BPCS Mutual Respect Policy

This *Mutual Respect Policy* applies to Bold Park Community School [BPCS].

This statement outlines the school's policy on how it applies *Mutual Respect* principles to meet the legal requirements for "the school to provide satisfactory levels of care for the students concerned"

BPCS may, from time to time, review and update this *Mutual Respect Policy* to take into account new laws and technology, changes to schools operations and practices and to make sure it remains appropriate to the changing school environment.

Overview

The *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy* is the underlying, fundamental policy of Bold Park Community School and is based on the Reggio Emilia principle of the *Image of the Student.*[1] It applies to all members of BPCS.

Policy

BPCS is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment where all members of the community are valued and respected.   All community members are to interact with each other in a respectful manner that promotes the ethos of the school.[2]

The implementation of this policy enables BPCS to make clear statements about its expectations relating to acceptable behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour to all members of its community.

The school explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment.

Objectives:
- BPCS will provide a safe and welcoming environment.
- BPCS makes clear statements to its community that it will not tolerate, nor support in any way, acts of bullying behaviour.
- BPCS staff will have the necessary skills and confidence to educate students in mutual respect, bullying behaviour and its prevention.
- BPCS staff and students will have the support to manage conflict assertively and equitably for all parties involved.
- The wider community will support prevention initiatives in the School.
- Students will feel empowered to report instances of bullying behaviour.

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[1] Refer to *Bold Park Community School Philosophy Document*
[2] Refer to *Bold Park Community School Philosophy Document*

Mutual Respect Implementation at BPCS

School Environment
BPCS has a safe, welcoming environment that promotes:
- mutual respect for all members of the school community;
- a sense of belonging and empowerment of all members of the school community; and
- collaboration and negotiation.

Learning Opportunities
Learning opportunities within the school provide students to:
- understand the nature of mutual respect;
- understand the nature of harassment and bullying behaviour;
- understand personal safety issues;
- develop interpersonal, communication and problem solving skills, such as negotiation, mediation, conflict resolution and assertiveness;
- develop self-confidence and enhance self-esteem; and
- acquire the ability to understand, respect and care for others.

How does this apply to staff and parents?
BPCS staff and parents are to interact with all members of the community in a respectful manner where tolerance and understanding are the focus of any interaction.

How does this apply to the students?
This policy is used to assist the students to develop appropriate behaviours and autonomy in their interpersonal relationships. It is also designed to provide them with strategies to use when conflicts arise. It is envisaged that this learning is lifelong. BPCS believes that respect for self, others and property is one of the most important concepts for students to learn.

BPCS requests that the students deal with issues that arise in this manner due to the following reasons:

1. The other student/s may not be aware that their behaviour is causing distress and will usually stop the behaviour immediately if informed and the relationship/s then continues uninterrupted.

2. By dealing with the situation themselves the students develop skills to manage their own space and what happens to them instead of needing to seek authority from an adult. This self-management is essential to the development of a positive self-esteem.

3. By facilitating self-management in the playground, a playground culture develops that is fair and self-regulating. Acceptable behaviour becomes the most frequently occurring behaviour even when an adult/staff member is temporarily not to hand.

If conflict arises or a student feels uncomfortable within the school environment, the student is directed to:

1. Talk to the other student/s involved and say, "I don't like it when you do that, please stop", or similar.

2. If the other student/s persists then they are asked to inform a staff member of the behaviour.

3. The staff member will then assist the student/s to deal with the conflict or, if appropriate, discuss the issue in a group discussion.

4. If a student/s advises staff of a conflict, staff will first ask if the student/s has talked to the other student/s or will assist the student/s in taking this first step. Often with this reminder or assistance, the student/s can proceed to deal with the situation. At times when a student/s tells staff about an issue, they may be asking to be heard and not asking for intervention. The staff member must use their judgement on intervention. If staff members do observe aggressive behaviour then they assess the situation and mediate the resolution between the students to achieve mutual respect.

How does this apply to families?

This approach in developing appropriate behaviour and conflict resolution skills is aimed at providing students with lifelong skills in this area of interpersonal relationships. Behaviour management is **not** about containing behaviour; it is about teaching the students how to manage themselves. This is only achieved by giving the students the strategies and opportunities to influence their environment. We hope that parents will understand that while the students are still learning, inappropriate behaviour and conflict will occur from time to time. All the students understand that hitting another student or damaging property is not acceptable. Families and the school need to remind the students of the importance of appropriate behaviour frequently. Class meetings provide the time to discuss and explore these issues.

Parents should seek advice from teaching staff in how to deal with incidents that have arisen during school hours, which their child/ren have discussed with them at home. Parents or guardians are encouraged not to deal directly with the other student/s or their parents without the support of teaching staff.

How does this apply to adults dealing with each other at BPCS?

While adults bring a multitude of learned behaviours from various environments that may not necessarily fit into the *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy*, it is expected that all adults will model the behaviour of mutual respect.

While BPCS acknowledges these challenges, it still expects that all adults will interact with each other in an open, mutually respectful manner. As such, if an adult has an issue or concern with the school or another adult, we ask that they approach the appropriate person with the concern and to communicate it respectfully.

If a BPCS member feels that they have not resolved an issue and would like to pursue this further, they should refer to the *BPCS Disputes & Complaints Policy* and seek the appropriate channel of communication.

As with the students, unless a problem is brought to a person directly, sometimes the party involved may not even realise a problem exists.

Appropriate Interactions at BPCS

BPCS staff members have a duty of care to foster safe and positive relationships with the children in their care so that the welfare of everyone concerned is not compromised.

These professional boundaries apply whilst on and off school sites, during and outside of school hours, and in the context of the school program, philosophy and curriculum.

Professional standards are to be upheld by establishing and maintaining appropriate boundaries around:

- Communication - conversations, discussion, meetings, social media and networking, all language used, all correspondence, etc.
- Physical contact - touching, conflict résolution, restraint, etc.
- Place - home (student or staff), school, camps, change rooms, transport, etc
- Roles - counsellor, photographer, transporting children, administering first aid, assessing, etc.

At many times during a school day staff members interact with students and very often this contact could or should be of a physical nature. Staff are to be mindful that each interaction be respectful. To this end, respectful interactions must be:

- non-intrusive;
- culturally sensitive;
- initiated by the child;
- where possible, visible to others;
- is supported by the School, its policies, and philosophy;
- and occur during work hours and in appropriate time frames.

At times, and as a last resort, a staff member may need to uphold their duty of care of a student by exercising the physical restraint of a child who may be putting him/herself or others in immediate danger. Where non-physical interventions have been exhausted or are impossible (verbal measures, cordoning off a safe area for the child to calm him/herself while awaiting parents or guardians, sitting calmly with the student) then a staff member may intervene if they can do so safely, and where possible a trained staff member should be sought to carry out or assist with the restraint. All due care should be exercised to use safe and reasonable practices when using physical restraint:

- Two staff members who are calm and in control and who know the student should carry out the restraint.
- It is safe for the staff members to intervene.
- The least restrictive measures necessary are used.
- Talk to the student throughout the interaction, remain calm and acknowledge the student's feelings.
- Desist if the restraint itself becomes dangerous to the child or staff members.

Where a staff member is observed to have engaged in inappropriate contact or communication with a student, the incident should be directed to the appropriate Team Leader, or if the matter concerns the Team Leader, a Director is to be informed.

Harassment and Bullying Behaviour Guidelines[3]

BPCS encourages the development of a community of students who feel comfortable playing the games or engaging in activities that they want and pursuing their own interests. Yes, conflict occurs and inappropriate behaviour happens. It is unrealistic not to expect these behaviours to surface in a playground. It is important that the students be given the opportunity to develop strategies to deal with conflict within a supportive environment, as these strategies will be central to strategies used throughout their life.

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[3] *This information is based on Bullying provided by AISWA and adapted for the BPCS context in line with the school's Mutual Respect Policy.*

Students often solve conflict through, what we as adults, can perceive as aggression. They do not always assess a situation in terms of the effect on those around them.

The *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy* assists all students involved to identify the problem, and seek a resolution that is respectful of each other and allows them to move on to a greater understanding of how to manage themselves in society.

The *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy* allows the School to:
- prepare students to manage and resolve conflict in non-aggressive and non-violent ways;
- reduce the incidence of harassment and bullying behaviour in school;
- create the opportunity for students and staff to develop the skills necessary to handle these situations with the minimum of distress and in an equitable manner; and
- assist the school community to manage frustration and conflict in assertive and equitable ways.

The *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy* also allows:
- ways of preventing harassment and bullying behaviour;
- the school community to know that harassment and bullying behaviour is unacceptable;
- development of procedures to combat harassment and bullying behaviour;
- consistent monitoring of student behaviour;
- provision is made to follow up the detection and reporting of incidents;
- the curriculum is used as an instrument to reinforce mutual respect and combat harassment and bullying behaviour; and
- mechanisms to be established to enable prompt action to be taken upon specific complaint (see below for *Response Plan*).

Harassment and Bullying at BPCS

BPCS will not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying of its school community. Students, staff and parents have a right to be free from harassment, bullying and conflict and violence and to be provided with help and support if these rights are breached.

It is the responsibility of the members of the school community to:
- abstain personally from bullying and harassing others;
- actively discourage harassment and bullying when it occurs; and
- provide support to those that are victimised.

Definitions

Bullying:
A product of social dynamics which can be defined as the repeated negative actions by individuals or groups against a target individual or group, which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take different forms: verbal, physical, social, cyber or psychological. Actions can be observable or hidden.

Harassment:
Negative behaviour intended to annoy or trouble another individual, which may be based on obvious differences such as gender, race, religious or cultural beliefs, physical difference, sexual orientation, ability or disability and socio-economic status. It may be a one-off incident between individuals or groups or may continue over time.

Violence:

Incidents where a person is intimidated, abused, threatened, physically assaulted or where property is deliberately damaged by another person. It is an extreme use of force often resulting in injury or destruction. Violence does not necessarily involve an imbalance of power.

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Conflict*:*
A disagreement, where the needs of one or both parties are not being met. It does not necessarily involve an abuse of power, even if parties do not have perceived equal power. If handled well, conflict is seen as an opportunity for personal growth.

Critical Incident:
An incident, or series of incidents, which result in:
- significant disruption to the school's normal procedures;
- a school being locked down, evacuated or requiring closure;
- police notification and involvement in the school; or a
- significant threat to the safety of students and/or staff.

Reporting of Critical Incidents are outlined in *BPCS Emergency Management Procedures & Plans*

Common characteristics of harassment and bullying behaviour are:
- attention seeking;
- seeking popularity and the support of others;
- not accepting responsibility for the behaviour;
- a need to seek control and dominate their peers;
- continuity of bullying behaviour should complaints not be made;
- no remorse for inflicting pain on another student;
- higher than average aggressive behaviour patterns; and
- often have parents whose bullying behaviour occurs at home therefore supporting aggressive behaviour.

Common characteristics of victim behaviour
Most students are approached by a bully at school. It is often the student's response that will determine if they will be bullied again. Students who are highly vulnerable often become victims. These students are usually:
- lacking social skills and confidence;
- self blaming; and
- are desperate to fit in.

How does the *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy and Guidelines for Bullying Behaviour* apply to the school?

All students, staff and parents need to be aware that the *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy* is applied to instances of harassment and bullying.

How does this apply to staff?

Staff are to direct students to follow the procedure below if bullying arises:

1. The student/s who is feeling threatened should inform the other student/s that they do not like the behaviour that is occurring and ask them to stop. Further, other students who witness the behaviour are encouraged to inform the perpetuator that the behaviour is inappropriate and must cease.

2. If the behaviour does not stop and does not achieve the desired result then the situation should be taken to staff to mediate. Sometimes the student/s will feel more comfortable when they talk to their parents about the situation. ***Parents have an obligation to inform the school as soon as they are aware of any incident***. Staff must be made aware of any situations that are causing a student/s unrest so that they are able to monitor this more closely and provide assistance to the student/s involved.

3. Staff will engage the student/s involved in a discussion with the ultimate goal that the student/s will take responsibility for their actions and cease to behave inappropriately. This process can be long but ultimately the change in the student/s' behaviour will be recognised and harassment and bullying will not develop into an underground playground culture. This process is on a case-by-case basis and will be adapted accordingly for those students and families involved, in line with the school's philosophy of working with the individual student's needs, and in line with the school's Response Plan as detailed below.

4. During this process, the parents of the student/s will be involved in helping their student/s to develop strategies to deal with any problems they may encounter and working on restorative practices to rebuild the relationship between the parties.

5. If the harassment and bullying persists, the Director will meet with the parents of a student who continues to engage in bullying behaviours, in consultation with relevant staff and the Non-Government School Psychology Service, if appropriate, to develop strategies to address the issue.

Response Plan

BPCS will respond to incidents of harassment and bullying and take account of the following when working with the school community:
- the nature of the incident;
- harm caused to individuals and the school community;
- personal factors of individuals involved;
- involvement of staff;
- involvement of external agents such as police, etc;
- underlying causes;
- repeated occurrence;
- support for victims, witnesses and school community; and
- strategies for the perpetrator.

Families, teaching staff and students need to understand that BPCS will not accept harassment and bullying under any circumstances and that the school will work together with the student/s, teaching staff and families to resolve any situations that occur. If unresolved, the final step may be asking the student to leave the school.

Cyber Bullying

Cyber bulling is a form of bullying that occurs using information technologies and is covered comprehensively in the *BPCS Acceptable Use of Technology Policy.*

BPCS students have a responsibility to ensure that they:
- Do not participate in cyber bullying.
- Do not use mobile phones, cameras or other digital devices to record audio and visual material that is not authorised recording or filming.

- Do not breach the privacy of students, staff and members of the school community through any unauthroised recording or filming.
- Do not desseminate inappropriate information through digital media or any other means.
- Report incidents of cyber bullying to a member of BPCS staff.
- Advise students being victimised by cyber bullying to talk to an adult.
- Offer to speak to an adult on behalf of the student who is being victimised by cyber bullying.

If students are victims of cyber bullying, the following steps must be taken:
1. Don't respond to the bullying.
2. Save the content.
3. Block and delete that contact.
4. Report abuse on sites such as *Facebook.*
5. Screen capture the cyberbullying.
6. Tell an adult.

If BPCS staff are advised of cyber bullying incidents, the following steps must be taken:
1. Follow the *BPCS Mutual Respect Policy*.
2. Document the incident in line with the Response Plan (as above).
3. Refer the incident to the relevant Team Leader.
4. Team Leader to advise the Director of School.
5. Team Leader to contact the parents.

Staff and Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying is a form of unacceptable harassment in the workplace. Australian research has shown that workplace bullying is a significant cause of absenteeism, sick leave, loss of productivity and high staff turnover. Workplace bullying may take the following forms:

- physical abuse;
- verbal abuse and intimidation;
- unfair or excessive criticism;
- insulting workers in public; and
- continually setting unrealistic work targets.

Performance problems are to be handled in a respectful manner according to the procedures outlined in the *BPCS HR Policy*. Note, staff who are found to be guilty of workplace bullying will be subject to disciplinary action.

Bullying can also be an issue in the workplace where repeated inappropriate behaviour by one of more persons undermines the individual's right to dignity at work. Bullying occurs in the workplace if it harms, intimidates, threatens, victimises, undermines, offends, degrades or humiliates an employee, whether alone or in front of others.

The steps involved in dealing with harassment and bullying in the workplace are those based on the *BPCS Mutual Respect Guide to Harassment and Bullying.*

If a staff member does not feel that an issue is resolved using the *BPCS Mutual Respect Guide for Bullying*, they may follow the *BPCS Disputes and Complaints Policy*, which is also summarised in the flow chart provided in the *BPCS Staff Handbook.*

Parents and Bullying

All parents and/or guardians of children enrolled at BPCS are to interact with all staff and other families in a mutually respectful manner, in keeping with the spirit of this policy.

Complaints Procedure

Staff who wish to discuss their situation or lodge a dispute or complaint are encouraged to do so. The situation may be discussed with:

- appropriate Team Leader; or
- the Director of School.

Formal complaints regarding workplace harassment can be lodged with the Director of School and will be treated in strict confidence.

Polices relating to Mutual Respect

Acceptable Use of I.T.

Child Protection

Discrimination – Disability, Racial and Sexual

Disputes & Complaints

Duty of Care

HR

Occupational Safety and Health

Relevant Legislation

Criminal Code
Discrimination Act 1991
Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (under sexual discrimination or harassment)
Human Rights Act 2004
Industrial Relations Act 1979
Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984
Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
School Education Act 1999
School Education Regulations 2000
Sex Discrimination Act 1984
Workplace Agreements Act 1993
Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981

Date of review: May 2017

Date of next review: Ongoing (no later than May 2020)