

Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

Policy Statement

DECV 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 positive self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. The purpose of a clear policy on preventing bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment is to inform the whole community that **bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.**

Aims

- To reinforce within the whole school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- To ensure that everyone within the school community is aware of their responsibility to report signs and evidence of bullying.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.

What are bullying, harassment and cyber bullying?

Bullying is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group.

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

Cyber-bullying is the use of Information Technology to harm or harass other people in a deliberate and hostile manner. It can be conveyed through electronic mediums such as emails, SMS and photo messaging, social media platforms, online lessons and chat rooms, discussion forums, blogs, video conferencing, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters such as Skoolaborate) and other websites.

Guidelines

The DECV adopts a school wide approach in order to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way. Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. 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.

All DECV students accessing the online environment are required to agree with the terms and conditions of the DECV Online Terms of Use and the DECV Online Acceptable Use Policy.

All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously. Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current strategies for dealing with these issues.

For those in breach of the Bullying (including cyber bullying) and Harassment Prevention Policy guidelines and procedures, there will be disciplinary consequences covering a range of strategies. (See Appendix A – DECV Student Engagement Policy)

Program

The DECV Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy will be made available to students, staff and the wider school community.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package and new staff will receive this documentation as part of the school's induction process.

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.

The DECV school leadership team 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. For students this will include notifying parents/carers as required and planning interventions.

If a teacher feels a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment it is their professional duty to forward the information to the appropriate person in order to ensure support for the student. It is important that teachers fully document their interaction with the student in order to verify the actions taken.

Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will comply with the DECV Student Engagement Policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines.

Implementation

- The Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy and processes will be made available to the entire DECV school community.
- The Student Wellbeing Leading Teacher will be available for staff, students and other members of the school community regarding bullying and harassment information and concerns.
- Any bullying and harassment related complaint can be lodged with a Subject Teacher, Student Support Teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Leading Teacher, Harassment Officer, Assistant Principals or Principal. All complaints will be investigated promptly, confidentially and with impartiality.
- Students reported for bullying and harassment issues will be interviewed (in person or by phone) by the relevant Leading Teacher/s and a record kept on file. Carers will be advised and consulted regarding the process and requested to discuss the issue with their child. Strategies for dealing with the issue will be in line with recommendations made in the Student Engagement Policy.

- The DECV recognises that large cohorts of students (Medical – Social/Emotional) are enrolled as a result of bullying and harassment incidents at their previous schools. These students will be provided with access to support and counselling.
- Professional development will be provided for individual staff and across the school community, particularly in areas related to bullying and harassment.

Evaluation

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

Links

Links which are connected with this policy are:

- [DECV Student Engagement Policy](#)
- [DEECD Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#)
- [DECV Online Terms of Use](#)
- [DECV Online Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- [Respectful Relationships Education](#)

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix A: Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Harassment Information
- Appendix B: Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template

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Appendix A

Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Harassment Information

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:

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.

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.

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) using the various mediums available.

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 college 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
- 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 Year Level Coordinator, member of Student Wellbeing or a teacher that you feel comfortable with
- 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 in the DECV Student Engagement Policy.

Appendix B

Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment – Template

Staff member recording incident: _____

Date: __ / __ / __

Name of student(s) who appears to have instigated bullying

Year/s: _____

Name(s) of target(s)

Name(s) of witnesses

Did you observe the incident? YES No

If 'NO' who reported the incident to you? _____

Brief description of incident (what was allegedly said or done to the student who appears to have been bullied?)

What form(s) of bullying took place? Verbal Physical Indirect Cyber

Other Please detail: _____

Was the incident of bullying: Mild Severe

Describe how you responded

Describe how student responded to your intervention

Where / when / time incident took place:

Location: _____

When: before school recess lunch in class after school

Time: _____ : _____ am/pm

Date incident took place: ___/___/___

Additional comments:
