ANTI-BULLYING & CYBER-BULLYING POLICY

2024-2025

Anti-Bullying & Cyber-Bullying Policy

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Anti-bullying and Cyber-bullying Policy

1. Rationale

At Amity Private School, Sharjah we believe that good behaviour is essential for an effective learning environment in which all students are given the opportunity to achieve. We seek to create a caring and inclusive environment which encourages and reinforces good behaviour. Our approach is closely aligned to the Sharjah Education Council (SEC) requirements that guide the principles and practice in all Sharjah schools. This policy is implemented in partnership with the school's behaviour policies and applies to the entire school from KG1 to Grade XII.

2. Definition

The definition of bullying is when an individual or a group of people with more power, repeatedly and intentionally cause hurt or harm to another person or group of people who feel helpless to respond. Bullying can continue over time, is often hidden from adults, and will probably continue if no action is taken. It can happen anywhere like in the classroom, in the playground, on the sports field, transiting from home to school,   on school transport and through the use of electronic technology, in particular text messages or emails, posting unkind messages, inappropriate image tagging, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites or the posting of embarrassing pictures, videos or the use of fake profiles to hurt, threaten, blackmail, or lower self-esteem in a student.

Victims of bullying may hesitate to report the behavior out of fear of retribution or because they feel that they should deal with the problem on their own. The impact of bullying may be manifested by poor grades, solitude or moodiness at home, or nervous reactions such as loss of appetite or insomnia.

Bullying involves a person being hurt, distressed, pressured or victimized by repeated intentional attacks by another individual or group. Bullies abuse less powerful individuals by intimidation and/or harassment. Bullying may involve physical, verbal, textual, psychological or social behavior.

Bullying includes:

- **Physical**: Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, hair-pulling, scratching, biting, spitting, tripping and other forms of violence or threats of violence
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, teasing, putdowns, ethnic or religious insults; physical, social or academic disability insults and sarcasm
- **Innuendo**: Spreading rumours, persistent teasing
- **Emotional:** Excluding, ridicule, humiliation, tormenting and being unfriendly
- **Intrusive:** Email, text messaging, use of social media, designed to upset or abuse
- **Racist:** Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, name calling
- **Sexual:** Unwanted physical contact or abusive comments
- **Social**: ignoring, excluding, mimicking, spreading rumors; defaming, dirty looks, intimidation, extortion, stealing, hiding, breaking possessions; inappropriate photos on social networking sites.

3. Aims

- To inform students and parents of our expectations in order to ensure a productive partnership, where each and everyone has a role to play in eradicating bullying;
- To maintain a community in which everyone feels valued and safe and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted;
- To promote a secure and happy, caring environment where kindness and helpfulness are expected and respected;

- To praise and reward positive behaviour which benefits others and the community as a whole;
- To teach students to respect themselves and others, promoting crucial self-esteem;
- To reduce the emotional and mental distress of any bullying enabling all students the right to enjoy their time at school.

4. Strategies

- To have a school wide program regarding anti-bullying, covering assemblies and classroom interactions that informs and educates pupils and students about the issues related to bullying and gives them coping strategies to deal with situations they might encounter.
- To help students through guidance and counselling, to make the right choices and not succumb to peer pressure.
- To listen to all parties involved in incidents and always take allegations from victims seriously
- To reassure students that the school will do all in its power to protect and support all parties involved while the issues are being resolved
- To foster, by example, the values in which we, as a school, believe
- To investigate all incidents as fully as possible
- To include within the curriculum, opportunities to discuss and consider bullying and other forms of anti-social behavior
- To identify bullying behaviour at the early stages and work towards behaviour modification before the problem becomes more serious.
- To organize Anti-bullying week, Health and Wellbeing Day as well as many other whole school events with the aim to educate students and staff on the importance of promoting inclusion and tolerance. There is also a positive emphasis on preventing and dealing with incidents of bullying at APSS.

5. Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- Is unwilling to go to school;
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence;
- Starts stammering;
- Attempts or threatens self-harm;
- Cries herself/himself to sleep at night or has nightmares/ bedwetting;
- Regularly feels ill in the morning;
- Change of pattern in school work or achievement;
- Comes home with clothes torn or books/equipment damaged;
- Has possessions go missing;
- Has unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Loss of appetite, not sleeping, loss of weight
- Is frightened to say what is wrong; or
- Changes his/her usual routine

All staff should be aware of these possibilities and report promptly any suspicions of bullying to the appropriate person. It is important to note that if a student presents with and/many or some of the symptoms listed above it does not necessarily mean that they are being bullied.

6. Reporting Bullying

As a school we will:

- Encourage victims and witnesses to speak up;
- Treat incidents seriously however trivial they might seem at first;
- Be alert, as a school, to changes in behavior, attitude and well-being, reporting these immediately to the appropriate members of staff.

7. Responding to Bullying

As a school, we will endeavor to:

- Take all bullying problems seriously;
- Deal with each incident individually and to access the needs of each student separately;
- Regard all incidents as potentially serious and investigate them thoroughly;
- Ensure that bullies and victims are interviewed separately;
- Obtain witness information;
- Keep a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes
- Ensure that action is taken to prevent further incidents. Such action may include:
  - Imposition of sanctions such as detention and removal of privileges;
  - Obtaining a sincere apology;
  - Informing parents of both bully and bullied;
  - Provide support for both victim and bully.

8. Preventing Bullying

The whole school community will:

- Create and support an inclusive environment that promotes a culture of mutual respect, consideration and care for others which will be upheld by all, recognize that bullying can be perpetrated or experienced by any member of the community, including adults and children (peer on peer abuse) and openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as:
  - Religion
  - Ethnicity
  - Disability
  - Gender
  - Children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities.
- Recognize that bullying can be carried out or experienced by anyone
- Recognize that some students may be vulnerable to bullying and have strategies and interventions in place to protect
- Provide a range of approaches for students, staff and parents/care takers to access support and report concerns
- Regularly update and evaluate our practice to take into account the developments of technology and provide up-to-date advice and education to all members of the community regarding positive online behavior
- Undertake appropriate, proportionate and reasonable action, in line with existing Academy policies for any bullying brought to the Academy's attention, which involves or affects students, even when they are not on Academy premises; for example, when using public transport or online, etc.
- Actively create 'safe spaces' for vulnerable students.
- Implement appropriate disciplinary sanctions; the consequences of bullying will reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.

- Use a variety of techniques to resolve the issues between those who bully, and those who have been bullied.
- Train all staff, including: teaching staff, support staff (e.g. administration staff, lunchtime support staff and site support staff) and pastoral staff, to identify all forms of bullying and take.
- Integrate a range of opportunities and approaches for addressing bullying throughout the curriculum and other activities, such as: Form Time curriculum, through displays, assemblies, peer support, the student Grade council, Guest Speakers and workshops.
- Ensure Anti-Bullying has a high profile throughout the year, reinforced through key opportunities such as Anti-Bullying week and through student Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.
- Provide systematic opportunities to develop pupils' social and emotional skills, including building their resilience and self-esteem

9. Anti-bullying Squad

Students have been identified for the anti-bullying squad. This includes students from each section and they work towards prevention of any form of bullying in class room settings and report immediately to authorities if any suspicious event occurs.

10. Cyber-bullying Squad

Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. Cyberbullying can involve Social Networking Sites, emails and mobile phones used for SMS messages and as cameras. In addition;

- It can be used to carry out all the different types of bullying; an extension of face-to-face bullying.
- It can also go further in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people.
- It can take place across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted.
- It can draw bystanders into being accessories.
- It includes: threats and intimidation; harassment or 'cyberstalking'; vilification; exclusion or peer rejection; Impersonation; and manipulation.
- It includes cyber stalking, e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts, defamation.
- It includes the circulation of private information or images.
- It can be an illegal act as in the UAE it is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.

Amity Private School, Sharjah educates students both in the proper use of technology and about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying and will, through curriculum links, computing lessons and assemblies, continue to inform   and educate its students in these fast-changing areas.

All members of the School community are aware they have a duty to bring to the attention of the Senior Leaders any example of cyber-bullying or harassment or misuse of technology that they know about or suspect.

Students are encouraged to report any suspicions of cyberbullying and have access to the school counsellor. Support is offered to victims of cyberbullying including emotional support and reassurance.

10.1. Roles and Responsibilities

10.1.1 Staff

All staff have a responsibility to prevent misuse of equipment and cyberbullying Staff may ask to look at content on a student's personal device, but it is good practice to do so with 2 adults present.

Mobile Phones

- Ask the student to show you the mobile phone
- Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names
- Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names
- Tell the student to save the message/image
- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership team and pass them the information that you have

Computers/Laptops/i-PADS

- Ask the students to get up on-screen the material in question.
- Ask the students to save the material.
- If possible, print off the offending material straight away.
- If possible and with the student's agreement a screen capture image may be able to be sent to the staff's school email account
- Inform a member of the Senior Leadership team and pass them the information that you have. Normal anti-bullying procedures to interview students and to take statements will then be followed particularly if a child protection issue is presented.

10.1.2 Students

- Should follow the school's code of conduct / behaviour policy, when writing online. It is acceptable to disagree with someone else's opinions, however, do it in a respectful way. What is inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate online.
- Must speak to an adult as soon as possible if they believe someone is a victim on cyberbullying.
- Should not answer abusive messages but save them and report them
- Should not delete anything until it has been shown to parents or a member of staff at APSS (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyberbullying)
- Should not give out personal IT details
- Should never reply to abusive e-mails or messages in chat rooms or other social media
- Should never reply to someone you do not know

10.1.3 Parents

- It is vital that parents and the school work together to ensure that all students are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyberbullying.
- Parents can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously APSS takes incidents of cyber-bullying
- Parents should also explain to their children legal issues relating to cyberbullying
- If parents believe their child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving an offensive text on their or their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything
- Parents should contact the school as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged with a member of the Senior Leadership Team