EMINENCE PRIVATE SCHOOL
مدرسة أيمينينس الخاصة

Antibullying Policy

Version 4.0

POLICY	ANTIBULLYING
STATUS	Implemented
FOCUS	What is bullying and norms to curb the same (includes cyberbullying)
RESPONSIBILITY	Child protection officer/school counselor
APPLICABILITY	School community
DATE OF REVIEW	FIRST REVIEW: September 2020 SECOND REVIEW: March 2021 THIRD REVIEW: March 2022 FORTH REVIEW: June 2023 NEXT REVIEW: June 2024

Policy Objective

The purpose of this policy is to create an environment for students where they feel mentally and physically secure in the learning community

Rationale

For learning to be productive it is important for the environment where the learning takes place to be safe and secure. Eminence Private School considers this as a high priority.

Scope

The scope of this policy is the whole school community keeping in mind the target audience - the students. This policy would be reviewed every year.

Roles and Responsibilities of School Counsellor/ Child Protection Officer

Ensure that all stakeholders are informed and aware of the relevant parts of this policy.

Ensure that the staff are well informed and work within the guidelines of the policy
Provide support and guidance to targets of bullying

Provide intervention with individuals who bully others.

Ensure that this policy is reviewed and updated as per policy guidelines.

Ensure the principles of the Personal Data Protection Policy will be applied when processing, collecting, disclosing, retaining or disposing of information relating to a student or member of staff

Involve staff and parents in supporting the procedures of the policy.

Definition

Bullying is: Repeated unwanted verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behavior by a person or group which involves hurting or causing discomfort to another person. Bullying can be:
- Verbal or written abuse - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters
- Violence - including threats of violence
- Sexual harassment - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.
- Homophobia and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality.
- Discrimination including racial discrimination - treating people differently because of their identity.

- Cyberbullying - either online or via mobile phone. There are also some behaviors, which, although they might be unpleasant or distressing, are not bullying. (detailed definition given later in the document)

Bullying is not:
- Mutual conflict - which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- Single episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people, is not bullying.
- Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

Antibullying:
Anti-bullying refers to laws, policies, organizations, and movements aimed at stopping or preventing bullying (Reference: Resource link provided at the end of the document).

Guidelines

Signs & Symptoms to look for

The symptoms listed below are not exhaustive, instead they are basic things to look for. The symptoms may vary from the ones listed below for many. The main thing is to be vigilant of behavioral changes and/or unusual actions that may be indicator of an underlying problem.
- Anxiety about travelling to and from school e.g., requesting parents to drive or collect him/her, changing travel routes, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, truancy.
- Ddeterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Patterns of physical illnesses e.g., headaches, stomach aches;
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g., stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him/her.

Teachers' Responsibilities

- Model friendly and approachable attitudes and behavior
- Discuss the antibullying guidelines regularly with students and teach bullying prevention, stressing that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and will be immediately reported.
- Listen and respond to reports of bullying, provide support and refer as needed.
- Contribute towards the implementation of this policy and Eminence's other policies such as Behavior Policy and Child Protection Policy.
- Class teachers, in most cases, would be the first person to be informed about a concern. So, they are to maintain an accurate written record of concern and liaise with designated child protection officer/school counsellor.
- Keep an eye out for signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Report suspected abuse cases to Child Protection Officer, seek investigation into the matter and follow up to see if appropriate action is being taken.
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Parents' Responsibilities:

- Be observant to the signs and symptoms of bullying.
- Talk to the child's teacher/any school authority about it instead of confronting the bully's parents directly.
- Teach the child nonviolent ways to deal with bullies, like walking away, playing with friends, or
- talking it out. Fighting could lead to him or her getting hurt, getting in trouble, and beginning more serious problems with the bully.
- Help child act with self-confidence.
- Involve your child in activities outside of school. This way he or she can make friends in different social circles.

Students' Responsibilities

- Behave appropriately and show respect for all members of the school.
- Follow the school's Online Safety Rules, Acceptable Use Rules and Behaviour Rules as communicated and made aware by teachers during classes, workshops and also through lessons.
- Support and report bullying by not being just a bystander. The bullying can be either reported to the class teacher, any of the student council members, any other staff whom student is comfortable talking to or even to parents.
- Assist and Support the Student Council in spreading the message of anti-bullying.

Cyber Bullying

Since the now and future of education is highly dependent on technology, this aspect of bullying and measures to curb the same are very important.

Cyberbullying refers to use of digital technologies such as e-mail, cell phones, text messages, instant messaging, websites, blogs, social media sites etc., to support deliberate and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm or humiliate others. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying that can happen 24/7, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

Cyber bullying differs from other forms of bullying in several significant ways:

- By facilitating a far more extreme invasion of personal space. Cyberbullying can take place at any time and intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe and personal.
- The potential for anonymity on the part of the bully. This can be extremely distressing for the victim.
- The potential for the bully to play very rapidly to a larger audience so the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying.
- Through the knowledge that the data is in the world-wide domain, disproportionately amplifying the negative effect on the victim, even though the bully may feel his / her actual actions had been no worse than conventional forms of bullying.
- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages as more people get drawn in as accessories. By passing on a humiliating picture or message a bystander becomes an accessory to the bullying.
- The profile of the bully and target can be different to other forms of bullying as cyberbullying can take place between peers and across generations. Teachers can be victims and age and size are not important.
- Many cyberbullying incidents can themselves act as evidence, so it is important the victim saves the information.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social Media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter
- SMS (Short Message Service) also known as Text Message sent through devices.
- Instant Message (via devices, email provider services, apps, and social media messaging
- features)
- Email

Responding to Bullying

Student: If the bully is student, then the procedure for dealing with students in case of bullying in general mentioned earlier is to be followed.

Strangers – If the bully is a stranger, the school authorities are to report to the UAE Cyber Crime Division (External agencies) or the Police with immediate effect.

Responding to the Bullied – It is very important that children who are cyberbullied are properly counselled. Here too parental involvement is important and joint sessions should also be arranged. The number of sessions for the child depends on the extent of the impact.

Records – It is essential that the cell keeps a record of every case handled with evidence and details of action taken.

Guidelines for Students

The following are some of the important things that students have to keep in mind in regard to cyberbullying:

• Avoid providing personal IDs and other personal information on social media.
• Never accept friendship requests from strangers or reply to social media to someone not known.
• Avoid answering abusive messages.
• Keep copy of any abusive message and inform an adult – be it a parent or a teacher or a member of the OSG.

Guidelines for Parents

Every parent needs to keep their eyes and ears open when their children are using the internet. Some tips for parents from Eminence are:

• Ensure that children have understood the perils of cyberbullying and what all it entails.
• Teach children "stranger danger" rules.
• Ensure that children do not use the internet in private – if the computer can be set up in a common area, it is always easy to monitor.
• If any case of cyberbullying is found which involves other students from the school, please report to the school authorities at once.

There are several Federal Laws of the United Arab Emirates Relating to Cyber Crime and regarding the existing crimes they have issues Article 1 – 51 citing the different provisions of law for each kind of cyberbullying.

Protection of children's Online

Article 29 of Federal Law No. 3 of 2016 Concerning Child Rights, also known as Wadeema's Law), states:

The telecommunications companies and internet service providers shall notify the competent authorities, or the concerned entities of any child pornography materials being circulated through the social media sites and on the Internet and shall provide necessary information and data on the persons, entities or sites that circulate such material or intend to mislead the children. which guarantees the protection of children from all forms of exploitation and abuse.
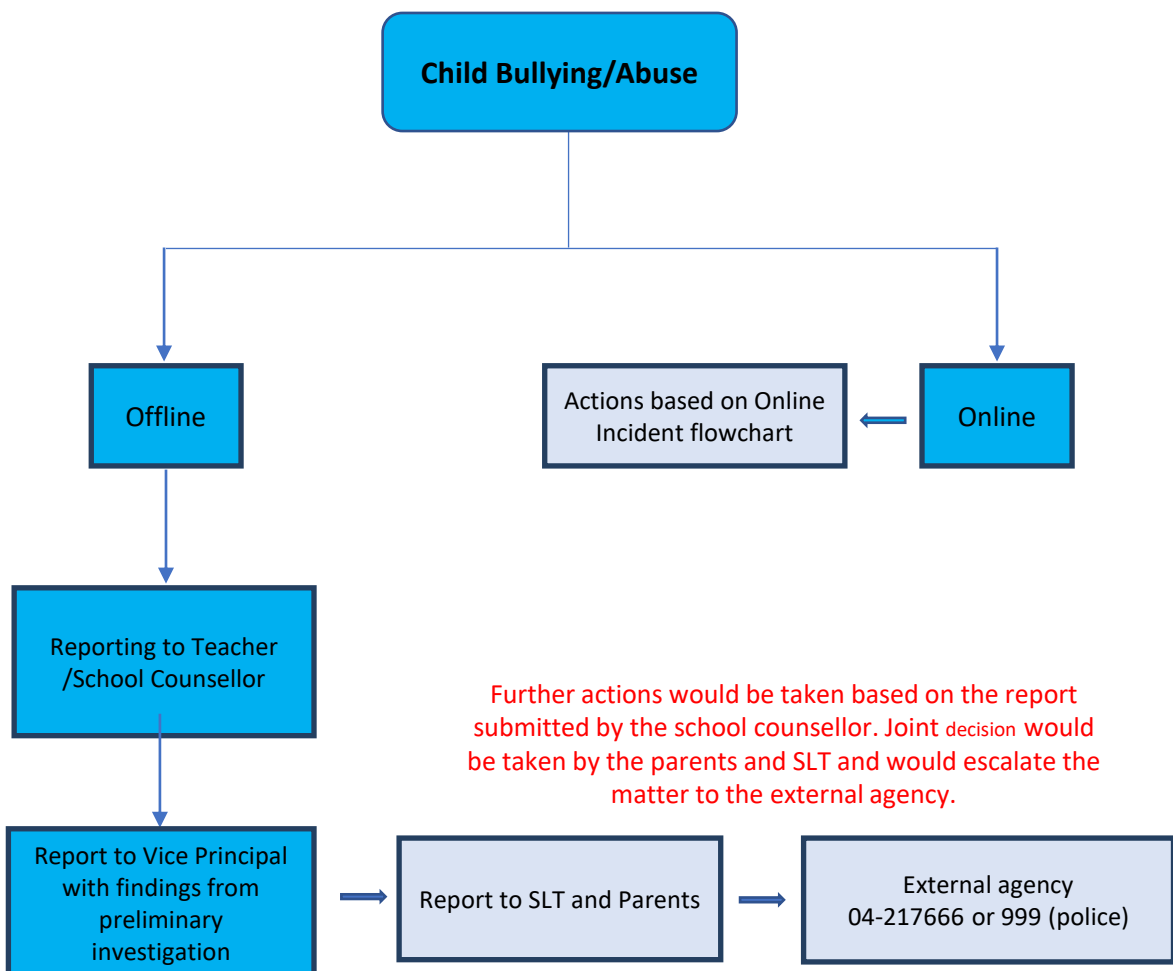
Ministry of Interior and the National Programme for Happiness and Wellbeing launched the 'Child Digital Safety' initiative in March 2018, in a joint effort to raise awareness among children and school students about online threats and challenges and promote a safe and constructive use of the internet.

Reporting

Reporting mechanism can happen from three stakeholders – students, parents, and teachers. (Reference: Online incident flow chart, online safety policy):

- Student/Parents Reporting – Students can report any cases of cyberbullying in/beyond school to the online safety leader and the school counsellor. Then based on the severity of the incident the actions would be taken.
- Staff Reporting – If a staff suspect's student case of cyberbullying they should report it to the School counsellor/ Child protection officer and online safety leader with as much details as possible. And if a staff faces the cyberbullying in/beyond school it should be reported to the immediate head as early as possible. Then based on the severity of the incident the actions would be taken.
- But there can be instances when parents/students or staff want to directly report to teachers in that case the following flowchart is applicable:

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                          ┌─────────────────────┐
                          │ Child Bullying/Abuse │
                          └─────────────────────┘
                                     │
              ┌──────────────────────┴──────────────────────┐
              │                                              │
         ┌─────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌─────────┐
         │ Offline │      │ Actions based on Online │◄───│ Online  │
         └─────────┘      │  Incident flowchart    │     └─────────┘
              │           └──────────────────────┘
              │
   ┌─────────────────────┐
   │ Reporting to Teacher │
   │  /School Counsellor  │
   └─────────────────────┘
              │
   ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
   │ Report to Vice       │─────►│ Report to SLT and    │─────►│ External agency      │
   │ Principal with       │      │ Parents              │      │ 04-217666 or 999     │
   │ findings from        │      └──────────────────────┘      │ (police)             │
   │ preliminary          │                                    └──────────────────────┘
   │ investigation        │
   └─────────────────────┘
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Further actions would be taken based on the report submitted by the school counsellor. Joint decision would be taken by the parents and SLT and would escalate the matter to the external agency.

Disciplinary actions taken by the school

According to the School's Behavior policy and MoE behavior policy these are the actions to be taken whenever an offence (misuse/misbehavior) occurs. Also, the sanctions for unacceptable use (Reference: Acceptable Use Policy) has been matched with the antibullying unacceptable use as given below:

For Students

SANCTIONS FOR STUDENTS ON UNACCEPTABLE USE												
Low severity					Medium Severity				High Severity			
Reporting to class teacher	Reporting to School Counsellor	Reporting to Online Safety Coordinator/IT coordinator	Reporting to Online Safety Leader/Vice Principal	First Action Plan - Verbal Warning	Reporting to parents	Reporting to Principal/Chairperson	Second Level Plan- written warning letter sent to Parents	Suspension from online classes for 2 days	If repeating, Suspension from online classes to 3 days or more until further notice	Joint decision by **School** Leadership, Online Safety group and parents	Immediate expulsion and suspension from all school's digital platform	Reporting to External Agency/Police

Severity	First Action Plan	First Repetition	Second Repetition	Third or More Repetition
Low Severity – Simple Offence – Behavior marks that can be deducted = 4	Verbal Warning	Inform the Parent/written warning	Call the parent If no response written warning to parent and undertaking to not repeat signed by parent	Refer to Counsellor Implement a set of strategies to reduce the misconduct Convert the offences to medium severity offence if it repeats and take necessary action
Medium Severity – Behavior marks that can be deducted = 8	Call parent and agreement for reforming child's behavior to be signed. Written warning Monitor behavior	Get the signature of parent on a warning letter	Suspend the student from online classes for 2 days.	Suspend the student from online classes for 3 days with a warning. Refer to school counsellor and if persists convert to high severity offence.
High Severity Offence – Behavior marks that can be deducted =12	School leadership along with online safety group reach a decision. Immediate suspension from online platform	Further recurrence: Suspension from online platform Immediate summon to parent and signing the decision/eExpulsion of student and Informing to external agencies		

Cross Reference

The following policies are linked with the Antibullying policy:
- Online safety policy
- Student online Behaviour policy
- Child protection policy
- Acceptable Use policy
- MoE student behavior policy

Resource link

Anti-Bullying: Definition & Policy - Video & Lesson Transcript | Study.com