

At Mirdif American School, we believe that all students have the right to a safe and positive learning environment in school or online which is free from bullying and harassment.

This policy serves the entire school from Pre-K to Grade 8, and it is an extension of the school's Anti-Bullying policy as well as the Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

### 1. What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through text, apps, or online in social media where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Cyberbullying is unlawful and considered criminal behavior in the UAE (The UAE's Child Rights Law (Federal Law No. 3 of 2016)). Cyberbullying can harm the online reputations of everyone involved, not just the person being bullied, but those doing the bullying or participating in it. Cyberbullying has unique concerns in that it can be:

- *Continuous* – Digital devices offer an ability to immediately and continuously communicate 24 hours a day, so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.
- *Permanent* – Most information communicated electronically is permanent and public, if not reported and removed. A negative online reputation, including for those who bully, can impact many areas of a student's life present or in the future.
- *Hard to Notice* – Because teachers and parents may not overhear or see cyberbullying taking place, it is harder to recognize.

### 2. Where does cyberbullying occur:

- Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter)
- Virtual Communication Apps (Zoom, Skype, etc.)
- Educational Platforms (Schoology, Class Dojo, Google Classroom, etc.)
- Text Messages
- Instant Message (via devices, email provider services, apps, and social media messaging features)
- Email

### 3. Objective

**Vision:** Mirdif American School enables all children to flourish in a holistic, positive, nurturing learning environment that prepares them to become contributing and impactful members of society .

**Mission:** Mirdif American School is committed to providing an inclusive environment that inspires and develops students who are: ethical, compassionate, forward thinking, resilient, reflective, collaborative, productive, and innovative.

- To inform students and parents of our expectations to ensure a positive and productive e-learning environment.
- To sustain an environment where everyone feels safe, appreciated, understood, accepted and valued.
- To promote a caring environment where kindness and helpfulness are expected and respected.
- To praise and reward positive behavior.
- To teach students to respect themselves and others.
- To reduce the emotional and mental distress of any form of cyberbullying by enabling all students the right to enjoy their time at school.

#### 4. **Recognizing cyberbullying methods:**

- Posting comments or rumors about someone online that are mean, hurtful, or embarrassing.
- Threatening to hurt someone or telling them to harm themselves.
- Posting a mean or hurtful picture or video.
- Pretending to be someone else online to solicit or post personal or false information about someone else.
- Posting mean or hateful names, comments, or content about any race, religion, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics online.
- Creating a mean or hurtful webpage about someone.

#### 5. **Strategies**

- To have a school wide program educating staff, students, and parents about the effects of cyberbullying and give them strategies to deal with situations they might encounter.
- To help students through support, guidance to help them make the right decisions and not surrender to peer pressure.
- To listen to all individuals involved in incidents and always take cyberbullying claims seriously.
- To continuously assure students that the school will protect and support all individuals involved while the cyberbullying issues are being resolved.
- To investigate all cyberbullying incidents fully.
- To use different strategies that will challenge and stop the cyberbullying behavior.

#### 6. **Reporting Bullying**

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As a school:

- We will encourage victims and witnesses to speak up.
- We will be alert to changes in behavior, attitude, and the overall well-being of a student and be proactive in reporting these issues immediately to the appropriate staff members or authorities.

## 7. Responding to Bullying

As a school:

- We will take all bullying situations seriously.
- We will deal with each incident individually and to access the needs of each student separately.
- We will deem all incidents as serious and thoroughly investigate them to ensure that bullies and victims are interviewed separately.
- We will acquire information from all witnesses.
- We will keep a written record of the incident, investigation, and outcomes.
- We will record all incidents and report them to the appropriate staff members to ensure that action is taken to prevent further incidents.

Such action may include, but are not limited to:

- Informing the parents of the bully and the bullied parents of bullying incidents.
- Provide guidance for the bully and victim.

*Last updated: August 2022*

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