Bullying can occur among children of any ages, sex, or background. In most instances, children need adult assistance to deal with bullying. This includes adults taking responsibility to develop strategies for the prevention of bullying, and for dealing fairly and effectively with allegations of bullying.

RATIONALE

The Hills Montessori School believes all children have the right to a safe, healthy, inclusive and supportive learning environment that promotes student wellbeing and encourages positive relationships between children and their peers.

AIMS

To develop good strategies to ensure all staff, children and families are aware of the policies and procedures in relation to bullying.

IMPLEMENTATION

Hills Montessori School does not tolerate bullying of any kind. The priority of our school is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child being bullied.

Although there may be underlying reasons causing a child to bully others, it is essential that the child being bullied receives the adult attention and support in the first instance. It is important that the needs of the child who bullies does not overshadow the needs of the child being bullied.

TYPES OF BULLYING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

The most common types of bullying in the early childhood setting are physical and verbal. Some children may also bully others by social isolation/exclusion.

Physical incudes:

- Hitting, punching, kicking, pinching – directed at the same child over an extended period of time

Verbal includes:

- Calling children names, taunting them, making sexist/racist statements, making cruel statements about attributes, clothing etc.

Social Isolation:

- Excluding individual children or groups of children from play or social situations.

SIGNS OF BULLYING

In many cases, bullying occurs without adults being aware of it. Bullying can include physical violence (hitting, shoving), teasing or name-calling, social exclusion, or intimidation. It often occurs over a period of time.
Possible signs a child is being bullied might include:

- unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- changes in behaviour, such as becoming moody, teary, depressed
- bedwetting
- complaints of physical ailments such as headaches or stomach-aches
- having few friends, or a breakdown in a previous friendship (if age appropriate)
- does not want to attend school
- does not want to attend parties, visit other children

Children may also disclose to a trusted adult that they are being bullied.

EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Children who are bullied are more likely to be depressed, lonely, and anxious and have low self-esteem. They may frequently feel sick and avoid interactions with others.

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGIES

Bullying thrives where there is not enough supervision. If required, and where possible, our school will increase our staff: child ratios above those set out in the National regulations.

Our daily program is designed to meet the needs and interest of all students in attendance to prevent periods of boredom.

Staff model appropriate behaviours towards other staff and children, including refraining from teasing, humiliating, or talking 'behind another's back'. This also includes staff using appropriate language when dealing with behaviour management issues assisting students to use the same.

Children are encouraged to verbalise their emotions and to develop empathy and compassion.

TALKING ABOUT BULLYING

Staff play an important role in helping children to understand and guide their own behaviour as they learn about positive and healthy relationships with others.

Behaviours in early childhood may be *precursors* to bullying rather than true bullying. This could include making faces, refusing to play together, telling lies or stories about another child, grabbing objects, pushing, pinching, or shoving another child. Without intervention, these behaviours could turn into a pattern of bullying.

Staff assist children to recognise bullying behaviour and assist children in developing strategies to develop positive relationships and prevent bullying. Skills to develop to assist in preventing bullying include:
- empathy – understanding and responding to what others feel
- problem solving – how to resolve problems constructively without using aggression
- language – understanding what to say when the child is feeling targeted by another child – "stop it"

Staff will teach social skills through role-plays, stories, puppets and games.
Staff will guide children to practice how to interact with others positively and respectfully when talking about bullying.

PROCEDURE WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES ALLEDGED BULLYING

Staff will:
- listen when a child attempts to talk about behaviours that might indicate bullying
- respond to incidents in a constructive, supportive and timely manner
- learn as much as possible about the children involved and the tactics used
- summarise the problem they are discussing
- ensure the child knows that the staff are here to help them
- provide sympathy and support
- empathise with the child and reassure them that it is not their fault
- ask the child what they think could be done to help, what will make them feel safe
- tell the child what action you are planning to take, including that you will need to talk to the alleged bully
- encourage and support the child who is being bullied to develop other friendships
- notify the Head of School of the allegation
- try to talk with the alleged bully and any witnesses without allowing them the opportunity to discuss what they may say (bullies often do not act alone and the responses of the bully and friends may therefore differ from the victim)

- notify all parents involved of the allegation of bullying (refer to Confidentiality Policy and Code of Conduct Policy)
- discuss the situation with the child's parents and work out a plan to manage the situation
- once the investigation is complete, advise the child, parents and the Board of the outcome.

PROCEDURE WHEN STAFF SUSPECT POSSIBLY BULLYING
- pay closer attention to the suspected victim and their interactions with other children
- tell the child that you are concerned about them and consider asking some questions such as "Do you have any special friends here?", "who you like to play with"
- consider talking with the parents to determine if they have similar concerns

STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Discussing the behaviour with the child who is bullying others
- make it clear to the child that this type of behaviour is not acceptable
- do not force a meeting between the victim and the bully. Forced apologies are not constructive.
- ask the child who is bullying for possible reasons for the bullying. Address any issues raised as appropriate
- discuss with the child who is bullying and their parents what possible sanctions may be implemented if the bullying continues

SANCTIONS

Possible sanctions will be dependent on each individual case, but may include:
- a warning
- temporary exclusion from the school
- permanent exclusion for the school

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

Our *Anti bullying Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with children, families, staff and Board.

LEGISLATIVE LINKS
Education and Care Services National Regulations
73 Educational Program 123 Educator to child ratios – centre based services 155 Interactions with children 156 Relationship in groups 168 Education and care services must have policies and procedures 170 Policies and procedures are to be followed 171 Policies and procedures to be kept available
National Quality Standards
5.1.2 Dignity and rights of the child 5.2 Relationships between children 5.2.1 collaborative learning 6.1 Supportive relationships with families
Registered and Accredited Individual Non-Government Schools (NSW) Manual
3.6 Safe & Supportive Environment

LINKS TO OTHER POLICES	LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS
Anti-Bias and Inclusion, Behaviour Guidance, Code of Conduct, Interactions with Children, Family and Staff, Privacy and Confidentiality	Supervision of Children

OTHER RESOURCES
Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2014)
Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2009) Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia
Early Childhood Australia – Dealing with bullying together: prevention and resolution (2009)
NSW Department of Education Anti-bullying – Parents and carers tips – Fact Sheet (2020)
Bullying – NO WAY www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
Eyes on Bullying in Early Childhood
Kids Help line https://kidshelpline.com.au/kids
Raising Children https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/behaviour/bullying/bullying-signs
Starting Blocks *Managing children's challenging behaviour in child care – bullying*

REVIEW DATES
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Ratified: 7 July 2021, 13 February 2023, 11 March 2024
Next review no later than February 2025

POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
February 2025		February 2026
February 2024	Hyperlinks and sources checked and repaired as required Annual policy maintenance	February 2025
27 January 2023	Sources checked for currency Hyperlinks checked and repaired as required	January 2024