on how to deal with such situations.
- Support is provided to those who exhibit bullying behavior: The student is provided assistance to understand the problem behavior and that MIS has a no tolerance stance on bullying. Consequences involve learning to modify the behavior or empathy building.
- Support for the "upstanders": who are trained to deal with how to respond to bullying when they see it.

While certain forms of bullying may take place on school campus or on school learning platforms, some forms are more likely to take place outside of school hours, particularly cyberbullying. If such forms of bullying are reported to a responsible adult, the school will consider that the incident impacts our school climate and individual wellbeing.

## **Anti-Bullying Procedure**

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**Consequences:** All reported incidences of bullying or inappropriate behaviour will be taken seriously. It is the school's responsibility to thoroughly investigate all reports; these investigations will be conducted by the Principals with assistance from other faculty as required. If it is found that the reported behaviour constitutes bullying, appropriate consequences will be actioned by the respective Principal or delegated authority. Consequences will be applied taking into consideration the age, developmental maturity of those involved and the seriousness of the offense. The following guidelines may be used to establish the appropriate consequences.

	Primary students	Secondary students
<b>First offense</b>	Verbal warning	Verbal warning and call to parents
<b>Second offense</b>	Verbal warning, student to report to parents and parents to acknowledge via email within 24 hours if needed call to parents, recommended counseling	Written warning, Parent & Student meeting with the Principal. Recommended counseling. Possible suspension.
<b>Third offense</b>	Verbal warning, written letter on file and mandatory student counseling, and if necessary, family counseling.	Suspension or possible expulsion from the school. Mandatory counseling, and if necessary, family counseling..

In all cases, a record of the investigation and associated actions will be kept by the relevant Principal. In situations where a clear case of bullying is not determined, but where the behaviour caused harm or offense, the Principal may have an informal call with the parents explaining the situation.

Very serious instances of bullying/harassment may require immediate consequences at the discretion of the Principal and may include suspension or expulsion.

Those involved in a bullying case including those who are being bullied and those who are exhibiting the behaviour may benefit from social-emotional counselling. This will be offered to those involved.

## Works Cited

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