SOPHIA
MUNDI

Equal Opportunity

Management Procedures

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1   Policy

Sophia Mundi Steiner School aims to provide a welcoming, supportive, and emotionally and physically secure learning and working environment for every member of the school community.

Every student and staff member at Sophia Mundi Steiner School should feel welcome, supported and emotionally and physically secure at school. The wellbeing of all students and staff is a priority for Sophia Mundi Steiner School. We understand that you cannot achieve your potential if someone is treating you unfairly, discriminating against you, vilifying, harassing or victimising you.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School recognises and promotes human rights and values the diversity of culture, beliefs, practices, customs, physical and intellectual abilities and life experience of the whole school community.

2   Purpose and Background

2.1   Our Commitment

Sophia Mundi Steiner School aims to create an inclusive school culture that fosters acceptance and respect for diversity. In doing so, we seek to deepen understanding and knowledge, promote student and staff wellbeing and help everyone achieve their full potential. Sophia Mundi Steiner School is enriched by and celebrates the diversity of our whole school community.

That is why discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation will not be tolerated at Sophia Mundi Steiner School under any circumstances.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School is committed to ensuring that the working and learning environment is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School acknowledges that in society some people are treated unfairly or unfavourably because of irrelevant personal characteristics such as their sex or race.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School supports the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)*, which says that it is against the law to discriminate against anyone, including students and staff members, because of their actual or assumed:

- age
- breastfeeding
- carer status
- disability/impairment
- gender identity
- industrial activity
- lawful sexual activity
- marital status
- parental status
- physical features
- political belief or activity
- pregnancy
- race
- religious belief or activity
- sex
- sexual orientation
- personal association with someone who has, or is assumed to have, one of these personal characteristics

No member of the school community will be treated less favourably because they do not possess any of these personal characteristics nor will such characteristics affect access to benefits and services Sophia Mundi Steiner School provides.

On behalf of the whole school community, the Board of Directors and the Principal support this policy and the principles and practice of equal opportunity, inclusion and respect for diversity that it articulates.

3   Scope

This policy covers the whole school community, including staff, students, parents, school governing body, contractors and volunteers.

This policy applies to:

- education (e.g. teaching and learning, enrolment, student management, student services, curriculum development and delivery)

- the provision of goods and services (e.g. extracurricular activities, camps, parent–teacher interviews, access to facilities)

- school sport operations

- employment at the school (recruitment, allocation of duties, employment conditions, access to benefits such as training, promotion and leave).

4   Definitions

4.1   Discrimination

Discrimination is unacceptable at Sophia Mundi Steiner School. Discrimination may be direct or indirect – both are against the law.

- **Direct discrimination** means treating someone unfairly or less favourably because of one of the personal characteristics listed above or because of their association with someone identified with one of those characteristics.

    Examples: Refusing to enrol a student because he has Hepatitis C, refusing to allow a Muslim student to wear the hijab as part of her school uniform, or failing to hire a suitably qualified teacher because of his or her sexual orientation.

- **Indirect discrimination** happens when a rule, policy or requirement unnecessarily or unreasonably disadvantages a group of people because of a protected personal characteristic they share.

    Example: Imposing an unreasonable requirement that all students take notes from the whiteboard without assistance may unreasonably disadvantage a student with vision impairment.

4.2   Harassment

Harassment is unacceptable at Sophia Mundi Steiner School

- **Harassment** is behaviour (through words or actions) based on the personal characteristics listed above, that is unwanted, unasked for, unreturned and likely to make school an unfriendly or uncomfortable place by:

    o   humiliating (putting someone down)

    o   seriously embarrassing

    o   offending (hurting someone's feelings) or

    o   intimidating (threatening someone so they behave in a certain way).

    Examples: Name calling, stereotyping jokes and offensive comments.

- **Sexual harassment** is an unwelcome sexual advance, request for sex or any other sexual behaviour that a reasonable person would know or expect would offend, humiliate, seriously embarrass or humiliate another.

  Examples: Unwanted touching, unwelcome sexual innuendo or jokes, displaying sexually explicit material (posters, emails, internet sites).

4.3   Racial and Religious Vilification

Racial and religious vilification is unacceptable at Sophia Mundi Steiner School.

- **Vilification** is behaviour (through words or actions) that incites hatred, contempt or ridicule of another person because of their race or religious belief.

  Examples: Public threats of harm, insults, ridicule, encouraging others to hate someone because of their religious beliefs.

4.4   Bullying

Bullying is unacceptable at Sophia Mundi Steiner School

- **Bullying** is unreasonable behaviour that is intimidating, threatening or humiliating and repeated over time or occurring as part of a pattern of behaviour. Bullying can be physical, verbal or indirect, and creates an unfriendly, threatening or offensive environment.

  Examples: Taking or damaging other people's property, excluding or isolating someone, subjecting someone to homophobic abuse, deliberately withholding information so as to affect their work performance, threatening not to renew an employment contract.

4.5   Victimisation

- Victimising someone who makes an Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint is unacceptable at Sophia Mundi Steiner School.

- **Victimisation** means treating someone unfairly or otherwise disadvantaging them because they have made an Equal Opportunity (EO) complaint or might do so in the future.

5   Procedures and activities

5.1   Prevention of Discrimination, Harassment, Vilification, Bullying and Victimisation

Sophia Mundi Steiner School will take action to prevent discrimination, harassment, vilification, bullying and victimisation and to promote a safe and inclusive school.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School will take immediate and appropriate action to address and resolve Equal Opportunity (EO) issues and complaints.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School will take action to promote human rights both in terms of school policy and practice and within its educational activities and culture. A human rights based approach means taking steps to assess the school's decisions and actions within the framework of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and also taking proactive steps to encourage and promote wider school discussion and student learning on the key Charter themes of Freedom, Respect, Equality and Dignity.

5.2 Aims and Implementation

Sophia Mundi sees all examples of Harassment or Bullying as a breach of human rights and is committed to a whole school approach to non-violence and mutual respect.

Aims

- To value individual differences.
- To create a culture of wellbeing.
- To positively resolve conflict.
- To educate positive social behaviours.
- To provide a safe educational environment that supports student growth, self-esteem and wellbeing.

Implementation

- All incidents of Harassment /Bullying are treated seriously and dealt with immediately.
- Provide mediation to resolve conflict.
- Ongoing staff development of the Restorative Justice process (See Appendix A).
- Programs of Anger Management, Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Resolution, incorporated into Life Skills and Pastoral Care.

5.3 Complaints Procedures

Sophia Mundi Steiner School encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school. Complaints procedures are detailed in the *Complaints & Disputes Policy*.

All complaints will be treated confidentially, fairly and consistently, and resolved as speedily as possible.

Any member of the school community who raises an issue of discrimination, harassment, bullying or vilification in good faith will not be victimised or otherwise unfairly treated or disadvantaged. All complaints of victimisation will be taken seriously, investigated and acted upon as quickly as possible.

Complaints procedures exist to provide an avenue to address unacceptable behaviour. Complaints procedures are designed to explain what to do if you believe you have been discriminated against, harassed, sexually harassed, bullied, vilified or victimised as explained earlier in this policy and your complaint is about your education or employment at Sophia Mundi Steiner School, or goods, services or sport provided by Sophia Mundi Steiner School.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School will treat all reports of misconduct fairly, confidentially and quickly. Only people directly involved in the issue or complaint will be told about it. Each complaint will be investigated to work out whether it is more likely the behaviour happened than not and, if so, how serious it is. Appropriate action to resolve the problem will be taken.

The Principal or someone else they appoint, has responsibility for investigating complaints of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation.

If proven, the consequences of such behaviour may include counselling, the removal of privileges, a parental interview, suspension or expulsion. Sophia Mundi Steiner School will arrange counselling and support, where appropriate or where requested, for any student who has experienced bullying or harassment. Counselling may also be provided for a person who has bullied or harassed another. The school may also need to discuss the incident with parents.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School will monitor how the complaint was resolved and the wellbeing of those involved. Further action will be taken if the problem behaviour continues.

Sophia Mundi Steiner School encourages all members of the school community to attempt to resolve complaints and concerns through the school if possible. It is also your right to seek help from outside the school. For example, you can contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) for information or advice, or to make a complaint.

Guidelines

To contact the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) call 1800 134 142

6   Legal and regulatory basis for compliance

- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

- *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*

- *Education and Training Reform Regulations 2007*

- *Equal Opportunity Act 1995*

- *Children Legislation Amendment (Reportable Conduct) Act 2017*

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Amendment (Child Safe Standards) Bill 2015 (Vic.)*

- *Ministerial Order 870 January 2016 (Vic.)*

- *Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) Minimum Standards: Mandated Registration Requirements*

- *Information Privacy Act 2000*

7   Roles, rights and responsibilities

Under this policy, every member of the Sophia Mundi Steiner School has the right to learn and work in a safe and inclusive environment free of discrimination, harassment, bullying, vilification and victimisation. Along with this right comes the responsibility to respect the rights of others by behaving according to this policy.

The Principal of Sophia Mundi Steiner School is accountable for implementation of this policy and may appoint an Equal Opportunity (EO) and Anti-Harassment Coordinator to support implementation of this policy.

Appendix A   Restorative Justice Process

The Restorative Justice Approach

The staff at Sophia Mundi are working together to create a practical approach to conflict management using the philosophy and practices of Restorative Justice. We believe this approach fosters a safe environment for all students and staff.

Restorative Justice processes promote repairing harm done to relationships and people without the need for blaming and dispensing punishment. Aspects of the process include:

- Facilitating dialogue between all those affected by the wrongdoing or conflict
- Encouraging those responsible for the harm to become accountable for their actions and responsible for putting right the wrong
- Ensuring that all those involved or affected are given the opportunity to share their story, their feelings and their needs
- Involving everyone affected in finding mutually acceptable ways forward
- Repairing the harm caused by any behaviour that has a negative impact on others
- Repairing, or at times building, relationships between those affected

The values embedded in Restorative Justice processes create an ethos of respect, inclusion, accountability and responsibility. These values include:

- fostering impartiality
- being non –judgemental
- collaboration
- empowerment
- emotional articulacy
- valuing others
- integrity
- honesty
- openness
- trust
- tolerance

The skills involved in Restorative Justice include:

- active listening
- facilitating dialogue
- empowering others to take ownership of problems
- emotional articulacy
- empathy
- open-mindedness
- conflict management skills