

BULLYING and HARASSMENT POLICY – STUDENTS

(see also Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy)

Rationale

Because Melton Christian College seeks to follow the teachings of Christ, protection of students from bullying and harassment is fundamental to College practices. All students are created in the image of God, and have equal right to uninhibited learning and other opportunities at the College.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is 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.

Other Aspects of Bullying

1. Bullying can happen at school, at home or online. It is never okay and it is not a normal part of growing up.
2. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious or hidden.
3. Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time or in the future, for example, through gaining and retaining, sharing or threatening to share digital images.
4. 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 peers, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.
5. Bullying can be easy to see and detect (overt) or hidden, subtle and hard to detect (covert). It can involve physical actions such as punching or kicking or other observable verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting. Or it can be very difficult for someone outside of the interaction to identify. Covert bullying can include hand gestures and threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with, spreading rumours, and manipulation of relationships.

Some Behaviours are not Bullying

There are also some behaviours, which are unacceptable and which our school will not approve of or tolerate that are not bullying. These behaviours are not bullying:

1. **Peer-to-peer conflict** can involve a disagreement without there being an imbalance of power. In other words, conflict itself is not bullying, it is conflict. Unresolved conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
2. Single episode acts of unkindness, lack of consideration, nastiness or physical aggression are not bullying. Aggression directed towards many different people is not tolerated, but it is not bullying.
3. Social rejection or dislike in itself is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and ongoing attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.

People Involved in Bullying

1. When there is bullying, there are people who are complicit in bullying:
 - (1) a person who bullies others
 - (2) a person who assists the bullying and actively joins in

- (3) a bystander who encourages and gives approval to the bullying; they reinforce it through verbal and non-verbal cues such as smiling, laughing or making comments and signal it is acceptable. These people must stop bullying and stop approving of bullying and approach a staff member for help.
- 2. When there is bullying, there are people who do nothing about bullying for various reasons. This is a bystander who sees or knows about someone being bullied but for a range of reasons is passive and does not participate in the bullying or support the target. This person should notify a staff member so that the bullying can be stopped.
- 3. When there is bullying, there are people who are the one or ones being bullied. Usually, they are unable to make the bullying stop. This person/people should notify a staff member and/or their parents so that a staff member is informed so that the bullying can be stopped.
- 4. When there is bullying, there may be upstanders. An upstander supports the student who is being bullied by getting help from a teacher, distracting the students engaged in bullying behaviour, supporting the student who is being bullied or directly intervening. These students play an important protective role for peers who are experiencing bullying, they have greater empathetic skills and are often perceived by peers to be positive role models.
- 5. When there is bullying, it can happen that a person is both being bullied and bullying others. This person must stop bullying others, and they must notify a staff member so that they can be helped and all bullying can be stopped.

Examples of Bullying

- Cyber-bullying – using technology of any kind to bully by any means, including ‘sexting’: sending sexually explicit messages or images by any communication device
- Discrimination – bullying on the basis of race or religion
- Exclusion – excluding others from activities, isolation, discrimination
- Extortion - standover tactics, victimising, extortion
- Non-verbal - Offensive gestures or body language, throwing objects near a person, intimidating staring or glaring, leering
- Physical - unwelcome physical contact, hitting, punching, fighting, kicking, slapping, throwing objects at a person, invading personal space, abuse of another’s property is another form of physical bullying
- Sexual bullying – brushing up against someone, inappropriate touch, crude words or names, commenting on another’s sexuality
- Verbal – swearing, spreading rumours, personally offensive or suggestive comments, demeaning jokes, derogatory comments, teasing, lying about a person, commenting on private, academic, personal life, appearance, abilities, etc.

Maintaining a Culturally Safe Environment

The Creator’s goodness can be seen in glimpses throughout all of life, and all human activities can be done with a sense of obedience to God. All societies and their cultures have elements that reflect God. Here at Melton Christian College, we are committed to establishing an environment of respect for the strengths of Aboriginal culture. It is enormously important to us that every enrolled student has positive learning experiences in a safe environment. For Aboriginal students, we recognise that Aboriginal culture and identity are linked to their sense of safety. So, we actively support inclusion, agency and cultural safety for Aboriginal students.

Definition of Harassment (including sexual harassment)

Harassment is demeaning, offensive, humiliating, derogatory or intimidating behaviour directed at someone. 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 ongoing or repeated pattern, harassment can be a single instance.

Examples of Harassment

Like bullying, harassment can appear in a variety of ways, and may often relate to a person's race, religion, physical appearance, dress, disability, or private life. Some examples include: offensive comments or jokes, invasive questioning, digital technology being used to demean another person.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment can include a wide range of behaviours, but will be defined as sexual behaviours that a reasonable person would find offensive. Some examples include:

- Displays of, or exposure to sexually graphic visual images or material
- Innuendo, sexually provocative remarks, suggestive comments about a person's physical appearance, inference of sexual morality or rumours of sexual history, crude humour such as smutty or sexist jokes or comments
- Physical contact such as fondling, pinching, grabbing or kissing
- Sexual demands such as repeated requests for dates, requests for sexual favours
- Straightforward propositioning or indirect pressure for sexual contact, including leering and over-familiarity
- Unwanted or uninvited sexual advances, sexual behaviours, or sexual gestures

Responsibilities:

- 1 The responsibility of Staff, Parents, Volunteers**
- 2 The responsibility of Students**
- 3 What to do if you become aware of Bullying or Harassment**
- 4 What the College will do**

1 – The responsibility of Staff, Parents, Volunteers

Melton Christian College community acknowledges that Bullying and Harassment are always unacceptable and staff, parents and volunteers are expected to take preventative and responsive action so as to provide a safe environment for the students of the College.

Part of caring for students is to ensure that the school environment is one in which everyone feels safe. All staff, parents and volunteers are responsible for immediately reporting incidents of bullying or harassment to senior staff.

2 – The responsibility of Students

Students are expected to confront bullying when they see it by:

- directly speaking up and confronting the situation if it is safe to do so
- immediately reporting incidents of bullying to staff whether they or others are the target of bullying
- acting protectively towards those who are being bullied

3– What to do if you become aware of Bullying or Harassment

Whether you are the person who is bullied/harassed, or whether you are a bystander who becomes aware of bullying/harassment, you are responsible to respond to the situation. It is important to know that bullying and harassment are unacceptable at the College and will not be tolerated.

- 1 If a person who feels bullied or harassed is confident to speak up, they should let the offending person know that the behaviour (or speech) is offensive.
- 2 If the behaviour continues nonetheless, or if the person who feels bullied/harassed does not want to speak up at the time of an incident, then they should inform any College staff-member of the situation.
- 3 Any College staff-member who is informed of bullying/harassment is to report the situation by email to the relevant Year-Level Coordinator, and the relevant Head of School, and Principal.
- 4 Students should be aware that if they are not confident reporting the situation to a staff-member, parent or volunteer, then they should contact Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or through the website www.kidshelp.com.au

4- What the College will do

1 Procedure in relation to Lower Primary students (Prep-2)

- a. When bullying is reported to or observed by a staff member that staff member will respond immediately by alerting, and emailing the relevant Year-Level Coordinator, and the Head of Primary. The situation is to be investigated immediately by the Class-teacher.
- b. When a report or staff-observation of bullying is investigated and sustained, the following steps will be followed by staff...
 - i. The perpetrator will be told by their Class-teacher to stop the particular behaviours that have been observed or reported. Class-teacher is to mediate towards forgiveness, repentance and restored relationship between the children.
 - ii. If the bullying stops, there need be no further action besides ensuring that there is a record in the children's files of the action and outcome.
 - iii. If the bullying does not stop, the parents of both parties will be informed, separately, and preferably face to face with the Class-teacher in the first instance.
 - iv. The Class-teacher, Coordinator and if necessary, the Head of Primary will consult together and use discretion for the appropriate consequences. The objective is the cessation of bullying.
 - v. The Class-teacher and Coordinator are to closely monitor the behaviour.
 - vi. If the perpetrator's bullying behaviour recurs, his/her parents will again be notified, and further plans formed in a consultative way. This may include a request that the parents seek expert counselling.
 - vii. It is expected that bullying can be prevented in Lower Primary.
 - viii. Emailed and written records of meetings shall be kept and filed in student files.

2 Procedure in relation to Middle/Upper Primary students (Gr3-6)

- a. When bullying is reported to or observed by a staff member that staff member will respond immediately by alerting, and emailing the relevant Year-Level Coordinator, the Head of Primary, and the Principal. The situation is to be investigated immediately by the Year-Level Coordinator.
- b. When a report or staff-observation of bullying is investigated and sustained, the following steps will be followed by staff.
 - i. The perpetrator will be told by their Class-teacher and Coordinator to stop the particular behaviours that have been observed or reported. Class-teacher is to mediate towards forgiveness, repentance and restored relationship between the children as peers.
 - ii. If the bullying stops, there need be no further action besides ensuring that there is a record in the children's files of the outcome.
 - iii. If the bullying does not stop, the parents of both parties will be informed, separately, and preferably face to face with the Class-teacher in the first instance.
 - iv. The Class-teacher, Coordinator and if necessary, the Head of Primary will consult together and use discretionary penalties and consequences. The objective is the cessation of bullying.
 - v. After this, the Class-teacher and Coordinator are to closely monitor the behaviour.
 - vi. If the perpetrator's bullying behaviour recurs, his/her parents will again be notified, and the Head of Primary will use discretionary penalties and consequences, this may also include a request that the parents seek expert counselling.
 - vii. If there is not a complete cessation of bullying then the Head of Primary may implement internal or external suspension at their discretion.
 - viii. If bullying continues even after several exhaustive attempts to guide the perpetrator and prevent the bullying, it is possible that the Principal will have no alternative but to end the student's enrolment.
 - ix. Emailed and written records of meetings shall be kept and filed in student files.

- c. Assuming a student is still enrolled, any recurrence of bullying after a twelve month period without bullying-offences will be treated as a new instance without recall to the previous penalties.

3 Procedure in relation to Secondary students

- a. When bullying is reported to a staff member that staff member will respond immediately by alerting, and emailing the relevant Year-Level Coordinator, and the relevant Head of School, and Principal. The report is to be investigated immediately.
- b. When a report of bullying is investigated and sustained, the following steps will be explained to the victim, and their permission will be sought to proceed with these steps.
 - i. The perpetrator will be informed that the College leadership are aware of the situation, they will be informed of these steps, and they will be informed of College leadership's intention to proceed with these steps
 - ii. The parents of both parties will be informed, separately, and preferably face to face with the Year Level Coordinator, and/or the Head of School and/or Principal
 - iii. The perpetrator will be advised that if the bullying behaviours are not stopped immediately and with no residual repercussions, then there will be, on the first instance of a repeat offence, an immediate two-day suspension.
 - iv. On returning to school after the two-day suspension, the perpetrator's behaviour will be monitored by the Year Level Coordinator
 - v. If the perpetrator's bullying behaviour recurs after the two-day suspension, his/her parents will again be notified, and there will be an immediate two-week suspension from school. At this point that student's parents may be requested to seek for their child, expert counselling outside school, and the continued enrolment of the student may be dependent on proof of such assistance being acquired by the parents. Parents will also be advised that the two-week suspension may be an appropriate time to seek alternative school enrolment.
 - vi. On returning to school after the two-week suspension, the perpetrator's behaviour will be monitored by the Year Level Coordinator and Head of School.
 - vii. If the perpetrator's bullying behaviour recurs after the two-week suspension, the parents will be notified that the enrolment of the student is to be ended as a result of the ongoing bullying.
 - viii. Emailed and written records of meetings shall be kept and filed in student files
- c. Assuming a student is still enrolled, any recurrence of bullying after a twelve month period without bullying-offences will be treated as a new instance without recall to the previous penalties.

Child Safe Culture

All staff have delegated responsibility from the Principal to:

- Work towards embedding an organisational culture of child safety
- Be familiar with and promote familiarity with the College child safe policy
- Be familiar with and promote familiarity with the VIT Code of Conduct, and the additional points that establish the College's expectations for appropriate behaviour with children
- Take part in screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel
- Be familiar with and promote familiarity with processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse
- Always work to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse
- Always work towards appropriate participation and empowerment of children.