



POLICY 8

Bullying & Harassment

- Includes
- Cyber-bullying
 - Harassment Procedure

PURPOSE

- Our school is committed to providing a safe, respectful 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 informs the community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.
- The purpose of this policy is to:
 - reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
 - ensure 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.
 - ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and alleged bully.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

DEFINITIONS

- **Bullying** is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.
- **Cyber-bullying** is any direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviour using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.
- **Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- 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.
- 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 this policy and related and procedures at the commencement of their time at the school.
- All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.
- Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that 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.
- There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of this Bullying (including cyber bullying) and Harassment Policy, guidelines and procedures (see Appendix A).

Program:

- Constructive strategies to deal with harassment will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills; counselling and behaviour modification. These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.
- This policy will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the school community.
- A summary of the policy will be included in the student enrolment package while new staff will receive documentation as part of the school's induction process.
- The school leadership and teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, by thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.
- If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to an appropriate person in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.
- Student programs will be organized to raise student awareness about bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in peer support programs, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by outside experts and workers. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current department guidelines.
- Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff.
- The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues.
- Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will be in accordance with the school's Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy.

REFERENCE/RELATED POLICY:

- Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy
- School Policy Advisory Guide, Victorian Department of Education and Training
- National Safe Schools Framework (www.education.gov.au)
- Bullying, No Way (www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed;

- as soon as possible after a serious incident occurs
- or as part of the school's three year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council on 15/06/2017

APPENDIX:

- Appendix A: Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Harassment Procedures

Appendix A

Bullying & Harassment Procedure

What are Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment?

Bullying

- Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.
- There are broad categories of bullying:
 - Direct physical bullying – e.g. hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.
 - Direct verbal bullying – e.g. name calling, insults, teasing, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
 - 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 may include:
 - 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
 - Cyber bullying - direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

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:
 - 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.
 - Unless the social rejection or dislike is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
 - Single episodes of nastiness or random acts of physical aggression or intimidation are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.
 - Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

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 school 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:

- 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) they include:

- 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
- harassment may 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 the Principal or a teacher that you feel comfortable with

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.

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
 - shared control discussion
- If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, an Incident Report Form should be completed and submitted to the Principal.

Level 2

- If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Principal.
- Here, the Principal 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"

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 'strength building' plan should be developed by the student welfare coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

Level 4

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

Note: 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 Student Engagement and Wellbeing Policy at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including-cyber bullying) and harassment.

Communication of Policies

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following way:

- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Available publicly on our school's website
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Reminders in our school newsletter
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

EVALUATION:

This policy will be reviewed;

- as part of the school's three year review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council on 11.8.21