



Mutual Respect Policy

This *Mutual Respect Policy* applies to Bold Park Community School [BPCS].

This statement outlines the school's policy on how it applies *Mutual Respect* principles to meet the legal requirements for "the school to provide satisfactory levels of care for the children concerned" [***School Education Act 1999, s160 (1) (e)***].

Bold Park Community School may, from time to time, review and update this *Mutual Respect Policy* to take into account new laws and technology, changes to schools operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing school environment.

Overview

The *Mutual Respect Policy* is the underlying, fundamental policy of Bold Park Community School and is based on the Reggio Emilia principle of the *Image of the Child*.¹ It applies to the children, staff and parents of Bold Park Community School.

Policy

Bold Park Community School is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where all members of the community are valued and respected.

All community members are to interact with each other in a respectful manner that promotes the ethos of the school.²

The implementation of this document *Mutual Respect Policy* with *Guidelines for Harassment & Bullying Behaviour* enables the school to make clear statements about its expectations relating to acceptable behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour to all members of its community.

Objectives:

- The school will be a safe and welcoming environment.
- The school will have made clear statements to its community that it will not tolerate, nor support in any way, acts of bullying behaviour.
- Staff will have the necessary skills and confidence to educate children about mutual respect, bullying behaviour and its prevention.
- Staff and children will have the support to manage conflict assertively and equitably for all parties involved.
- The wider community will support prevention initiatives in the school.
- Children will feel empowered to report instances of bullying behaviour.

¹ Refer to *Bold Park School Philosophy Document*

² Refer to *Bold Park School Philosophy Document*

Mutual Respect Procedures and Implementation

School Environment

The school has a safe, welcoming environment that promotes:

- mutual respect for all members of the school community;
- a sense of belonging and empowerment of all members of the school community; and
- collaboration and negotiation.

Learning Opportunities

Learning opportunities within the school provide students to:

- understand the nature of mutual respect;
- understand the nature of harassment and bullying behaviour;
- understand personal safety issues;
- develop interpersonal, communication and problem solving skills, such as negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution and assertiveness;
- develop self-confidence and enhance self-esteem; and
- acquire the ability to understand, respect and care for others.

How does this apply to staff?

Staff are to interact with all members of the community in a respectful manner where tolerance and understanding are the focus of any interaction.

How does this apply to the children?

This school policy is used to assist the children to develop appropriate behaviours and autonomy in their interpersonal relationships. It is also designed to provide them with strategies to use when conflicts arise. This learning is life long. The school believes that respect for self, others and property is one of the most important concepts for children to learn.

There are very sound reasons why we request that the children deal with issues that arise:

1. The other child(ren) may not be aware that their behaviour is causing distress and will stop the behaviour immediately if informed and play continues uninterrupted.
2. By dealing with the situation themselves the children develop skills to manage their own space and what happens to them instead of needing to seek authority from another person. This self-management is essential to the development of a positive self-esteem.
3. By facilitating self-management in the playground, a playground culture develops that is fair and self-regulating. Acceptable behaviour becomes the most frequently occurring behaviour even when an adult / staff member is temporarily not available.

If conflict arises or a child feels uncomfortable within the school environment, the child is directed to:

1. Talk to the other child(ren) involved and say, "I don't like it when you do that, please stop", or something similar.

2. If the other child(ren) persists then they are asked to inform a staff member of the behaviour.
3. The staff member will then assist the child(ren) to deal with the conflict or, if appropriate, discuss the issue in a group discussion.
4. If a child(ren) advises staff of a conflict, staff will first ask if the child(ren) has talked to the other child(ren) or assist the child(ren) in taking this first step. Often with this reminder or assistance, the child(ren) can proceed to deal with the situation. At times when a child(ren) tells staff about an issue, they may be asking to be heard and not asking for intervention. The staff member must use their judgement on intervention. If staff do observe aggressive behaviour then they assess the situation and mediate the resolution between the children to achieve mutual respect.

How does this apply to families?

This approach in developing appropriate behaviour and conflict resolution skills is aimed at providing children with life long skills in this area of interpersonal relationships. Behaviour management is **not** about containing behaviour; it is about teaching the children how to manage themselves. This is only achieved by giving the children the strategies and opportunities to influence their environment. We hope that parents will understand that while the children are still learning, inappropriate behaviour and conflict will occur from time to time. All the children understand that hitting another child or damaging property is not acceptable but they forget sometimes. Families and the school need to remind the children of the importance of appropriate behaviour frequently. Class meetings provide the time to discuss and explore these issues.

Parents should seek advice from teaching staff in how to deal with incidents that have arisen during school hours which their child(ren) have discussed with them at home. Parents or guardians are encouraged not to deal directly with the other child(ren) or their parents without the support of teaching staff.

How does this apply to adults dealing with each other at Bold Park?

While adults bring a multitude of learned behaviours from various environments that may not necessarily fit into the school's *Mutual Respect Policy*, it is expected that all adults will model the behaviour of mutual respect.

Whilst the school acknowledges these challenges, it still expects that all adults will interact with each other in an open, mutually respectful manner. As such, if an adult has an issue or concern with the school or another adult, we ask that they approach the appropriate person with the concern and to communicate it respectfully.

If a Bold Park Community member feels that they have not resolved an issue and would like to pursue this further, they should refer to the *BPCS Disputes & Complaints Policy* and seek the appropriate channel of communication.

As with the children, unless a problem is brought to a person directly, sometimes they may not even realise a problem exists.

Harassment and Bullying Behaviour Guidelines³

Bold Park Community School encourages the development of a community of children who feel comfortable playing the games or engaging in activity that they want and pursuing their own interests. Yes, conflict occurs and inappropriate behaviour happens. It is unrealistic not to expect these behaviours to surface in a playground. It is important that the children be given the opportunity to develop strategies to deal with conflict within a supportive environment, as these strategies will be central to strategies used throughout their life. Young children often solve conflict through, what we as adults can perceive as aggression. They do not always assess a situation in terms of the effect on those around them.

The *Mutual Respect Policy* assists all children involved to identify the problem, and seek a resolution that is respectful of each other and allows them to move on to a greater understanding of how to manage themselves in society.

The *Mutual Respect Policy* allows the school to:

- prepare students to manage and resolve conflict in non-aggressive and non-violent ways;
- reduce the incidence of harassment and bullying behaviour in school;
- create the opportunity for children and staff to develop the skills necessary to handle these situations with the minimum of distress and in an equitable manner; and
- assist the school's community to manage frustration and conflict in assertive and equitable ways.

The *Mutual Respect Policy* also allows:

- ways of preventing harassment and bullying behaviour;
- the school's community to know that harassment and bullying behaviour is unacceptable;
- development of procedures to combat harassment and bullying behaviour;
- consistent monitoring of student behaviour;
- provision is made to follow up the detection and reporting of incidents;
- the curriculum is used as an instrument to reinforce mutual respect and combat harassment and bullying behaviour; and
- mechanisms to be established to enable prompt action to be taken upon specific complaint (see Response Plan).

Harassment and Bullying at BPCS

Bold Park Community School will not entertain any form of harassment or bullying of its school community. Children, staff, other workers and parents have a right to be free from harassment, bullying and conflict and violence and to be provided with help and support if these rights are breached.

It is the responsibility of the members of the school community to:

- abstain personally from bullying and harassing others;
- actively discourage harassment and bullying when it occurs; and
- give support to those that are victimised.

³ This information is based on *Bullying as provided by AISWA and adapted for the Bold Park context in line with the school's Mutual Respect Policy.*

Definitions

Bullying:

A product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take different forms – verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or hidden.

Harassment:

Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

Violence:

Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

Conflict:

A disagreement, where the needs of one or both parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not have perceived equal power. If handled well, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

Critical Incident:

An incident, or series of incidents, which result in:

- significant disruption to the school's normal procedures
- a school being locked down, evacuated or requiring closure
- police notification and involvement in the school
- significant threat to the safety of students and/or staff.

Common characteristics of harassment and bullying behaviour are:

- attention seeking;
- seeking popularity and the support of others;
- not accepting responsibility for the behaviour;
- a need to seek control and dominate their peers;
- continuity of bullying behaviour should complaints not be made
- no remorse for inflicting pain on another child;
- higher than average aggressive behaviour patterns; and
- often have parents whose bullying behaviour occurs at home therefore supporting aggressive behaviour.

Common characteristics of victim behaviour

Most children are approached by a bully at school. It is often the child's response that will determine if they will be bullied again. Children who are highly vulnerable often become victims. These children are usually:

- lacking social skills and confidence;
- self blaming; and
- are desperate to fit in.

How does the *Mutual Respect Policy and Guideline for Bullying Behaviour* apply to the school?

All children, staff and parents need to be aware that the *Mutual Respect Policy* is applied to instances of harassment and bullying.

How does this apply to staff?

Staff are to direct children to follow the procedure below if bullying arises:

1. The child(ren) who is feeling threatened should inform the other child(ren) that they do not like the behaviour that is occurring and ask them to stop. Further, other children who witness the behaviour are encouraged to inform the perpetrator that the behaviour is inappropriate and must cease.
2. If the behaviour does not stop and does not achieve the desired result then the situation should be taken to staff to mediate. Sometimes the child(ren) will feel more comfortable when they talk to their parents about the situation. **Parents have an obligation to inform the school as soon as they are aware of any incident.** Staff must be made aware of any situations that are causing a child(ren) unrest so that they are able to monitor this more closely and provide assistance to the child involved.
3. Staff will engage the child(ren) involved in a discussion with the ultimate goal that the child(ren) will take responsibility for their actions and cease to behave inappropriately. This process can be long but ultimately the change in the child(ren)'s behaviour will be recognised and harassment and bullying will not develop into an underground playground culture. This process is on a case-by-case basis and will be adapted accordingly for those children and families involved, in line with the school's philosophy of working with the individual child's needs and in line with the school's Response Plan as detailed below.
4. During this process the parents of the child(ren) will be involved in helping their child(ren) to develop strategies to deal with any problems they may encounter and working on restorative practices to rebuild the relationship between the parties.
5. If the harassment and bullying persists, the Principal(s) will meet with the parents of a child who continues to engage in bullying behaviours, in consultation with the Non-Government School Psychology Service, to develop strategies to address the issue.

Response Plan

BPCS will respond to incidents of harassment and bullying and take account of the following when working with the school community:

- the nature of the incident;
- harm caused to individuals and the school community;
- personal factors of individuals involved;
- involvement of staff;
- involvement of external agents such as police, etc;
- underlying causes;
- repeated occurrence;
- support for victims, witnesses and school community; and
- strategies for the perpetrator.

Families, teaching staff and children need to understand that BPCS will not accept harassment and bullying under any circumstances and that the school will work together with the child(ren), teaching staff and families to resolve any situations that occur.

Staff and Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is another form of unacceptable harassment in the workplace. Australian research has shown that workplace bullying is a significant cause of absenteeism, sick leave, loss of productivity and high staff turnover. Workplace bullying may take the following forms:

- physical abuse;
- verbal abuse and intimidation;
- unfair or excessive criticism;
- insulting workers in public; and
- continually setting unrealistic work targets.

Performance problems are to be handled according to the procedures outlined in the *BPCS Staff Performance Management Policy* in a respectful manner. However, staff who are found to be guilty of workplace bullying will be subject to disciplinary action.

Bullying can also be an issue in the workplace where repeated inappropriate behaviour by one or more persons undermines the individual's right to dignity at work. Bullying occurs in the workplace if it harms, intimidates, threatens, victimises, undermines, offends, degrades or humiliates an employee, whether alone or in front of others.

The steps involved in dealing with harassment and bullying in the workplace are those based on the *BPCS Mutual Respect Guide to Harassment and Bullying*.

If a staff member does not feel that an issue is resolved using the *Mutual Respect Guide for Bullying*, they may follow the *BPCS Disputes and Complaints Policy*, which is also summarised in the flow chart provided in the *BPCS Staff Handbook*.

Complaints Procedure

Staff who wish to discuss their situation or lodge a dispute or complaint are encouraged to do so. The situation may be discussed with:

- appropriate Team Leader; or
- the Director of Teaching & Learning; or
- the Director of Business & Management, or
- the Assistant Director.

Formal complaints regarding workplace harassment can be lodged with the Director of Teaching & Learning and/or the Director of Business & Management and will be treated in strict confidence.

Polices relating to Mutual Respect

Child Protection

Discrimination – Disability, Racial and Sexual

Duty of Care

Occupational Safety and Health

Relevant Legislation

Criminal Code

Discrimination Act 1991

Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (under sexual discrimination or harassment)

Human Rights Act 2004

Industrial Relations Act 1979

Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984

Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

School Education Act 1999

School Education Regulations 2000

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Workplace Agreements Act 1993

Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981

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