



BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

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| Date Approved: | 20 June 2023 |
| Approved by: | SCC Board |

RATIONALE

Shepparton Christian College is committed to providing a safe, friendly, respectful and supportive environment where bullying or harassment in any form is not accepted. As a Christian school we aim to create a positive culture that is built on the biblical foundations of loving one another, respecting others, building each other up and encouraging one another. Scripture teaches us these principals, for example in Luke 6:31 "Do to others as you would have them do to you". It is the College's expectation that all staff, students, volunteers and the wider school community will act in accordance with these principals.

AIMS

The College seeks to provide a safe and supportive environment; therefore the aims of this policy are:

- To educate the school community about bullying and harassment and the fact that they are unacceptable
- To alert everyone within the school community to the signs and evidence of bullying, and to responsibly report it to staff, whether as observer or victim
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately, and that support is given to both victims and perpetrators
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation
- To promote a culture within the College, which actively discourages bullying and harassment in any form
- To provide an environment free from all forms of abuse

DEFINITIONS

Bullying

The National Centre Against Bullying defines bullying as 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. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

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:

Mutual Conflict - involves an argument or disagreement between people, but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly for retaliation or spite.

Social Rejection or Dislike – some personalities clash and there are always people with whom we don't wish to share a close relationship. Whilst this may cause disappointment or other emotional reactions, it is not classed as bullying or harassment, as long as it isn't expressed as a personal attack, doesn't seek to cause others to dislike the person, and doesn't use exclusion as a form of social control or punishment of a single person by a group.

Single-episode acts - single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion, they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.

While some negative behaviours may not be classified as bullying, they are still seen as inappropriate and against school rules. These behaviours will be dealt with according to the Discipline Policy.

CATEGORIES OF BULLYING

Direct Physical Bullying - includes, but is not limited to hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.

Direct Verbal Bullying - includes, but is not limited to, name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, discriminatory remarks, or verbal abuse.

Indirect Bullying - action designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Includes, but is not limited to lying and spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.

Cyber Bullying - is the ongoing abuse of power to harass, threaten, embarrass, target or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones and includes actions such as:



- **Pranking** – repeated hang ups, anonymous mocking or threatening phone calls.
- **Image sharing** – forwarded or sharing unflattering or private images without permission.
- **Sexually explicit images** – people of any age, who forward or share images of a sexual nature of a person under 18 need to be aware that this is a criminal offence (child pornography) that may result in prosecution.
- **Text and email** – sending insulting or threatening text messages or emails.
- **Personal online information** – publishing online someone’s private, personal or embarrassing information without permission, or spreading rumours online.
- **Identity theft** – assuming someone’s identity online and negatively representing them in a way that damages their reputation or relationships.
- **Hate sites** – creating hate sites or implementing social exclusion campaigns on social networks.

Harassment

Harassment is demeaning, offensive, humiliating, derogatory or intimidating behaviour directed at someone, often on the basis of their identity, culture or ethnic origin, religion, physical characteristics, age, ability or disability. Harassment can appear in many forms including non-verbal, verbal, physical, digital-technology based, visual-image based, etc. A noteworthy difference between harassment and bullying is that whereas bullying is defined as an ongoing or repeated pattern, harassment can be a single act, intentional or unintentional, as well as an ongoing pattern of behaviour.

- **Sexual Harassment** - includes, but is not limited to, touching or brushing against another in a sexual manner, sexually orientated jokes, drawings of, or writing about, someone’s body, using rude names or commenting about someone’s morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, offensive questions about someone’s body and/or someone’s private life, or encouraging or making others do so.

(Depending on the age of students and/or the involvement of adults, bullying or harassment of a sexual nature may be a reportable incident or seriously impact child safety. Please refer to our Mandatory Reporting and Child Safe Policies for further information).

Future reference in this document to the term bullying should be taken to include incidents of bullying and harassment, depending on the context.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Students’ Role

- If bullying and harassment are witnessed, it is to be reported to a teacher.
- If it is safe to do so, students are encouraged to act assertively and influence others to stop bullying and harassment when they see it occurring.
- If students need support, they can contact the Student Wellbeing Team. Additional support can be found at Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or via the website www.kidshelpline.com.au.



Parents' Role

- Parents should report bullying or harassment to the College. Dealing effectively with bullying and harassment is very difficult if events go unreported and staff may not always be aware of incidents.
- The following signs may be indicative of a child being bullied. These include:
 - Crying and having nightmares
 - Refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?"
 - Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
 - An unwillingness or refusal to go to school
 - Feeling ill in the mornings
 - A decline in quality of schoolwork
 - Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence
 - Lack of sleep and a loss of appetite
 - Beginning to bully siblings
 - Acting unreasonably
- Parents are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and harassment and notify the College. People to contact to discuss your concerns include the Principal, Assistant Principal, Primary and Secondary Coordinators, classroom or homeroom teachers or the Student Wellbeing team.

Staff Role

- Model appropriate behaviour at all times
- Be alert and respond to suspected bullying incidents, whether inside or outside of the classroom. No reported or observed case of bullying should be ignored
- Ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or that is reported to them is recorded appropriately
- Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims.

IMPLEMENTATION

Shepparton Christian College recognises that the implementation of a whole-school approach to bullying and harassment is the most effective way of minimising incidents within our school community. Parents, teachers, students and the community will be made aware of the school's position on bullying through the College website, student and parent handbook, parent information sessions and staff handbook. Additionally, the College will adopt a four-phase approach to bullying.

Phase 1 - Primary Prevention

- Professional development for staff relating to bullying and harassment.



- Each classroom teacher to clarify to students at the start of each year the College's bullying and harassment policy.
- Community awareness relating to bullying and harassment, its characteristics and the school's programs and response.
- The College will work towards providing programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.
- The College will promote supportive and respectful behaviours and attitudes in line with the College's values of compassion, humility, respect, integrity, service and truth.
- The promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students as a way of empowering students to positively and safely take appropriate action when they see or hear of a peer being bullied.
- Surveying students annually to identify bullying issues that may go unnoticed by staff.
- Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate.
- Monitoring the school environment through staff supervision and knowing recognised trouble spots to ensure student behaviour can be observed.
- The College offers support to all students through our Student Wellbeing Team and the pastoral care role of all teachers.
- The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies.
- Structured activities will be available to students at selected recess and lunch breaks.

Phase 2 - Early Intervention

- Encourage students to report bullying incidents that involve themselves or others. This can be done verbally to a member of staff, or in writing using the Student Complaint Form (see Appendix A).
- On a regular basis, classroom teachers will remind students to report incidents of bullying. The principal will do likewise with staff during regular staff meetings.
- Parents are advised to contact the College if they become aware of a problem.
- Public recognition for positive behaviour through the College's commendation program.

Phase 3 - Intervention

- Once identified, the bully, victim and any witnesses will be spoken with, and all incidents or allegations of bullying will be fully investigated and documented. Impartiality, confidentiality, lack of victimisation, timeliness and support are regarded as paramount to any bullying investigation.
- Students identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations and findings. The inappropriateness of the bullying behaviour will be fully explained to the bully. Responses such



as “I was only joking” and the like will be explained as unacceptable. Consequences consistent with the College’s *Discipline Policy* will be discussed and implemented. The expected guidelines for future behaviour will be clearly explained.

- Resolution with both parties will be encouraged, with an understanding of how they must interact appropriately in the future.
- The victim of the bullying will be seen regularly over the next few weeks if appropriate, to establish whether the bully has modified his or her behaviour.
- If the bullying behaviour does not recur, the matter will end.
- If the bully’s negative behaviour persists, parents will be contacted and consequences consistent with the College’s *Discipline Policy* will again be discussed and implemented.
- Complaints found to be wholly or substantially vexatious (i.e. factually untrue), or maliciously made, will be seriously dealt with.

Phase 4 - Post Violation

Steps in the Discipline Policy will be implemented and consequences for students who bully will be individually based, and may involve:

- Withdrawal of privileges
- Exclusion from class
- Exclusion from yard
- Detention/s
- School suspension
- Behaviour Management Plan
- Ongoing counselling for both victim and bully
- Ongoing monitoring of identified bullies, which may include daily reporting to a designated teacher.
- In cases where bullying behaviours are unable to be resolved, those responsible may have their enrolment cancelled.

Privacy considerations

The College is not required to share information with a victim or his/her family about consequences given to the student who bullied. The College understands that aggrieved people desire that fair discipline is given, and leadership will always seek for the best interests of all involved. It is expected that all parties respect and trust the decisions of the College leadership.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

This policy applies to all school activities, including camp and excursions. If bullying behaviour is occurring outside of the College and is reported, the following considerations will be taken into account:

- Parents of all parties will be notified.



- Counselling (by either the College counsellor or chaplain) will be recommended and made available.
- If incidents occurring outside of school relate to digital resources provided by the College, then it will be taken as though the incident occurred within the College.
- If incidents occurring outside of school are impacting on a student such that their safety or ability to feel safe at school or home is affected, then as far as practical, such incidents will come under this policy.

RESOURCES

The following websites and resources provide useful information on prevention and responding to bullying, as well as supporting students who have been the target of bullying behaviours:

- [Bully Stoppers](#)
- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [ReachOut Australia](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Bullying. No way!](#)
- [Student Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [eSafety Commissioner](#)
- [Australian Student Wellbeing Framework](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The College acknowledges the following schools in the development of this policy:

- Victory Christian College
- Waverley Christian College
- Northside Christian College
- Melton Christian College
- St Andrews Christian College

Appendix A: Student Complaint Form

Student Complaint Form

This form should be completed and handed in to the front office, if:

- The student believes they have been bullied or harassed.
- The student witnessed someone else being bullied or harassed.
- A member of staff completes it as a result of a verbal report made by a student.



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|--|------------------------|
| Date | |
| Name of student making the report | |
| Year level | |
| Name of person who displayed bullying or harassing behaviour? | |
| | |
| Date/s and location of incidents | |
| | |
| Witnesses to incident | |
| | |
| Description of acts of bullying or harassment | |
| | |
| Described the impact of the bullying or harassment | |
| | |
| What actions have been taken about this matter so far? | |
| | |
| Any other relevant details? | |
| | |
| | |
| Student's Signature | Staff Signature |

When the office receives this form, they will forward it to the appropriate member of staff to investigate the matter in accordance with the Bullying and Harassment Policy.