MURGON STATE HIGH SCHOOL
Anti-Bullying Policy

School Values and Beliefs

All schools across Queensland are committed to taking action to protect students from bullying and to respond appropriately when bullying occurs. It is important that students, staff and parents/carers have a shared understanding of what bullying is, how it impacts on people, and how MSHS responds to bullying.

At MSHS we believe:

- Students have a right to learn in a healthy and safe environment. Where students do not feel safe their capacity to learn can be affected.
- Adults, in the setting of the school, have a right to teach and work in safety. Where adults do not feel safe they may not be able to teach or work effectively.
- All members of the school community have a right to have respectful, fair and decent treatment.
- We value diversity and tolerance. Despite our differences (ability, gender, race, appearance or background) we can learn and work together in a productive way.
- We believe that individuals who have been harmed by bullying need to be believed and protected from further harm.
- We believe that the harm done by bullying can be repaired, in general, through taking educative, non-punitive responses, which aim at restoring the balance in relationships, which have been affected by bullying.

Definition

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in-person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). The key features of bullying are that it causes hurt and distress, is repeated, and involves the use of power in an unfair way.

Bullying takes many forms, all of which will cause distress, including:

- **Physical** - hitting, pushing, tripping, kicking, spitting on others etc.
- **Verbal** - teasing, using offensive names, ridiculing, spreading rumours etc.
- **Non-Verbal** - writing offensive notes or graffiti about others, using e-mail or text messaging to hurt others, rude gestures etc.
- **Exclusion** - deliberately excluding others from group, refusing to sit next to someone etc.
- **Extortion** - threatening to take someone's possessions, food or money etc.
- **Property** - stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying property etc.
- **Sexual harassment** – behaviours such as unwanted sexual touching, inappropriate joking, exposure, making sexual advances or demeaning someone due to their sexual orientation.
- **Racial harassment** – behaviours such as social exclusion, teasing, taunting and threats based on another person's race.

- **Instigating or encouraging bullying** – instigating or encouragement through rumours/comments or online behaviour that may instigate or encourage bullying behaviour.
- **Cyber Bullying** – causing hurt via technologies such as the internet and other forms of social media, and through the use of smart phones and other mobile devices.
  - Sending hateful or threatening comments or pictures.
  - Using technology to engage in the social exclusion of someone.
  - Stealing someone's identity in order to harm them in some way.
  - Covert or overt filming, recording or taking a picture of someone and posting the images to cause hurt.
  - "Outing" and disseminating confidential information about someone.
  - Using aliases and pseudonyms on social media sites in order to harass and upset.
  - Engaging in cyber stalking and the invasion of privacy.
- **Sexting** – taking sexually explicit photos and making them available to see via electronic carriage service using electronic devices including mobile phones or computers. *Sending explicit images of anyone, including yourself, is a crime if you are under the age of 18 years. If the person in the picture is under 16 years, it can be a very serious crime resulting in charges of paedophilia.*
  - Posting rude, explicit or embarrassing messages or pictures about someone.
  - Putting pressure on a person to send revealing or compromising pictures of themselves.

Characteristics of Safe and Respectful Schools

Safe and responsible schools:
- Have a whole school approach to student safety and wellbeing.
- Develop and promote bullying prevention policies and programs.
- Have a leadership team that understands duty of care requirements.
- Have staff model pro-social behaviour and intervene when they see bullying or anti-social behaviour.
- Value the expertise of student and staff wellbeing.
- Have clearly defined roles for responding to bullying.
- Ensure all staff have access to regular professional learning.
- Address bullying incidents swiftly and consistently.

Responsibilities:

At MSHS students are encouraged to:
- Take some positive action to stop the bullying if they observe an incident.
- Report the bullying incident to their Year Level Coordinator as soon as possible.
- Make it clear to their peers that bullying at school is not accepted.
- Actively report bullying behaviour. Bullying also involves the concept of 'bystanders'. A bystander may be someone who sees bullying or knows about it but he or she is not directly involved. Any member of the school community can be a bystander and can act successfully to prevent or stop bullying.

At MSHS staff are expected to:
- Take positive action to stop the bullying when they observe an incident.
- Pass on information about any reported or observed bullying behaviours to the Year Level Coordinator for further action.

At MSHS parents are encouraged to:
- Listen to their child and encourage their child to speak to their Year Level Coordinator or relevant Deputy Principal at MSHS.
- Contact the school (Year Level Coordinator) if they have any concerns.
- Monitor their student's use of technology (e.g. computer, smart phones, and social media accounts).

Response to bullying at MSHS

At MSHS we adopt a number of strategies to prevent bullying including:
- Explicit teaching of positive behaviours embedded within the curriculum addressing positive relationships, conflict resolution, resilience, bystander action etc.
- Vigilant classroom, playground and transition supervision.
- Provision of safe and structured playground spaces and activities at break.
- Year Level Coordinators training in dealing with bullying.
- The MSHS Whole School Support Team.

Bullying is seen as a major breach of the schools behavioural expectations and therefore follow up action will align with our school Behaviour Management Flowchart. Any reports of bullying will be investigated and appropriate action will be promptly taken in accordance with the schools Responsible Behaviour Plan for Students.

The response to and procedures surrounding bullying at MSHS may include:
- Preliminary interview/s to ascertain the specific nature and extent of the bullying. These will be conducted with varying individuals including the student being bullied, the student or staff witnessing or reporting the bullying, the student engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Guidance and support for the recipient of the bullying (e.g. reteaching of strategies of resilience and social skills, counselling, conflict management etc.).
- Guidance and support for bystanders, supporters or witnesses of bullying (e.g. intervention strategies).
- Intervention and support for the student who was the bully including a Behaviour Support Plan/Discipline Improvement Plan where specific interventions are developed to reduce the bullying behaviour, teaching of replacement behaviours, reinforcers etc.
- Decisions made as to the level of severity of the incident and whether parents of those involved need to be informed.
- Regular monitoring and follow up through Year Level Coordinators for students involved.
- Any further recurrence of bullying may result in further consequences as outlined in the schools Behaviour Management Flowchart.
- Records of all interviews, incidents and Behaviour Support Plan/Discipline Improvement Plans will be recorded on OneSchool.
- Parent/carer contact.

Prevention Programs, Intervention and Coping Strategies

Murgon State High School has a school culture where bullying is unacceptable, disclosure is encouraged, and prompt intervention is taken by staff. The MSHS Whole School Support Team will decide on the appropriate combination of interventions for the individual circumstances of bullying behaviour. Prevention builds on protective factors which increase the likelihood of positive wellbeing outcomes and buffer against the effects of negative experiences.

The methods used by the school to discourage bullying will vary from time-to-time, with new initiatives being introduced when appropriate. Effective social skills and positive relationships act to prevent bullying. At Murgon State High School we promote effective social skills and positive relationships through:

- Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) Team.
- An active and supportive Whole School Support Team including the Chaplains, Youth Support Coordinator and Guidance Officer.
- Year Level Coordinators (YLC's) who are Case Managers for students with problems in their year levels. YLC's are often among the first people to hear about any bullying behaviour and will take appropriate action including regular contact with parents.
- A multi-age House Class System where students from all year levels meet together. This provides all students with an opportunity to mix with their peers from all year levels who can provide advice, support and friendship.
- Alternative Programs and Relationship Education Programs through Pastoral Care Class and the Whole School Support Team.
- Extra-Curricular programs to support and challenge students and provide them with opportunities to develop new and important life skills.
- Productive and respectful working relationships established between all members of the school community.
- School and classroom expectations, routines and processes negotiated and applied consistently.
- Adequate supervision of students during breaks, in the playground ovals etc.
- Modelling of appropriate problem-solving, non-aggressive behaviours by adults in the school.
- Active intervention when bullying occurs.
- Skilling of students and staff in conflict resolution strategies including peer mediation.
- Education and promotion of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy through Newsletters, Facebook, Assemblies, Posters and Pastoral Care Classes.

Links to Outside Agencies:

- Kids Helpline
  www.kidshelp.com.au

- CyberSmart
  www.cybersmart.gov.au

- Bullying No Way!
  www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

- MindMatters
  www.mindmatters.edu.au/default.asp

- ReachOut
  http://au.reachout.com

- National Safe Schools Framework
  http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/nations_safe_schools_framework.htm

WE WILL PARTICIPATE.   WE ARE RESPECTFUL & RESPONSIBLE.   WE ARE SAFE.