



Open minds campus

Reviewed annually

A community of self-directed learners

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Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Unacceptable Behaviour Involving Bullying

Open Minds Campus does not tolerate bullying in any form, and all school community members are committed to promoting a safe, caring environment. No one has the right to hurt others through any form of bullying. Staff, students, and parents will work together to address bullying.

2. What is Bullying?

The term “bullying” applies to a whole range of behaviours, from verbal disagreements to physical altercations. However, the term “bullying” has a specific meaning: the use of strength or power to frighten or hurt weaker people [from Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary]. Bullying can also be defined as repeated and systematic harassment and/or ‘violation’ of others.

Individuals or groups can perpetuate bullying.

Bullying takes many forms and can include many different repeated behaviours such as:

- **Physical:** any form of physical violence towards another, including pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching as well as damaging property or the belongings of others;
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, persistent teasing, and put-downs;
- **Social:** a more indirect form of bullying which includes social exclusion, spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, damaging someone’s social reputation or social acceptance;
- **Cyber:** bullying using digital technologies and online platforms, including the sending of abusive or hurtful text messages, posting images or videos online of others without their express consent, engaging in online dishonesty such as catfishing and hacking into other people’s social media accounts.

Bullying can be particularly hurtful and harmful when it takes on a sexual or prejudicial nature. Sexual bullying is any form having a sexual nature to it, including unwanted physical contact, comments, requests, or name-calling of a sexual nature, or sexual propositioning.

Prejudicial bullying is when a student becomes the target of any bullying because of specific personal characteristics. This includes racist bullying, which targets someone based on their race, ethnicity, or nationality, and homophobic bullying, which targets someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

3. Signs of being bullied might include:

- unwillingness to come to school.

- Withdrawn, isolated behaviour.
- Complaining about missing possessions.
- Refusal to talk about problems.
- Being easily distressed.
- Defaced or incomplete schoolwork.

The classic sense of bullying involves a power imbalance that is abused. A typical example of this would be a larger student demanding the lunch money of a smaller student.

The various forms this type of behaviour can take result in differing violations of Open Minds Campus' Policies and Ethos. Apart from that, bullying can constitute several other transgressions, such as the lunch money example constituting theft.

Therefore, it is unnecessary and potentially confusing to prescribe consequences for an act described only as “bullying,” as more detail is required to determine the exact nature of the conduct. The Respectful Behaviour Policy document prohibits all forms of conduct that could be perceived as a “bullying” nature.

4. What is **not** bullying?

At Open Minds Campus, particularly in the Primary School context, students learn how to interact with each other and develop their social skills. In these experiences, there are numerous disagreements and points of conflict, even among students who consider themselves friends.

These occurrences often require teacher intervention to help learners resolve their differences appropriately but rarely constitute actual bullying. Our preference at Open Minds Campus is for students, where possible, to work out their disagreements themselves, for example, who gets to go next, etc. But adult supervision is provided to facilitate healthy student interaction.

Teachers also deal with teasing, which is hurtful or malicious, going against our Respectful Behaviour and ethos, but again, this is not considered bullying but rather unkindness.

Ultimately, the labeling of inappropriate behaviour is less important than the underlying principles which guide our behaviour. At Open Minds Campus, we are sensitive to student conflict and meticulous about our approach in dealing with it.

Responsibility

At Open Minds Campus, we believe it is the responsibility of the whole school community to prevent bullying.

Staff will

- Supervise school activities.
- Communicate and supervise appropriate movement between lessons.
- Inform students of the expected code of behaviour.
- Inform students of class rules and essential agreements.
- Educate students and parents about bullying.
- Be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying.
- Investigate all reported incidents.
- Record all reported bullying incidents on an incident report form and give it to the student's class teacher.
- Assist victims of bullying and ensure that they are not placed at further risk.
- Support the 'bystanders' of bullying to encourage a proactive response to bullying.
- Report all suspected incidents of bullying to the class teacher.
- Be role models in word and action.

Students will

- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.
- Report any incident or suspected incident of bullying by telling a teacher.
- Reliably recall or record events of a bullying situation on request if they are a bystander.

Parents and guardians will

- Watch for any signs of unhappiness in their child's life.
- Inform the school if there is any suspicion that their child is being bullied.
- Refrain from telling their child to retaliate.
- Seek to address the situation and cooperate with the school if their child has bullied another student.
- Be provided with strategies to assist their children in working through bullying situations.

Intervention in bullying situations at Open Minds Campus will be dealt with systematically, and the following steps will be taken by teaching staff:

- Intervene immediately; stop the bullying behaviour as soon as you see it or become aware of it.
- Talk to the victim separately, obtain a clear picture of what happened and how the victim has been harmed.
- Talk to the bully separately. If more than one child is involved in perpetrating the bullying, talk to each perpetrator separately in quick succession.
- Obtain a clear picture of what happened and remind child(ren) of the behaviour expectations.
- Talk to any bystanders separately.
- Arrange a meeting with the victim and the bully. The purpose of this meeting is to initiate a process of restorative justice. Perpetrators will have to face the consequences of their actions in terms of the Open Minds Campus' Respectful Behaviour. However, perpetrators will also be provided with psychosocial support to understand their behaviour better so that it can be prevented from recurring. In other words, individuals will be held accountable for their actions within a system of support.