



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Introduction to the policy

- Michael Oak strives to nurture each learner to become a healthy and socially responsible member of his/her/their community. To facilitate this progress, we hold the following expectations:
 - that we are respectful of the dignity and self-worth of others;
 - that we behave courteously, honestly and with integrity;
 - that we behave responsibly towards each other and the learning process; and
 - that as a school, it is our legal, professional and constitutional responsibility to uphold and respect the rights of our children.
- We aim to develop awareness in our community of what the consequences of our words and actions are, both positive and negative.
- We believe that behaviour is imitated and learned both at home and in society at large. Our teachers and staff strive to be role models of appropriate behaviour for the learners.
- Skills that support the learners in their learning process and that enhance their feelings of self-worth and confidence should be practised in each class community and lesson.
- We acknowledge that conflict is a normal part of relationships and friendships, and that such conflict situations can be valuable learning opportunities for our individual and collective social and emotional development.
- We also acknowledge that a conflict can escalate to the point of bullying, and as this behaviour can have a very negative effect on the person targeted, observers and the class community, it must be handled with urgency. We acknowledge that bullying may occur in our school; however it will not be tolerated.

2. Bullying behaviour

- Bullying refers to one or more people attempting to gain greater physical or social power than their target and acting disrespectfully toward their target by verbal, physical or digital means.
- Bullying behaviour may manifest as deliberate or unconscious abuse of power, whether physical, verbal, psychological or threatening in tone or gesture, intended to threaten, frighten, injure, harass, hurt, disrespect, manipulate, shame or coerce others. Bullying behaviour includes one-time actions as well as repeated or ongoing conduct.
- The above may be manifested in the form of cyberbullying, as defined below.
- There are six forms of bullying:
 - *Verbal bullying*: When an individual utilises verbal language to gain power over others. This can be through verbal insults, name-calling, teasing or cursing.
 - *Relational or social bullying*: This involves a person trying to hurt another person and/or that person's standing within a particular social or peer group. This type of bullying is often

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used as a tool by those who bully to improve their social standing and gain control over others. Relational bullying is not overt and can continue for a long time without being noticed.

- *Cyberbullying*: This is a form of bullying or harassment that occurs using the media of electronic or social media platforms. Cyberbullying is also referred to as cyber-harassment or online bullying. Electronic communication is issued to intentionally hurt, insult or bully another person, either publicly or privately. This often takes place in the form of insults or threats.
 - Please note that because of the important issues related to Cyberbullying, the school has its own policy, which is currently under review.
- *Sexual bullying*: This is a type of bullying or harassment that occurs which relates to an individual's sex, body, physique, sexual orientation, gender identity or with their sexual activity. Sexual bullying may be physical, emotional, verbal, relational or through an online media platform in both text and visual forms.
- *Prejudicial bullying*: This is typically based on stereotypes and fears which a person has developed towards individuals who are different from them. The bullying involves, but is not limited to, factors like the religious or cultural practices of another, the sexual orientation or the skin colour of another. This often arises from a misguided or learned belief system that certain groups of people should be treated differently due to certain focused factors.
- *Physical bullying*: This is the act of using one's physical body and physical bodily acts in order to exert power over others. The impact of physical bullying is often easier to see in comparison to relational or verbal bullying. It involves, but is not limited to, punching, kicking, hitting, tripping, biting and physical attacks.

3. Objectives of the policy

This policy seeks to:

- Affirm that members of the Michael Oak School community are treated with respect, dignity and consideration.
- Acknowledge that the act of bullying may take place within our school context - both on and off our school grounds, as well as online - and commits that, as a school body, we strive to prevent it, and, when it does occur, to deal with it appropriately.
- Provide a procedure for the reporting of any form of bullying, be it conscious or unconscious.
- Ensure that an effective procedure is adhered to in order to address and manage the reported matter in an impartial, timely and appropriately confidential manner.
- Raise the awareness and understanding of Michael Oak students, parents and staff, with regard to the impact that their behaviour and actions may have on others, as well as the procedures for reporting and resolving an allegation of bullying.
 - This will include presentations to all staff and relevant classes, as well as including bullying as part of the Diversity & Inclusion awareness programme.
- Ensure that the rights, responsibilities and best interests of the child are always upheld, in accordance with the Child Care Act 38 of 2005, the National Schools Act and the South African Constitution.

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4. Guiding principles of this policy

- We aim to make our learners feel safe enough to share their concerns, fears and experiences.
- We are guided by individual situations and age appropriateness.
- We judge the behaviour, not the person; avoiding blaming or shaming any parties involved, while still acknowledging that they must be held accountable for their actions.
- We believe that bullying can be resolved in a constructive way when all parties acknowledge their role in a conflict and its resolution.
- We are committed to dealing with every reported incident of bullying timeously, and as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- We aim to offer appropriate support to all parties involved.`
- We aim to be constructive and consistent in our approach to bullying.

5. Responsibilities and procedures

All behaviour of children is part of a process of social and physical learning. Each situation is different and is a way of establishing identity. Waldorf teachers work from the basis of their understanding of child development. Each section of the school has therefore committed itself to responding to bullying behaviour in an age-appropriate way as described below.

Please note that while each faculty has responsibility for following these procedures, it is the school counsellor who coordinates this policy on behalf of College.

Reporting an incident

- All members of the school community have a duty to report any incident of bullying that they know about or suspect.
- Students, staff and parents shall immediately report an incident to the class teacher, class guardian or school counsellor. This can be done verbally, via a written note or by email.
- Depending on the severity of the situation, parents of the children involved will be informed of the incident and the process that is being followed.

Handling an incident

- Should the situation need further support, the teacher or guardian will make contact with his/her mentor where applicable, or the school counsellor. If engaged, the school counsellor will work with the students concerned and communicate the outcome to the teacher and parents, if necessary.
- Parents and staff are expected to follow the procedure of the school and not to take matters into their own hands.
- Parents must refrain from contacting other parents of children involved, or the children themselves or any other parents and children, regarding the matter. They must also refrain from speaking harshly/ insultingly about another child.
- If a parent feels that the matter is not timeously, appropriately or effectively dealt with, the parent should follow the Procedure for Bringing a Concern.
- The teachers and staff involved will keep careful records to provide clarity on the process followed, outcomes and the protection of all concerned.
- If the incident involved an adult (staff member or parent) then internal personnel procedures or

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mediation will also be followed.

6. Approach by Faculties

Playgroup and Kindergarten

In this early phase of development, it is our view that children do not have a mature enough sense of self to try to dominate with malicious intent. The Kindergarten and Playgroup therefore approach hurtful incidents in the following manner:

- We teach that if someone says 'stop', you must.
- We point out that certain remarks and language can be hurtful.
- We strive to pre-empt a hurtful situation.
- Where hurt has occurred, we point out what has happened, in order to make children more conscious of how their behaviour impacts on others.
- Children who are hurting each other are separated.
- We use stories and drawings to manage the healing of specific incidents.
- If negative behaviour is repeated, then the following will take place:
 - A child study will be conducted, and/or
 - Parents will be contacted.

Primary and High School

The Primary & High School approach these incidents in the following manner:

- We talk to the parties involved within 24 hours, or as soon as possible. Both parties will be engaged with, creating a safe space to speak and listen. This is facilitated by the class teacher or guardian.
- In the lower primary we use stories as a means for raising a common awareness of the problem and a way forward.
- Possible solutions are shared (either together or separately). An agreement is reached and accepted by both parties together. This may include consequences in accordance with the school's disciplinary procedures.
- We will call on the parents when necessary.
- Parents will receive a brief report of the process from the responsible teacher, depending on the severity of the situation or upon request.
- In the event that an agreement cannot be reached we will first take the matter to faculty to discuss possible avenues for resolving the situation. If need be, we will invite the parents for a mediated discussion. If this does not resolve the matter to the satisfaction of all concerned, it will then be escalated to the College of Teachers for further attention.

7. Evaluation, revision and adoption of this policy

Evaluation

An annual review of this policy will be performed by the College of Teachers.

Revision of this Policy

If the evaluation demonstrates that the policy isn't supporting the goals of the policy, or because of issues

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raised by the Faculties, College or Trustees, this policy can be amended as required, subject to the approval of the College of Teachers after consultation with the Board of Trustees. When a revision is recommended, the original as well as the revised versions must be made available, and the reason for the revision specified.

Adoption

- The original policy was approved by the College of Teachers in 2014.
- This revised policy was approved by the College at their meeting of 01 September 2022.