

Anti-Bullying Policy

Excellence, Diversity, Learning, Integrity,
Community



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By – SLT

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Anti-Bullying Policy

Rationale:

This policy intends to support the school's objectives to provide a safe learning environment for members of the VISS community, allowing development and growth, while promoting the high standards of the school in both behaviour and education. This policy provides an outline for students to achieve the standards laid out in our *Behaviour, Child Protection, Safeguarding, Equality, E-Safety and Acceptable Use* policies. At Victoria International School Sharjah (VISS), we believe that all students have the right to an educational environment where they feel safe, an environment free from harassment, bullying and intimidation. This policy serves the entire school from Pre KG to Grade 12.

Aims of the policy also include:

- To inform students and parents of our expectations in order to ensure a productive partnership, highlighting everyone's role 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, happy, and 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 their growth and self-esteem;
- To reduce the emotional and mental distress of any bullying enabling all students the right to enjoy their time at school;
- To demonstrate that the school takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated.

What does Victoria International School Sharjah consider to be 'Bullying'?

The school regards bullying as: ***'The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person by one or more others. Bullying can be carried out physically, verbally, emotionally or through cyberspace'***.

Bullying is any behaviour which is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten, frighten or discriminate against another individual or group. It is usually unprovoked, happens again and again as part of a pattern of behaviour and can continue for a long period of time (See Appendix A for examples of bullying behaviour)

Signs of Bullying

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration, or truancy. All staff should be aware of these possibilities and to report promptly any suspicions of bullying to the appropriate Grade Level Leader.

Strategies

- To identify bullying behaviour at the early stages and work towards behaviour modification before the problem becomes more serious;
- To have a school wide programme regarding anti-bullying, that informs and educates students, staff and parents about the issues related to bullying;
- To foster the values in which VISS believes;
- To include within the curriculum, opportunities to discuss and consider bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour;
- To help students through advice and counselling, to make the right choices and not succumb to peer pressure and to engage a range of strategies which challenge bullying behaviour;
- 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.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

If being bullied, a student should report it to a member of staff, either their Homegroup teacher, Class Teacher, Grade Level Leader or “THE LOOKOUT- Anti-Bullying Squad” (currently in formation). If another student is aware that bullying is occurring, they have an obligation to report it to an appropriate member of staff.

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 whole staff, to changes in behaviour, attitude and well-being, reporting these immediately to the appropriate members of staff.

Responding to Bullying

If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with initially and immediately by the teacher approached. If necessary, the incident will be investigated by the relevant Grade Level Leader. The details of the incident will be recorded. If a racial or prejudicial element to the bullying is suspected, the relevant Grade Level Leader must be informed immediately. The Grade Level Leader will determine in consultation with the Assistant Head Student Wellbeing (Secondary School)/ Deputy Head of Primary School the appropriate sanction. Any extenuating circumstances will be taken into account when dealing with the incidents.

As a school, we will endeavour to:

- Deal with each incident individually and to assess the needs of each student separately;
- Ensure that all parties are interviewed separately;
- Obtain witness information;
- Keep a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes which should be recorded and provided to relevant staff;
- Ensure that action is taken to prevent further incidents. Such action may include:

- Implementation of sanctions such as detention and removal of privileges; (serious cases can result in a student's place at the school being reviewed)
- Obtaining a sincere apology;
- Informing parents of all parties involved;
- Provide support in the form of restorative practice for all parties involved.

Anti-Bullying System

If a parent wishes to report an occasion of bullying, they will be encouraged to contact their son/daughter's Homegroup teacher, Class teacher, Grade Level Leader or Assistant Head Student Welfare (Secondary School)/ Deputy Head of Primary School. Parents have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining its high standards of behaviour. Consistent expectations between home and school are essential and it is vital that there is co-operation between the two.

Prevention of Bullying

The school strives for the prevention of bullying, rather than the reaction to it. Strategies to achieve this include;

- Teacher supervision at lunch and break time at different areas around the school.
- Teachers are expected to be vigilant in their prevention of bullying.
- VISS promotes an extremely high level of behaviour, achievement and morals as well as social awareness and respect.
- VISS staff understand that bullying behaviour may be a sign of other problems experienced by the student and may have been bullied themselves, therefore requiring support by the School Psychologist/Counsellor, or members of THE LOOKOUT: Anti-bullying Squad.

Review of Policy

All staff, students and parents should be aware of the negative effects that bullying can have on individuals, and the school in general. Assistant Head Student Wellbeing (Secondary School)/ Deputy Head of Primary School have oversight in the respective schools, in conjunction with other staff for bullying prevention.

We aim to educate VISS students to be well-mannered, polite, respectful, well-rounded individuals that leave the school, and our anti-bullying framework is designed to uphold this ethos.

The school raises awareness of the anti-social nature of bullying through school assemblies, the School Council, use of tutorial time activities and in the national curriculum programmes of study as appropriate. VISS has recently formed a new anti-bullying initiative called The Lookout- Anti-Bullying Squad, which is being piloted in Grade 9. Members of Grade 9 have either been nominated or have nominated themselves to take part in a new through-school initiative to build the awareness of the effects of bullying on an individual and participate in a prevention programme to eliminate all forms of bullying.

Appendix A

Various types of Bullying Behaviours

Bullying includes:

Physical:

Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, hair-pulling and other forms of violence or threats of violence

Verbal:

Name-calling and sarcasm

Innuendo:

Spreading rumours, persistent teasing

Emotional:

Excluding, ridicule, humiliation

Intrusive:

Email, text messaging, use of Facebook and other social media, designed to upset or abuse

Racist:

Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

Sexual:

Unwanted physical contact or abusive comments