



## Bullying and Harassment Policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote consistency of approach and to create a climate in which all members of Harkaway Hills College are valued and feel safe.

The policy creates a framework to assure students and parents that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

Within the College all students and staff members have certain rights. However, along with those rights we also must take responsibility for our own actions.

All students and staff members have the right:

- to feel safe, cared for and respected at the school;
- to be free from threat and intimidation; and
- to have a pleasant, healthy and safe environment.

All students have the responsibility:

- to consider the impact of their actions on others;
- to respect the property and rights of other staff and students;
- not to accept bullying, but to report it;
- to follow the school policies and rules.

All staff members have the responsibility to:

- provide a safe, secure learning environment for our students;
- strive to provide an environment free from bullying, harassment, intimidation and abuse;
- engender a culture where bullying is discouraged and opposed;
- consider the impact of their actions on others;
- to be positive role models in work and action at all times.

### Definitions

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| Bullying | <p>Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person that involves an imbalance of power. It can involve humiliation, domination, intimidation, victimisation and harassment. In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.</p> <p>Bullying can take many forms including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical bullying which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.</li><li>• Psychological bullying which is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background.</li><li>• Indirect bullying which is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.</li></ul> |
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|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyberbullying which is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyberbullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.</li> </ul> <p><b>What Isn't Bullying</b><br/>There are many negative situations which, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not bullying. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mutual Conflict Situations which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation</li> <li>• One-Off Acts (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying</li> </ul>  |
| Harassment | <p>Harassment is unwelcome behaviour that intimidates, offends, or humiliates a student because of a particular personal characteristic.<br/>Harassment is similar to bullying because someone hurts another person through cruel, offensive and insulting behaviours. Harassment is different from bullying in that it is a form of discrimination and is unlawful where the basis for harassment relates to a personal characteristic which is protected by law, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sex and gender identity or sexuality and sexual orientation</li> <li>• race, religion, ethnic background</li> <li>• disability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sexual Harassment</b><br/>Sexual harassment occurs when a student is subjected to unwelcome and uninvited sexual conduct by another student which could be expected to make a student feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated.<br/>Sexual harassment can also result when a sexually intimidating or offensive environment is created.<br/>Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal, written or pictorial, and can range from relatively mild sexual banter to actual physical violence.<br/>It is important to remember that it is the way the victim perceives the behaviour that is important in determining whether or not harassment has taken place, not the intent of a particular individual.<br/>Mutual attraction or consenting friendships do not constitute sexual harassment.<br/>Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unwanted physical contact, touching, brushing against another student, hugging</li> <li>• persistent jokes or innuendos of a sexual nature</li> <li>• repeated requests to go out</li> <li>• offensive gestures</li> <li>• persistent or intrusive enquiries into another student's private life, sexuality, or physical appearance</li> <li>• sexual propositions</li> <li>• sexually offensive phone calls, messages on email, voicemail or in writing</li> <li>• displaying offensive screen savers, photos, calendars or objects</li> </ul> |



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|               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sexually explicit emails, text messages, or posts on social networking sites (refer to our Information and Communication Technology policy)</li> <li>stalking</li> <li>sexual assault.</li> </ul> <p><b>Racial Harassment</b><br/>Racial harassment is also found in many forms. Examples include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>abusive, threatening or insulting words and behaviour</li> <li>deliberate exclusion from conversations</li> <li>displaying abusive writing and pictures</li> <li>insensitive jokes related to race</li> <li>pranks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disability Harassment</b><br/>Examples of disability harassment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>humiliating comments or insults about a student's disability</li> <li>disparaging remarks to students who have received learning adjustments</li> <li>comments or actions which create a hostile environment for a student with a disability</li> <li>deliberately excluding a student where the disability is not an issue.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to our Disability Discrimination policy.</p> <p><b>Allergy Harassment</b><br/>Examples of Allergy Harassment include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teasing</li> <li>tricking a student into eating a particular food</li> <li>threatening a student with the substance that they are allergic to, such as peanuts.</li> </ul> <p>Harkaway Hills College seeks to address this issue through raising peer awareness so that the students involved in such behaviour are aware of the seriousness of allergic reactions. Any attempt to harm a student at risk of anaphylaxis with an allergen is treated as a serious and dangerous incident and treated accordingly.</p> <p>Refer to our Allergy Awareness policy.</p> |
| Teasing       | Sustained verbal harassment.  |
| Victimisation | the action of singling someone out for cruel or unjust treatment.   |



## **Harkaway Hills College Policy**

Harkaway Hills College recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the College is respected and accepted. Harkaway Hills College deplores teasing, victimisation or bullying in any form. All staff members must send a clear message that these things will not be tolerated and will be actively discouraged. Harkaway Hills College is a place where every student is learning to exercise all the social virtues. There can be no justification for anti-social, threatening or violent behaviour. It is the right of all individuals in the school community to be free of bullying and (if bullied) to be provided with help and support.

The Bullying and Harassment Policy will be evaluated by the Principal and staff at least annually and more frequently should circumstances require.

It is our policy that:

- bullying is managed through a 'whole-of-College community' approach involving students, staff and parents/carers
- bullying prevention strategies are implemented within the College on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age-appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and respond appropriately
- bullying response strategies are tailored to the circumstances of each incident
- staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture
- bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

## **Procedures**

A pro-active and preventative approach is the preferred option at Harkaway Hills College.

## **Prevention**

The College employs each of these means to prevent a bullying attitude emerging in any individual or in the school community.

1. Class teachers hold discussions and arrange role plays of bullying which address the bully, the victim and the onlookers.

Teachers will take care to explain that interactions between people take many forms, not only physical and verbal – they include, in particular, communication via technology – and that intentionally causing harm or distress in any circumstance, no matter how indirectly or discreetly, is the wrong thing to do.

2. Use is made, where possible, of travelling drama groups, to add to those discussions and role plays.
3. The Virtues Program, known as the "Motto" in the primary years, will reinforce inclusive attitudes among students. Staff members constantly reinforce these mottoes in class and on the playground. They provide a meta-language readily understood by students and teachers alike: eg 'Better to say we can all play'.
4. The advice to parents outlined below will be made available to parents through key parent functions and meetings with mentors, where relevant.



### **Response**

When teasing or bullying is brought to the attention of a member of staff, the following procedure will be immediately followed at all times observing procedural fairness:

1. The staff member will inform the Principal or Deputy.
2. The Principal or Deputy will maintain a record of all reports and coordinate a prompt and thorough investigation and follow-up. He/she will closely observe procedural fairness throughout this process. If it is his/her conclusion that the teasing or bullying is severe or recurrent, he/she will follow the procedure detailed below – see “Response to severe or recurrent bullying”.
3. Depending on the severity of the incident, the Principal or Deputy will inform the parents of the students involved as soon as possible. Parents will be informed immediately if there has been a substantiated complaint by another parent, or if their child has been involved in the physical harassment of another student.
4. The Principal or Deputy will inform the mentors of all students involved.
5. In the first instance, a student who has harassed another student will be:
  - a. required to offer a genuine apology and to undertake never to act in such a way again;
  - b. given an appropriate sanction. These sanctions generally involve the suspension of privileges such as part of playtime;
  - c. told that a record has been taken of the incident; and
  - d. assured that the issue has been dealt with and once apologies have been made and sanctions observed, s/he is starting with a clean slate.

### **Response to severe or recurrent bullying**

Where the Principal or Deputy has determined that bullying has taken place which is severe or recurrent, he/she will enact the following process.

1. He/she will ensure that his/her enquiry has been careful and thorough, including interviews with alleged bullies, victims and observers.
2. He/she will document his/her observations and conclusions carefully.
3. He/she will arrange serious talks with the parents of the perpetrators.
4. He/she will offer counselling services to any person involved where he/she deems this may be beneficial, and if this offer is accepted then he/she will ensure arrangements are made.
5. He/she will apply sanctions as required, including possible suspension of the perpetrators.
6. In extreme cases, the Principal or Deputy may consider whether it is necessary to involve the police. He/She will contact the Youth Resource Officer stationed at Cranbourne Police Station. Students and parents will also be provided with the contact information if need be.

Youth Resource Officer  
Cranbourne Police Station  
168 Sladen Street, Cranbourne 3977  
Ph: (03) 5991 0600

Or else, for immediate police attendance, the closest station is in Narre Warren.  
Narre Warren Police Station  
8 Coventry Road, Narre Warren 3805  
Ph: (03) 97053111



### **Advice for Parents**

When parents and mentors are seeking to foster charity in a young person, it can be productive to think in terms of building positive habits of behaviour: kindness, compassion, understanding, tolerance, friendship for all and respect for all.

Opportunities should be sought to reinforce the importance of:

1. being kind to all, without discrimination;
2. recognising that everyone has strengths and weaknesses of character. One should never judge others;
3. recognising that generally speaking, any form of bullying or taunting reflects an insecure character: a person who seeks popularity by picking on a weaker, younger or newer student is insecure;
4. focusing on the strengths and good qualities of others;
5. having the courage to stand up for others who are being mistreated;
6. recognising that no-one should have to put up with bullying, victimisation, teasing, or harassment. Both the victim and witnesses have a duty to speak up if there is any incident when a person is unjustly treated; and
7. it is everyone's responsibility to foster harmony between people.

Parents can aim to teach practical skills to their child so that situations can be handled personally and effectively. In the first instance, it is best not to presume malicious intent. An effective approach involves looking at the other person in the eye and telling her/him clearly not to act in whatever way was disturbing, hurtful or annoying. Words to the effect: "Please don't do that. I don't like it!" will often be effective. If the harassment continues the child should report the incident to a teacher, and if necessary to her/his parents.

Parents are asked to be aware that, at times, the facts may not be exactly as they first seem. The teacher, Principal or Deputy will always follow up the concern so that the situation can be addressed and resolved promptly.

### **Staff Responsibilities**

Staff members are to investigate every report of harassment and bullying, with the aims of:

- bringing it to a halt promptly and effectively;
- facilitating the eradication of negative attitudes and behaviours in the bullying student(s); and
- assisting any student who has been the target of teasing or bullying to build resilience.

Staff members are to work closely with parents, mentors and teachers so that the opportunities to build character in all students involved is maximised. The common aim is to work towards the character education of all students, including those who have behaved inappropriately.

If parents contact a member of school staff to report a concern about teasing or bullying, it is the responsibility of that member of staff, on the same day, to pass on the information to the Principal or Deputy. The Principal or Deputy is then responsible for coordinating an effective and prompt



investigation and follow up. She should ensure that parents are apprised of proceedings within 24 hours.

### **Implementation**

This Policy is implemented through a combination of:

- staff training
- student and parent/carer education and information
- effective incident reporting procedures
- effective management of bullying incidents when reported
- the creation of a 'no-bullying' culture within the College community
- effective record keeping procedures
- initiation of corrective actions where necessary.

### **Student Responsibility**

All students are required to:

- treat all students, staff and any other person at the College professionally and with respect
- avoid behaviour that could be interpreted as harassing and act to prevent other students from engaging in harassment, where this is reasonably practicable
- where students have witnessed harassment at the College they are encouraged to report this to a staff member.

### **Discipline for Breach of Policy**

Depending upon the nature and seriousness of the breach of this Policy Harkaway Hills College may take disciplinary action, including in the case of serious breaches, suspension or expulsion.

Engaging in unlawful harassment or bullying may result in legal action being taken against the perpetrator and Harkaway Hills College.

**Last updated: February 2023**