

DSM Policy

Bullying and Harassment

Deutsche Schule Melbourne Inc, ABN 52 936 931 854



Rationale

The Deutsche Schule Melbourne is a school that supports the existence of healthy relationships between all members of the school, including staff, students, parents and carers.

We foster a tolerant, harmonious and inclusive school community, recognising, respecting and valuing the richness of diversity. We promote respect, understanding and fairness in all interactions in order to create an environment to develop the personal, social, intellectual, physical and creative development of every child.

Behaviour that is offensive and inconsiderate and interferes with the rights of teachers to teach and students to learn is not acceptable. Our school community does not tolerate any form of bullying or discrimination of others.

Definitions

Harassment and/or bullying means subjecting another person to repeated behaviour that is hurtful, threatening and/or frightening. It can be done by one person or a group of people. This behaviour can be active, such as name-calling or physical assault, or passive, such as refusing to sit next to someone. There are many forms of bullying and harassment including:

Physical harassment

Includes, for example, repetitive fighting, pushing, throwing objects, invasion of personal space.

Verbal harassment

Includes, for example, name-calling, offensive language, picking on people because of their appearance, academic ability, skills, race or religion.

Visual harassment

Includes writing or preparing offensive notes or material, either hand-written or computer generated, damaging other people's possessions, giving other people 'looks' and using non-verbal signs to humiliate them.

Victimisation/psychological bullying

This is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Includes, for example, emotional abuse, repeated exclusion from peer group, circulating offensive notes, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, lying and spreading rumours.

Sexual harassment

Includes, for example, commenting about someone's moral values or asking unacceptable questions about someone's private life. It can include touching or brushing against someone etc, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature.

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Cyber bullying

Includes repeatedly calling someone, sending emails, text or MSN messages or any other electronic communications or video recordings which are intended to harass, cause discomfort, intimidate or spread rumour.

Principles

- Students have the right to be free of harassment and bullying of any kind when attending school.
- Individuals should have the freedom to express who they are with confidence.
- All members of the school community are entitled to feel safe, respected and valued.
- Pro-social skills can be modelled and taught.
- Healthy relationships are a shared responsibility of all members of the school community.
- Building a safe and supportive school environment is essential to student engagement and well-being.
- It is the responsibility of the school community to work together to prevent and resolve bullying.

Goals

- Encourage all members of the school community to reflect on and be responsible for their own behaviour. Each member should attempt to view the impact of their behaviour from the perspective of the community.
- Create an environment where all members of the school community feel safe, respected and valued.
- Support all students by teaching and modelling appropriate social skills and fostering resilience.
- Assist those who demonstrate inappropriate behavior into being aware of the situation and subsequently assist them to change their behavior.
- Encourage students to respect themselves and others.

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Strategies

Staff

Staff has responsibilities to students and the school community to create an environment which minimises bullying, harassment and vilification. Deutsche Schule Melbourne will:

- build a safe and supportive school environment that engages students
- be responsible for managing the safety and welfare of all students
- provide an effective school transition program
- provide lunchtime activities
- undertake early intervention of bullying and, where required, develop a management plan to monitor and restore well-being
- proactively manage all incidents of bullying
- offer a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate to allow children to succeed
- undertake professional development in areas that promote healthy relationships, such as conflict resolution and personal safety
- foster cooperative learning environments in classrooms, where diversity and community are appreciated
- model healthy relationships with other staff, students and parents/guardians
- model positive values and behaviours
- develop strategies to promote positive peer relationships across all year levels
- develop a whole school approach to student wellbeing and developing positive peer relationships
- support students in helping them to develop protective resources to minimise stress and antisocial behaviours or educational failure, and to foster resilience via programs such as You Can Do It or Friendly Schools Friendly Families
- involve parents/guardians and the school community in the development of safety and wellbeing strategies
- develop and implement a Code of Conduct in conjunction with students and parents to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students
- encourage genuine student leadership
- have high expectations of the behaviour of all students
- support students who are bullied or harassed
- engage counsellors where required
- report concerns to parents/guardians

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to:

- report all incidents of bullying to the school, not just incidents that happen to their own child
- let their child know how much they disapprove of bullying and why
- avoid any type of bullying at home, and model respect for others
- talk to their child about the qualities associated with caring friendships and discourage them from staying in 'friendships' where they are mistreated or not respected
- teach their child assertive responses

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Students

Students are encouraged to:

- report bullying behaviour to staff, and be supported by staff and parents/carers through the process when they do
- avoid joining in with others who might want to harass another student
- support any person they feel is being bullied and encourage them to do something about it
- be aware that not talking about bullying or harassment often allows it to continue
- be respectful, inclusive, kind, and supportive to others
- take responsibility for their own behaviour
- explore and practice proactive behaviours such as assertiveness, seeking help and ignoring unwanted behaviour

The school has specific procedures in place for the management of a bullying incident which follow below.

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Bullying procedures for parents/guardians

Discovering that your child is being bullied or that your child is bullying others is very stressful and upsetting. Most parents initially experience anger, confusion and guilt. The following information has been developed to provide you with useful strategies in dealing with incidents of bullying.

What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person on more than one occasion. Bullying includes physical bullying such as hitting; verbal bullying such as name calling; and indirect bullying such as spreading rumours.

Bullying is not:

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

- a situation where there is mutual conflict, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. – Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
- social rejection or dislike (unless it is a repeated act and directed towards a specific person)
- single episodes of nastiness or meanness or random acts of aggression or intimidation. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.
- Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying. However, since the school has a duty of care to provide a student with a safe and supportive environment, single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should not be ignored or condoned.

How do I know if my child is being bullied?

Some of the signs that a child is being bullied include:

- an unwillingness or refusal to go to school
- feeling ill in the mornings
- wagging school
- doing poorly in their school work
- becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence
- crying themselves to sleep, having nightmares
- asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
- refusing to talk about what's wrong
- having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- beginning to bully other children or siblings
- becoming aggressive and unreasonable

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Adapted from Kidscape, available at:

- www.kidscape.org.uk/parents/signsof.shtml
- www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm

What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Step 1

Listen carefully to your child and show concern and support.

Step 2

Give sensible advice – don't encourage your child to fight back. This will most likely increase the bullying.

Step 3

Assist your child to develop positive strategies including:

- saying 'leave me alone' and calmly walking away
- avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying
- making new friends

Step 4

Ask your child the following questions to understand if there is a repeated pattern:

- What, where and when did the incident happen?
- Who was involved on each occasion?
- Did anybody else see it and, if so, who?
- What solutions have been tried so far?
- The names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Step 5

Work with the school to solve the problem. Deutsche Schule Melbourne takes its responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour very seriously and Deutsche Schule Melbourne will have more success when you work with Deutsche Schule Melbourne to solve the bullying problem.

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You should:

- make an appointment with your child's teacher and make notes of the points you want to discuss before the meeting.
- try to stay calm at the meeting and present information in a way that makes it clear that you and the school are working as partners in trying to fix the problem.

Step 6

A follow-up call can be made to see what has been done or alternatively ask the school when you can expect them to get back to you.

The school will need time to investigate and to talk to teachers and, perhaps, other students.

Step 7

Work with the school to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Before you leave, ask for clarification about the next steps in the plan, which might include parental responsibilities.

Step 8

If needed, ask for the Principal to become involved.

Step 9

Encourage your child to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

What I should NOT do if my child is being bullied?

- Do not directly approach any other student who you believe may have been involved in bullying your child.
- Do not try to sort the issues out with their parents. This usually doesn't work and makes the situation much worse.

What if my child is bullying others?

- Respond calmly and non-defensively, and commit to working with the school to manage the problem in a helpful way.
- See the situation as an opportunity for your child to learn important developmental lessons.

What I should NOT do if my child is bullying others?

- Do not directly approach the bullied student or their family or try to get other parents to take your child's side.

Adapted from:

- Parent Fact Sheet
http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/Parent_Factsheet.htm

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Useful websites

- Safe Schools are Effective Schools
www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm
- Student Code of Conduct
www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/welfare/conduct.htm
- Bullying. No Way!
www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Bullying procedures for students

Bullying is when someone deliberately upsets or hurts a person more than once.

What can I do if I see someone being bullied?

If you see someone being bullied you have to help.

- Talk to a teacher.
- Tell the person acting like a bully to stop.
- Don't watch or join in.
- Try to get the group to talk about something else.
- Ask the person being bullied to play with you.

What can I do if I am being bullied?

If you are being bullied you can

- tell them you don't like how they treat you and ask them to stop.
- walk away from the person who is hurting you.
- talk to a teacher you trust. They will be able to help you.
- talk to a family member or close friend.

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au

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Adapted from:

- Primary school poster 1
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/BullyPosterPrimA.pdf>
- Primary school poster 2
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/BullyPosterPrimB.pdf>

Bullying procedures for staff

Schools must take their responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour very seriously. Bullying and harassment issues are more successfully managed when parents and the school work together to solve the bullying problem.

Step 1

Listen carefully to the student or parent or staff member with concerns.

Step 2

Give sensible advice. Help the student to de-mystify what has occurred.

Step 3

Assist the student to develop positive strategies such as:

- saying 'leave me alone' and calmly walking away.
- avoiding situations that might expose them to further bullying.
- making new friends.
- talking to a friend and asking for ideas and support about what s/he can do to solve the problem.

Step 4

Investigate the matter immediately, talking to all involved and those witnessing any event. In order to understand if there is a repeated pattern, ask questions such as:

- What, where and when did the incident happen?
- Who was involved on each occasion?
- Did anybody else see it and, if so, who?
- What solutions have been tried so far?
- The names of any teachers who are aware of the problem.

Step 5

Determine whether formal or informal resolution processes are required.

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Step 6

Implement prevention and intervention strategies such as:

- assertiveness training.
- restorative practices such as community conferences, small group, individual conferences or classroom conferences.
- bystander training.
- buddy systems.

Step 7

Where a pattern of a significant behaviour or repeated incident has occurred, parents should be notified with a view to negotiating an agreed approach to solving the problem before it becomes a serious issue.

Step 8

Report concerns and the outcomes of investigations to parents/guardians. Make an appointment with the student's parents/guardians to discuss the issue if required. At the meeting try to present information in a way that makes it clear that the school and family are working as partners in trying to fix the problem.

Step 9

Work with the family to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents. Clarify all steps in the plan, including school and teacher responsibilities and parental/guardian's responsibilities.

Step 10

Arrange for counseling if required.

Step 11

Where necessary, implement disciplinary procedures.

Step 12

Encourage students to report any further bullying incidents to a teacher they trust at the school.

Adapted from:

- Guidelines for Developing the Student Code of Conduct Incorporating Student Discipline Procedures, 1994 and Ministerial Order No. 1 Discipline of Students
Directorate of School Education 1994
<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/stuman/wellbeing/conduct.pdf>
- Safe Schools are Effective Schools. A resource for developing safe and supportive school environments

Department of Education and Training 2006

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/wellbeing/safeschools/bullying/index.htm>

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