ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Purpose

1.1 APGS is committed to providing a respectful, safe and inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued, connected and supported. APGS recognises that preventing and addressing bullying is critical to achieving this given the negative impact bullying can have on the wellbeing of students as well as the whole-school culture.

1.2 APGS expects all members of its community to contribute to a positive whole-school culture by being respectful, inclusive, empathetic and kind in their interactions to build positive relationships.

1.3 This Anti-Bullying Policy sets out the School's approach to preventing and responding to bullying in line with the NSW Anti Bullying Framework and includes information about what bullying is, what the school's approach to preventing and responding to bullying is and how concerns about bullying can be raised with or reported to the School.

1.4 This Policy is to be read together with the School's Student Anti-Bullying Procedures which explains how the School will generally respond to allegations of bullying.

2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to all members of the School community including students, staff (including employees and volunteers) and students' parents/carers and in relation to all School activities (including camps, excursions and other school-organised events).

2.2 It also applies to interactions which occur outside of school hours and/or off school premises (including online), where there is a clear and close connection to the School eg the interaction involves students of the School.

3. What is bullying?

3.1 The definition of bullying which APGS uses is:

Bullying is typically an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. It is difficult for the target to stop it from happening to them and is a violation of the right to dignity, safety and education.

The four main types of bullying behaviour are:

(a) **Physical** which involves using physical actions or presence to cause harm. Examples include hurting or intimidating others and damaging or stealing property.

(b) **Verbal** (and/or written) which involves using words to cause harm. Examples include name-calling, using offensive language and insulting, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.

(c) **Social** (sometimes called relational or emotional bullying) which involves deliberate acts of exclusion, spreading rumours or sharing information (including harmful digital content) to have a harmful effect on another person.

(d) **Cyberbullying** is any form of bullying behaviour that happens online using technology such as the internet, social medial, online games or mobile devices. It can include sharing harmful digital images, video and/or audio as well as threats of violence. Examples include sending abusive texts or emails, hurtful messages, images or videos, imitating others online, excluding others online, humiliating others online, spreading online gossip, and creating fake accounts or 'avatars' to trick or humiliate someone.

3.2 Bullying behaviour is typically:

(a) Ongoing and deliberate.

(b) A misuse of power in relationships.

(c) Repeated covert/overt verbal, physical and/or social.

(d) Online and/or offline.

(e) Individual or group-based.

(f) Intended to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm.

(g) Difficult for the target to stop it from happening to them.

(h) A violation of the right to dignity, safety, and education.

3.3 Bullying behaviour can occur:

(a) Online via information or communication technologies (refer to cyberbullying above).

(b) Directly as overt or face-to-face conduct which is visible to the target of the bullying (eg direct physical or verbal actions).

(c) Indirectly as covert, discreet or anonymous conduct which may be unseen by the target of the bullying (eg social actions of exclusion or spreading of rumours).

4. What is not bullying?

4.1 Not all aggressive or unkind behaviour amounts to bullying. There are many negative situations which, while potentially distressing for students, are not necessarily bullying. These generally include the following:

(a) **Mutual conflict situations** where there is disagreement between peers but not an imbalance of power. These situations need to be closely monitored, as they may evolve into a bullying situation.

(b) **One-off acts of aggression or meanness**, including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting, or swearing, do not normally constitute bullying.

4.2 While these matters generally fall below the bullying threshold, they are still problematic and will generally need to be dealt with by the School, as appropriate to the issue.

5. Our whole-school approach to preventing and responding to bullying

5.1 APGS recognises that a whole-school approach is the most effective way of developing a learning environment where bullying is less likely to occur or persist. the School is committed to taking a whole-school approach to address bullying and this is achieved by taking the actions set out in sections 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5. The School's approach is in line with the NSW Anti Bullying Framework.

Preventing

5.2 APGS is committed to **preventing** bullying by developing a whole-school culture which promotes positive relationships, inclusion, safety and kindness, including by taking the following actions:

(a) Actively encouraging respectful behaviour and by setting and reinforcing clear behavioural expectations, and modelling positive relationships. This is achieved by ensuring students are aware of the School's expectation that they are respectful and inclusive towards and do not harm others, in accordance with the School's values and behavioural standards as outlined in this and other policies, including the Student Code of Conduct; including a statement to this effect in the student handbook and by reminding students of this expectation in assemblies, homeroom and other communications throughout the school year, as appropriate.

(b) Ensuring students feel safe, allowing them to focus on learning and building healthy relationships rather than worrying about potential harm. This is achieved by ensuring students are aware of their right to feel safe and respected and that they can and should raise concerns if they do not feel this way through the provision of age-appropriate bullying education that encourages students to raise concerns and explains the channels available for them to do this and reinforcement of this messaging and information in assemblies, newsletters and other communications throughout the school year, as appropriate.

(c) Building a strong sense of belonging for students by helping them to be kind, inclusive and empathetic with each other, so they feel less isolated or targeted and more likely to support one another. This is achieved by emphasizing the School's ambition for all students to feel a strong sense of belonging within its community, and for all students to contribute to this by being kind, inclusive and empathetic with each other and supportive of one another. This messaging is conveyed to students in assemblies, newsletters and other communications throughout the school year, as appropriate.

(d) Fostering trust and maintain regular open communication with the whole school community, so students and families feel confident any concerns they raise will be heard and taken seriously. This is achieved by regularly communicating to students and parents/carers that the School takes all concerns raised about bullying behaviours seriously and will seek to address them in a timely, consistent and appropriate manner with care and support for the students involved. This messaging is to be conveyed to students and parents/carers in assemblies, homeroom and other communications throughout the school year, as appropriate.

(e) Ensuring that policies, teaching practices and physical environments are inclusive and signal that every student is valued and diversity is to be celebrated. This is achieved by including statements to this effect in policies, ensuring teachers are aware of the expectation they model inclusive behaviours and by displaying signage which celebrates all forms of diversity strategically within the School.

(f) Explicitly teaching and modelling appropriate social and emotional skills to all students, including developing respectful relationships, regulating emotions, treating others with kindness, recognising emotions in others, and handling interpersonal conflict. This is achieved by providing age-appropriate education to students to develop their social and emotional skills and competencies for managing and preventing bullying that covers topics such as how to manage negative emotions, support each other, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts and seek help when bullying occurs.

(g) Supporting students to manage negative emotions and resolve conflicts peacefully, reducing the likelihood of aggressive or bullying behaviour. This is achieved by providing access to wellbeing support, including teachers and the Head of School, when students require additional assistance.

(h) Supporting students to strengthen their skills in communication and seeking help, encouraging students to speak up, support others, and seek assistance when bullying occurs. This is achieved by maintaining clear and accessible reporting pathways, ensuring students feel heard, supported and confident that concerns will be addressed promptly and sensitively.

(i) Building strong, safe, and mutually respectful relationships between school staff and students to recognise early signs of student distress or conflict. A key way in which this is achieved is by ensuring all students have a consistent and reliable connection with at least one teacher who is expected to take a particular interest in their pastoral care. For a student this is the teacher responsible for their pastoral care/homeroom.

(j) Creating a connected school community that enables inclusive peer interactions and encourages students to stand up for one another. This is achieved by providing age-appropriate bullying education that highlights the importance of responsible bystander behaviours and raising concerns, and by displaying signage in support of 'speaking up' strategically within the School.

(k) Displaying anti-bullying signage and information strategically within the School.

Responding

5.3 APGS is committed to ensure **responses** to reports of bullying concerns are consistent, prompt and caring. the School does this by following the process for responding to concerns raised outlined in the Student Anti-Bullying Procedure.

Partnering

5.4 APGS is committed to **partnering** with students, families and relevant community organisations to address bullying and ensure students benefit from strong networks of support, including by taking the following actions:

(a) Strengthening students' sense of belonging and inclusion by helping them feel listened to, valued, and connected to their school community. This is achieved by encouraging feedback from students about

the School's strategies for preventing and responding to bullying and/or its handling of specific bullying matters. Section 10 of this Policy outlines how feedback can be provided.

(b) Enabling students to contribute to actions to preventing and responding to bullying. This is achieved by seeking feedback from students during bullying education sessions and through surveys and student representative committee forums. The School will also seek feedback from students involved in bullying matters about their experience of the resolution when it has concluded.

(c) Ensuring that approaches to address bullying reflect real student experiences, so that actions taken to prevent and reduce student harm from bullying are trusted, relevant, and impactful. This is achieved by providing opportunities for students to share their real experiences of bullying with the School including by seeking direct feedback from students involved in bullying incidents handled by the School, as well as more generally during bullying education sessions and through surveys conducted during the school year and by consulting with the student representative cohort.

(d) Partnering with families and local communities to strengthen trust and understand diverse perspectives and experiences, ensuring that bullying prevention and response strategies are culturally safe, responsive and inclusive. This is achieved by regular provision of information to parents/carers to raise awareness of bullying as a whole-school community issue, to help them recognise signs of bullying and to remind them of the pathways for raising concerns about bullying with the School and providing feedback about the School's strategies for preventing and responding to bullying and/or its handling of specific bullying matters. Section 10 of this Policy outlines how feedback can be provided.

(e) Extending the reach of anti-bullying efforts beyond the School, reinforcing respectful relationships, behaviours and values. This is achieved by participating in community initiatives that engage the whole-school community in bullying prevention activities.

(f) Facilitating coordinated care across community settings, ensuring students receive appropriate and holistic care, especially for students whose needs exceed what can reasonably be provided by the School. This is achieved by developing and reviewing individual learning, wellbeing and support plans to ensure reasonable adjustments and appropriate school-based support are in place.

(g) Partnering with community agencies to provide specialised community services, expertise and resources, to more comprehensively protect vulnerable students and respond to students affected by bullying. This is achieved by providing students and families with information about appropriate community services and referral pathways.

(h) Partnering with family and community agencies to strengthen early intervention and recovery in complex cases and reduce the long-term impact of bullying on students' physical, mental and social wellbeing. This is achieved by maintaining regular communication with parents and caregivers to identify concerns early and develop collaborative support strategies.

Implementing

5.5 APGS is committed to **implementing** a co-ordinated, consistent and evidence-based approach to preventing and responding to bullying across all levels of the community, including by taking the following actions:

(a) Implementing proactive, multi-tiered and evidence-informed response strategies that address the diverse needs of students through prevention, early intervention, and targeted supports. This is

achieved by monitoring student behaviour, attendance, engagement and wellbeing to identify emerging concerns and patterns of behaviour.

(b) Strengthening whole-school ownership and accountability by embedding anti bullying strategies within the School's overall culture, expectations, and support structures. This is achieved by clearly communicating the School's expectations regarding respectful behaviour, inclusion and the prevention of bullying to all students, staff and families.

(c) Ensuring consistency and coherence across all School policies, practices and procedures, reducing gaps or contradictions that can undermine efforts to prevent and respond to bullying effectively. This is achieved by ensuring all reports of bullying are addressed promptly, fairly and sensitively, with appropriate consideration given to the circumstances and needs of individual students.

(d) Encouraging early identification and intervention by integrating bullying prevention with related wellbeing and behavioural supports at the School. This is achieved by encouraging students to communicate concerns to trusted staff members and providing accessible opportunities to seek assistance.

(e) Ensuring clear communication and coordination among staff, enabling more effective case management and follow-up when bullying incidents intersect with behavioural or other concerns such as attendance. This is achieved by establishing clear internal reporting and escalation pathways for staff who identify or receive reports of bullying or concerning student behaviour.

(f) Offering professional learning that empowers staff to proactively create safe, inclusive classroom environments, including the teaching of social and emotional skills and other preventative strategies. This training includes professional learning on recognising, preventing and responding to bullying, including different forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination and inappropriate peer behaviour.

(g) Providing all school staff with professional learning to build confidence and capability to effectively recognise, respond to and manage often subtle and evolving bullying behaviour, including covert and online bullying.

(h) Strengthening collaboration and shared staff responsibility for preventing, identifying, reporting, and managing bullying incidents, by building a common language and understanding across the school community. This is achieved by ensuring all staff understand their shared responsibility to recognise, report, document and respond to bullying concerns, regardless of their role within the School.

(i) Providing professional learning to ensure staff engagement with families and students is trauma-informed, culturally aware and empathetic. This learning includes providing guidance on appropriate referral pathways and working collaboratively with families and external professionals when additional support is required.

(j) Identifying bullying patterns and trends through regular review of anti-bullying approaches and bullying and other relevant data, helping staff to proactively address emerging issues and target interventions where they are most needed. This is achieved by regularly reviewing incident reports, student behaviour records, attendance data and wellbeing concerns to identify recurring patterns or emerging issues.

(k) Evaluating the effectiveness of strategies, ensuring that responses to bullying are being implemented as intended and making a meaningful difference for students. This is achieved by reviewing the School's strategies for addressing bullying and the Student Anti-Bullying Policy and Student Anti-Bullying Procedure after the resolution of any significant bullying incident or change to the NSW Anti-Bullying Framework, to ensure it continues to reflect best practice.

6. Identifying bullying concerns

6.1 Bullying can be recognised and identified by staff, students and parents/carers in a number of ways including by, for example, observing conduct directly, being informed of concerns by students as well as by identifying signs of major behavioural changes in students which may suggest they are being bullied.

6.2 The signs of major behavioural changes in a student which may indicate that they are being bullied can include:

(a) Crying at night or having nightmares.

(b) Refusing to talk when asked 'What's wrong?'.

(c) Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches.

(d) An unwillingness or refusal to go to school, a school-organised activity, or reluctance to attend other social events.

(e) Feeling ill in the mornings.

(f) A decline in quality of schoolwork.

(g) Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence.

(h) Appearing lonely or distressed.

(i) Beginning to display bullying behaviour towards siblings.

(j) Unexpected changes in friendship groups.

(k) Acting unreasonably.

6.3 Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and report any concerns to the School if they suspect their child is being bullied.

7. How to report concerns about bullying to the School

Expectations for reporting

7.1 APGS encourages all students, parents/carers and staff to report any concerns they have about bullying to the School. This includes:

(a) Students who experience bullying should report all incidents to the School

(b) Students who witness bullying should report all incidents to the School

(c) Parents/carers who suspect that their child is a target of bullying should report their concerns to the School.

Reporting channels

7.2 Students and parents/carers can raise or report concerns about bullying to the School verbally or in writing through any of the following avenues:

(a) Directly with any trusted staff member including a class teacher, homeroom teacher, or Head of School. This can be done by speaking to the staff member in person or on the phone or by emailing them.

(b) For more serious incidents, reports can be made directly to the Head of School. This can be done by contacting Administration to arrange a meeting or phone conversation with the relevant staff member or by emailing them directly.

(c) Reports can also be made by emailing the School's dedicated email address for raising bullying concerns which is admin@apgs.nsw.edu.au. This email address is monitored by the school administration staff.

7.3 Staff can raise concerns about students who they believe are the targets of bullying or engaging in bullying with the School by speaking to or emailing the Head of School.

7.4 Where cyberbullying material is targeted at a child under 18, a complaint may also be made to the relevant service provider and, if unresolved after 48 hours, to the eSafety Commissioner under section 30 of the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth).

8. How to respond to bullying as a bystander

8.1 No one in our School community should be neutral about bullying. Supporting those affected by bullying and reporting what they see are among the most powerful ways that students, staff and parents/carers can help to keep students safe.

8.2 If a student, parent/carer or staff member sees someone being bullied, they should support them and, where safe to do so, tell the person engaging in the bullying to stop. This shows that they care about the person affected and that they do not accept the behaviour.

8.3 Where possible, they should remove the person affected from the situation and let them know that they support them.

8.4 Students and parents/carers who see bullying occur should tell a trusted staff member. The person affected may not want to speak with staff themselves, but it is vital that the School is made aware of the incident. They should offer to go with them to report it, and if they will not, they should report it themselves.

8.5 Students should not join in on bullying behaviours (eg by repeating rumours or gossip about someone or excluding someone from a group because others say you should), even where this is difficult among friends. Everyone should be treated with respect and courtesy.

9. What happens if you report bullying concerns

9.1 APGS is committed to responding to concerns raised about bullying in accordance with the following general principles:

(a) Every concern is taken seriously.

(b) Every concern is responded to in a consistent, considered and prompt manner.

(c) The confidentiality of affected students will be protected to the extent possible.

(d) The wellbeing of students is paramount and students who are target of or engage in bullying must be provided with appropriate support and care.

(e) Communications and interactions with students and their parents/carers should be compassionate, trauma-informed and non-stigmatising.

(f) Appropriate processes will be implemented to review concerns raised about bullying and determine appropriate responses.

(g) Responses and consequences will be determined on a case-by-case and proportionate basis taking into account all relevant circumstances.

(h) the School will keep affected students and their parents/carers appropriately informed about who is handling the matter and [the School's progress in responding to the concerns raised.

(i) Records of bullying concerns will be kept and maintained.

9.2 On becoming aware of reports of bullying concerns, the School will generally respond by following the steps in the Student Anti-Bullying Procedure which is available on the School website.

9.3 the School as processes in place to collect and analyse data about bullying incidents to inform continuous improvement of the prevention and response strategies which form the School's whole-school approach to addressing bullying.

10. How to provide feedback to the School

10.1 All members of our School community are responsible for helping us to build a positive whole-school culture in which bullying is unlikely to occur and/or recur. To this end, the School welcomes and encourages all feedback from students and parents/carers about our strategies for preventing and responding to bullying and/or our handling of a specific bullying matter.

10.2 General feedback can be provided to any trusted member of staff. If you have feedback about the handling of a specific bullying matter then please direct this to Head of School.