Adopted: 2024-09-23

<p style="text-align:center">Bullying and Harassment Policy for Students</p>

1.0 Preamble

1.1 The Board of Maria Montessori Academy believes that every student has the right to be treated with respect, and dignity and to feel safe at school. Research tells us students who feel safe and respected at school are able to reach their full potential.

1.2 The Board recognizes that bullying:

- **1.2.1** adversely affects a school's ability to educate its students;
- **1.2.2** adversely impacts a student's ability to learn;
- **1.2.3** affects the dignity and self-esteem of students who are bullied;
- **1.2.4** damages healthy relationships;
- **1.2.5** adversely impacts school climate, including healthy relationships; and
- **1.2.6** will not be tolerated on school property, at school-related activities, on school buses or in any other circumstances (e.g. electronically or cyber) where bullying will have a negative impact on the school climate.

1.3 The impact of bullying can lead to long-term social and emotional problems not only for the victims of bullying, but for the bully and those who watch or are aware it is happening. Bullies have an increased risk of becoming adults who engage in illegal activities, substance abuse, dating/relationship violence, child abuse and elder abuse. As a society, for many decades bullying was either viewed as a relatively harmless "rite of passage" or ignored altogether. It has taken high-profile acts of school violence and youth suicide to change the public perception of bullying behaviour, and to reach an understanding of what it actually is: a form of physical, emotional and/or psychological abuse.

1.4 At the Maria Montessori Academy we believe it is everyone's responsibility to stop bullying behaviour which is why we partner with parents/guardian/caregiver, community organizations and agencies to put a stop to bullying. Serious incidents of bullying are defined as, but not limited to, racist, homophobic, sexual and sexist remarks, body image, disability, slurs, jokes or graffiti that could lead to suspension and/or expulsion. All incidents of bullying will result in a consideration of suspension and/or expulsion pursuant the education act and the school's disciplinary policy.

2.0 Definitions of Bullying

2.1 **Bullying** means aggressive and typically repeated behaviour by a pupil where,

- 2.1.1 the behaviour is intended by the pupil to have the effect of, or the pupil ought to know that the behaviour would be likely to have the effect of;
- 2.1.2 causing harm, fear or distress to another individual, including physical, psychological, social or academic harm, harm to the individual's reputation or harm to the individual's property; or
- 2.1.3 creating a negative environment at a school for another individual; and
- 2.1.4 the behaviour occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance between the pupil and the individual based on factors such as size, strength, age, intelligence, peer group power, economic status, social status, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, disability or the receipt of special education; ("intimidation");
- 2.1.5 for the purposes of the definition, "bullying" behaviour includes the use of any physical, verbal, electronic, written or other means.

2.2 **Cyber-bullying**

For the purposes of the definition, "bullying" includes bullying by electronic means (commonly known as cyber-bullying), including,

2.2.1   Creating a web page, a blog or use of social media tools, in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;

2.2.2   Impersonating another person as the author of content or messages posted on the internet; and

2.2.3   Communicating material electronically to more than one individual or posting material on a website that may be accessed by one or more individuals.

2.3 Positive School Climate

2.3.1   Positive school climate is the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school. When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm. A promotion of a positive school climate means that all members of the school community are inclusive and accepting of all, including persons of any race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status and disability.

2.3.2   The following are some characteristics of a positive school climate:

- Students, staff members, and parents feel safe, and are safe, included, and accepted.
- All members of the school community demonstrate respect, fairness, and kindness in their interactions, building healthy relationships that are free from discrimination and harassment.
- Students are encouraged and given support to be positive leaders and role models in their school community.
- Open and ongoing dialogue takes place between the principal, staff members, parents/guardians/caregivers, and students. All partners are actively engaged.
- The learning environment, instructional materials, and teaching and assessment strategies reflect the diversity of all learners.
- Every student is inspired and given support to succeed in an environment of high expectations.
- Bullying prevention and awareness-raising strategies for students and staff are reinforced through curriculum-linked programs.

2.4 Means and Forms of Bullying

Bullying is a dynamic of unhealthy interaction that can take the following means and forms[1]:

2.4.1   *Physical bullying* includes behaviors such as: hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, or damaging property.

2.4.2   *Verbal bullying* includes behaviors such as: name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist comments, or sexual harassment.

2.4.3   *Social bullying* includes behaviors such as: rolling your eyes or turning away from someone, excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish and damaging friendships.

2.4.4   *Electronic or Cyber-bullying* includes the use of email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships.

2.4.5   *Racial bullying* includes behaviors such as: treating people disrespectfully because of their racial or ethnic background, saying bad things about a cultural background, calling someone racist names, or telling racist jokes.

2.4.6   *Religious bullying* comprises treating people disrespectfully because of their religious background or beliefs, saying bad things about a religious background or belief, name calling or telling jokes based on others' religious beliefs and practices.

2.4.7   *Sexual bullying* includes behaviors such as leaving someone out or treating him/her disrespectfully because of their gender, making sexist comments or jokes, unwanted touching, pinching or grabbing someone in a sexual way, making crude comments about someone's sexual behavior, spreading a sexual rumor about someone, calling someone gay, a fag, a dyke, or making inferences about their sexual orientation.

2.4.8   *Disability bullying* includes behaviors such as: leaving someone out or treating them disrespectfully because of a disability, making someone feel uncomfortable because of a disability, or making comments or jokes to hurt someone with a disability.

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[1] Definitions of Means and Forms of Bullying from *PREVnet.ca* April 2019

2.5 **Rough Play vs. Conflict vs. Bullying**

2.5.1   Interactions between students are often difficult to classify. The following provides an assessment tool to help with the situation at hand. Even where conduct is not necessarily labeled as bullying, staff should consider what appropriate responses may be used to support students and to encourage positive student behaviour.

2.5.2   Staff are reminded that, in resolving issues in a healthy manner, students often need adult assistance to resolve rough play or conflict, and that rough play or conflict resolved in a healthy manner is much less likely to result in bullying.

Rough Play	Conflict	Bullying
Usually friends or friendly. Often repeated. Same players.	Acquaintances or friends. Occasional. Usually issue-centred, until resolved; could centre around misunderstanding, misinformation or no common ground.	Typically not friends; however may have had a relationship previously or have a relationship currently. Intentional target. Repeated and persistent.
Balance of power	Power relatively equal	Unequal power

Equal, consensual reaction.	Equal or near equal emotional reaction.	Bully's reaction meets own intrinsic need for power and control (consciously or unconsciously). Strong emotional, mental and physical reaction for target.
Not seeking power or attention	Not seeking power or attention	Attempt to gain power and control, possessions or popularity
No intent to harm.	Intentionally to sort out who is right.	Intentionally harm-doing

Intention is fun. If goes wrong, then remorseful.	Remorse – takes responsibility	Bully may or may not show remorse. May or may not know what they are doing is wrong. May blame target or believe the target deserves it.
Not regarded as a problem.	Effort to solve problem.	Bully may deny there is a problem. Target may not be able to articulate.
Not serious, unless something goes wrong.	Usually not serious and can be resolved on their own or with aid of third party.	Threats of physical or emotional harm; intent to humiliate, exclude or victimize.

3.0 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Students

3.1 Bullying is a covert activity that we all have a responsibility to stop. Reporting instances of bullying to an adult in the school is the socially responsible thing to do. Students are encouraged to report instances of bullying not only for themselves, but on behalf of bullies, victims or bystanders in a timely manner, to a teacher, Child Youth Worker, Principal, Vice-Principal, Guidance Counselor, bus or taxi driver, social worker either by phone, email or in person. The Board will take steps to ensure that bullying incidents can be reported safely and in a way that will minimize the possibility of reprisal.

4.0 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Parents/Guardians/Caregivers

4.1 When parents/guardians/caregivers notice a change in their child's behaviour, desire to attend school or loss of interest in hobbies and interests or if their child discloses a bullying situation, it is advised to contact the school immediately. Initial reporting can be made to an adult with whom the parent has a relationship, the classroom teacher, Child Youth Worker, Vice-Principal or Principal. The Principal or Vice-Principal will work with the student, the family, other students and staff to investigate the report and work to resolve it. It is important to stay connected with the school following the report to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

5.0 Responding to Bullying by Board Staff

5.1 All Maria Montessori Academy staff who work directly with students MUST respond to all student bullying behaviours as well as any other behaviours that have a negative impact on school climate. This includes administrators, teachers, non-teaching staff, as well as board resource staff visiting schools. When bullying is observed, the response may include a request to stop the behaviour because it is disrespectful or inappropriate. Board employees

are not required to respond to incidents of bullying when, in their opinion, responding would cause immediate physical harm to a student or themselves or another person. This behaviour and the response (or lack of response) must be reported to an administrator.

6.0 Reporting of Bullying Incidents by Board Staff

6.1 All bullying incidents must be reported using the appropriate form. Bullying incidents must be reported by the end of the school day and as soon as possible after the incident. Where immediate action is required, the report can be made verbally, with submission of the written form by the following day.

7.0 Principals Response to Reports of Bullying

7.1 After a report is submitted, the Principal(s) will investigate any reports of inappropriate behaviour and specifically bullying, and communicate the results of the investigation to the employee. The Principal must acknowledge the receipt of the report to the employee who reported. The receipt will identify if further action is being taken or if no action is required.

7.2 If no action is taken, it is not necessary to retain the report.

7.3 When relevant, a behavior report will be drawn up and put in the students file.

7.4 Principals are required to inform parent/guardians/caregivers of victims, as a result of any incident for which suspension/expulsion is being considered.

7.5 When notifying the parent/guardian/caregiver of the victim, the Principal must disclose the nature of the incident that caused harm, the nature of the harm to their child, the steps being taken to keep their child safe, including the nature of the discipline in response to the incident, and the supports that will be provided for the student in response to the harm that resulted from the incident. Principals need not share the name of the student who caused harm or any identifying information with the parent / guardian / caregiver of the victim. This is done at the Principal's discretion.

7.6 Principals must not inform the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student who caused harm when, in the Principal's discretion, doing so would put the student at risk of harm from the parent/guardian/caregiver. If the Principal decides not to notify the parent/guardian/caregiver for this reason, the Principal must document the rationale for the decision. The Principal is required to inform the teacher or, if appropriate, the other staff member who reported the harm of this decision.

7.7 When notifying the parent/guardian/caregiver of the student who caused harm, the Principal must disclose the nature of the incident that caused harm, the nature of the harm to the other child, the nature of any disciplinary measures taken in response to the incident, and the supports that will be provided to the student in response to his or her engagement in the activity. Principals need not share the name of the student who was harmed or any identifying information with the parent/guardian/caregiver of the student who caused the harm.

7.8 When notifying a parent/caregiver/guardian under these sections, the principal shall invite the parent/caregiver/guardian to have a discussion with the principal about the supports that will be provided for his or her child.

8.0 Supports for Victims and for Students who Bully

8.1 All MMA staff must take allegations of homophobia, sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and inappropriate sexual behaviour and bullying seriously. Incidents of this nature must be dealt with in a sensitive, supportive and timely manner.

8.2 All staff must support students who disclose they are being bullied by providing programs, interventions or other supports and by making available information on community agencies that can provide professional support.

8.3 Great care, planning and follow up will ensure that there are no retaliatory threats or actions made towards victims or bystanders of a bullying situation. Clear information about

Disciplinary consequences will be relayed to both victims and students who bully with a scheduled check in organized when relevant.

9.0 Supports for Bystanders

9.1 When bullying does happen, it is imperative to debrief the incident with bystanders. This is a teachable moment and the best tool for building empathy.

9.2 The Board shall provide programs, interventions or other supports to these individuals who witness bullying.

9.3 Students are more likely to challenge bullying situations if active intervention by all members of the school community in bullying situations is valued and encouraged.

10.0 **Prevention Strategies**

10.1 **Code of Conduct** – All MMA staff will familiarize themselves with the School's Code of Conduct which set out standards for behaviour. Schools will incorporate into their Code of Conduct the stipulations of this policy, associated procedures and the responsibilities for staff, students and parents/guardians/caregivers as outlined in this policy.

10.2 **Positive School Climate** - A positive school climate can defined as "the sum total of all the personal relationships within a school". When these relationships are founded in mutual acceptance and inclusion, and modeled by all, a culture of respect becomes the norm. Confirmation of a positive school climate is when all members of the school community feel safe, accepted and included.

10.3 **Collaborations with Community Agencies** – MMA works closely with Safer Schools Together, Saanich Police and Saanich Police Liaison School Program and, when relevant, Child Services BC.

10.4 **Training -** Bullying Awareness and Prevention Training will be provided to staff and students on an on-going basis, and, at a minimum, annually.

10.5 **Leadership Activities -** All students should participate in bullying prevention and leadership initiatives within their own school, such as daily classroom teaching with curriculum links, character education initiatives, mentorship programs, citizenship development, student leadership, student success strategies, healthy lifestyles initiatives and social skills development.

10.6 **Teaching Strategies** - Teaching strategies will support the school-wide Ministry of Education bullying prevention strategies by integrating prevention and intervention strategies into curriculum. Teaching strategies will focus on developing healthy relationships by promoting inclusion, respect and empathy. Prevention messaging will be reinforced through programs addressing discrimination based on age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, faith, special needs, ethnicity, social status and family circumstances.

11.0 **Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week**

11.1 The third week of February in each year is recognized as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week. MMA continues to support this and participate in any other bullying prevention awareness activities throughout the year.

12.0 Communication of the Policy

12.1   Administrators will inform all staff and students, and other members of the school community of this policy. Student/school handbooks and School Websites should include a statement regarding the unacceptability of bullying, the procedures for reporting bullying and the consequences for bullying.

13.0   **Access to Information**

13.1   The Board is committed to making reasonable and targeted efforts to providing access to appropriate board resources/publications for parents/guardians/caregivers and in doing so, taking into account linguistic and accessibility considerations.