



## **BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY**

### **Rationale:**

Our school is committed to providing a safe and caring environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

### **Aims:**

- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- Everyone within the school community is alerted to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

### **What are bullying, cyber bullying and harassment?**

- **Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.
- **Cyber-bullying** consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through social media. It is verbal or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various technological mediums available.
- **Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

## **GUIDELINES**

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

All new students and staff will be informed of our policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

All complaints of bullying and harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

The school prioritises and promotes learning positive behaviours for all. The School Wide Positive Behaviour Program and associated curriculum programs promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- DEECD's [Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#)
- DEECD's [Safe Schools are Effective School's](#)
- DEECD's [Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#)
- The school's Internet Use Policy (re cyber-bullying)
- DEECD's [Respectful Schools](#)

#### **EVALUATION**

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

Ratified by School Council June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures

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### What are Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment?

#### Bullying

##### *Definition of Bullying*

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

##### *Types of Bullying*

There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying** – e.g. hitting, tripping, and pushing or damaging property.
2. **Direct verbal bullying** – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. **Indirect bullying** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - mimicking
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance
  - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress

##### *What Bullying is Not*

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

1. *Mutual Conflict*  
In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.
2. *Social Rejection or Dislike*  
Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
3. *Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation*  
Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

#### Cyber-bullying

Consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cell-phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some

adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment).

## **Harassment**

Is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

### **Why do we have a Policy on these?**

To provide a safe and friendly environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

### **What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?**

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospects

### **Am I bullying or harassing someone?**

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

### **What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?**

- *"I will ignore it and it will go away."*  
If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.
- *"I don't want to cause trouble."*  
Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.
- *"Am I to blame?"*  
Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.
- *"Am I imagining things?"*  
Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

**Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:**

**Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:**

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

**What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?**

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

**Bullying can involve**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving
- publicly excluding a person from your group
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk
- teasing a person because of their looks

**Cyber-bullying can involve**

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- *Cyber-stalking* – repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear

**Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities – it can be subtle or explicit**

*Subtle (the most common)* includes:

- offensive staring and leering
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference
- racist or smutty comments or jokes
- questions about another's sexual activity
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body
- offensive name calling

*Explicit (obvious)* they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing

- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
- requests for sexual favours
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

### **What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?**

- tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
- discuss the matter with a teacher, Student Wellbeing Coordinator or the principal
- the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

### **How will your complaint be dealt with?**

Your concerns will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially. School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below but circumstances for each case need to be considered, so progression through level 1 to 4 may not necessarily occur.

#### ***Level 1***

If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

- stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
- restorative questioning
- think time detention
- private conference

#### ***Level 2***

If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral will be made to the Student Wellbeing Coordinator.

Here, the Student Wellbeing Coordinator may:

- meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
- provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
- conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and "target"
- contact parents to make them aware of the situation and ask for their support.

#### ***Level 3***

For 'at risk' students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual plan will be developed by the student wellbeing coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. This may include separation from other students for a period of time.

#### ***Level 4***

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing will be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. Student Wellbeing Coordinator will be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family.

**Note:** The school may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with '***Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines***' (DEECD) at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including-cyber bullying) and harassment.