

# CASTLEMAINE SECONDARY COLLEGE ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

## *Introduction*

Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated at Castlemaine Secondary College. *Bullying and harassment occur when one or more people abuse the power that they have to hurt, embarrass or humiliate others. This hurtful behaviour is usually, but necessarily, repeated over time.*

When a person is bullied or harassed, they can be negatively affected by:

- feelings of anger, embarrassment, loss of self-confidence or humiliation;
- not wanting to come to school;
- becoming depressed;
- experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicide;

Examples of behaviours that could constitute bullying and harassment are:

- threatening a person;
- working with a gang or group in order to frighten, embarrass or humiliate a person;
- hitting, punching, pushing or employing other unwanted aggressive physical contact against another person;
- hiding or destroying a person's property;
- making rude or unpleasant notes or drawings about another person;
- name calling or other put downs;
- racially offensive insults;
- deliberate and hurtful exclusion of others from groups;
- spreading rumours about another person or their family;
- "cyber" bullying (using Facebook, other social networking services, email, text messages etc to bully or harass).

Examples of what could constitute sexual harassment are:

- unwanted touching or brushing up against another person;
- calling another person rude names or making sexually suggestive comments or gestures;
- commenting on the size or shape of another's body;
- sexually oriented comments;
- comments about another's sexual preference or alleged sexual behaviours;
- displaying or passing on sexually graphic material.

Although much of this policy focuses on bullying and harassment that exists between students, it is acknowledged that bullying and harassment sometimes occurs between staff and students. There is advice later in this policy about processes for reporting examples of bullying and harassment between staff and students.

## ***Preventative Approaches to Bullying and Harassment at CSC***

The primary preventative approaches the College takes to minimize bullying and harassment are to:

- Create an environment where students are actively involved in a wide range of positive classroom and co-curricular activities which require students to work co-operatively and solve problems together.
- Insist that all staff members model respectful behaviours and positive strategies for resolving any conflicts that occur.

The College also strives to minimise bullying and harassment by developing students’:

**(1) Knowledge about bullying, its effects and how to respond as a victim or bystander to bullying**

**(2) Positive Attitudes e.g. being unprejudiced, empathetic and self-accepting**

**(3) Skills e.g. assertiveness and conflict resolution abilities**

Examples of how this preventative education is achieved are: reminders to staff, students and parents about the contents of this policy every term; guest speakers and drama performances; activities in the weekly extended Mentor Group sessions; targeted small group programs co-ordinated by the Social Workers (e.g. “Go Boys, Go”, “Go Girls, Go” and “Respect Yourself”); and exploration of themes such as prejudice and empathy in various other parts of the curriculum (e.g. English, Humanities and History).

Other ways that the College aims to prevent or minimize harassment at CSC include:

- Ongoing professional development for staff (e.g. throughout 2010 and 2011, many CSC staff have attended anti-bullying professional development delivered by Solving the Jigsaw and Mind Matters, as well as training in Restorative Justice).
- An annual Student Bullying Survey which helps staff to understand and act upon information such as the areas of the school students feel most unsafe and the names of specific students who are repeatedly being reported as bullying others.
- Provision of a Social Worker (Blakeley Road Campus) and Guidance Counsellor (Etty Street Campus) during school hours five days per week.
- Accreditation as a Mind Matters ([www.mindmatters.edu.au](http://www.mindmatters.edu.au)) and working towards accreditation as an eSmart ([www.esmartschools.org.au](http://www.esmartschools.org.au)) school.

## ***Recommended responses for students when targeted by bullying and harassment***

Depending on the circumstances of the bullying or harassment that has occurred, the following strategies can be helpful. However, it is not suggested that you have to follow these strategies in order (e.g. often it might be appropriate to go straight to Strategy D). Any of these four strategies can be used as a starting point for addressing the problem.

**A. Try to ignore the problem** – sometimes low-level bullying will stop if it is ignored. However, this approach is not recommended if: (a) the target of the bullying is particularly humiliated, upset or hurt; or (b) this tactic has been tried for some time, but the bullying has continued.

**B. Stick up for yourself assertively.** Tell the offender firmly but respectfully that their actions are unwanted and you expect them to stop.

**C. Discuss the problem with your parent, guardian or another trusted adult.**

**C. Approach a teacher or other staff member that you trust.** This may be your Mentor Teacher, another teacher, School Nurse, Chaplain or Social Worker (Blakeley Rd Campus) or Guidance Counsellor (Ettý St Campus). The staff member will not talk to others about your problem or take any action without your permission (except in the case of child abuse or if they believe you are at serious risk of harm), although you will be given the option to lodge a formal bullying complaint. With your permission the staff member will enlist the support of a Leading Teacher, Social Worker, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain or Assistant Principal to:

- Speak with the accused person or people and investigate what has occurred.
- Take action to try to stop the bullying happening again and to repair any harm that has been done.
- Continue to monitor the situation to check whether the action taken has worked.

## ***College Responses to Reports of Bullying and Harassment***

Although there might be occasions when low-level examples of bullying and harassment can be addressed relatively quickly and informally by staff, those who report bullying must always be given the option of making a formal complaint. Reports of bullying and harassment must not be “fobbed off” by staff members who receive such complaints.

The process for dealing with formal complaints of bullying and harassment are as follows:

(1) The staff member receiving the complaint must make a written record of the report, or seek the support of one of the College Social Workers, Chaplain, Leading Teachers, Assistant Principal or Principal to do so. The written record needs to contain specific details of what has occurred, where and when it occurred, who was involved and who witnessed what occurred.

(2) The written complaint must be passed on to one of the College Social Worker, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Leading Teachers, Assistant Principal or Principal, who will interview other people involved and witnesses. Such interviews must be conducted fairly and with an open mind.

(3) If bullying or harassment is deemed to have occurred, the investigating staff member must take action to address the problem. The action that the investigating staff member takes will depend on the circumstances and severity of the bullying that has occurred. Follow-up actions may include:

- Cautioning those involved
- Restorative conferences or mediation
- Counselling for those involved
- Disciplinary measures including detentions and suspensions

(4) Specific arrangements for following up regularly with the victim and perpetrator must be made and documented.

(4) The parents of the victim and perpetrator/s will be contacted unless there are exceptional circumstances approved by an Assistant Principal or the Principal for not doing so.

(5) The notes and follow-up actions relating to all formal bullying complaints must be forwarded to the Assistant Principal – Student Engagement and Wellbeing.

### ***What if I'm not satisfied with how a formal complaint has been dealt with or I have a complaint involving a student and staff member?***

If parents or students are not satisfied with how a formal complaint of bullying or harassment has been dealt with, they are urged to raise this concern with the Principal or one of the Assistant Principals, who must review the follow-up that has occurred.

If students wish to lodge complaints of bullying by staff, or staff wish to lodge complaints of bullying by students, they should also report their concerns directly to the Principal or an Assistant Principal.

If any student, parent or staff member wishes to make a complaint of bullying or harassment by the Principal, or has concerns about the manner in which the Principal has handled a bullying complaint, they are encouraged to contact the DEECD Regional Office in Bendigo to discuss their concern.

### ***Advice to bystanders***

Research about bullying tells us that (a) bullying almost always occurs in front of other student bystanders, and (b) the actions of these bystanders can have a very powerful influence on whether the bullying stops or gets worse.

Most students feel uncomfortable about witnessing bullying. Specific ways that bystanders are encouraged to respond when bullying occurs are:

1. **Not join in or offer any form of encouragement to the bullies** – being seen to offer any form of encouragement for the bullying behaviour will make the situation much worse for the target of the bullying.
2. **Directly support the victim** – e.g. assertively tell the bullies to stop or offer comfort to the victim.
3. **Report and seek help from a staff member.**

## ***Specific advice to students and parents about responding to cyber bullying***

Cyber-bullying is a particularly hurtful form of bullying because it can occur anywhere and at anytime. Offensive forms of electronic communication are able to be viewed and passed on to a wide audience of people. This material can also be later used against those who have produced or sent it (e.g. by the police or by future employees who might use your electronic trail to make judgements about you).

Those people who experience cyber-bullying are urged to:

1. Not respond to the offensive material.
2. Keep a copy of what has been sent.
3. Block the sender from making any further contact with you.
4. Report what has occurred to one or more of the following: (a) the administrators of the electronic space where the bullying has occurred (e.g. report abuse to Facebook); (b) the Police (if the messages are particularly threatening or sexually explicit); (c) a trusted adult; (d) the Social Worker (Blakeley Rd Campus) or Guidance Counsellor (Etty St Campus).

## ***Advice about bullying and harassment to parents and guardians***

CSC values our relationship with the parents and guardians of our students. Specifically, we welcome suggestions about making the College a safer place for our students, as well as feedback about particular incidents of bullying. Through this policy, the web links at the end of the policy and various parent information evenings that we run, we aim to provide parents with detailed information about bullying.

Parents who wish to discuss specific bullying concerns with the College are encouraged to follow the advice (below) provided by one of Australia's foremost experts about bullying in schools - Ken Rigby (*Children and Bullying, How Parents and Educators Can Reduce Bullying at School*):

- **Make an appointment to discuss the concern** – specific people who can assist are: the Social Worker (Blakeley Rd Campus), Guidance Counsellor (Etty St Campus), the student's Mentor Teacher, the Chaplain or one of the Assistant Principals.
- **Gather the facts about what you believe has taken place** – Calmly present this information to the College and listen to any further information which might be presented during your meeting (quite often, each of the adults in a meeting such as this will only have part of the picture each).
- **Be firm, but refrain from angry threats or denouncing the school** – Often the College will be unaware of what has occurred. Working together calmly to address the problem is essential.
- **Recognize that the school may need time to investigate and respond to what has occurred** – Negotiate a reasonable timeline for action with the College.

- **Be prepared to work with the College to address the problem in a way that is consistent with this policy.**
- **Make sure that you develop with the school representative a clear understanding of how and when you will be informed of the follow-up that has occurred and how the situation will be monitored afterwards.**
- **Let the College know if there is any further harassment after action has been taken.**

### ***Further information for students, parents and teachers***

The following websites are highly recommended:

#### **Bullying and Harassment:**

**Bullying – No Way!** ([www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au))

*Plenty of useful information and fun resources for young people and adults can be found on this site.*

**Evelyn Field's site** ([www.bullying.com.au](http://www.bullying.com.au))

*This site contains valuable information for parents, teachers and students.*

#### **Youth mental health support including information about bullying:**

**Kid's Help Line website** ([www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au))

This site provides information about the Kids' Help Line free 24 hour telephone and online counselling service. Other useful information can also be accessed through this site, including an informative Bullying Fact Sheet ([click here](#)) and strategies to help children and parents deal with bullying.

**Beyond Blue website** ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)) This site provides contact details and professional advice for people who feel as though they may be suffering from depression.

**The Reachout Foundation's site** ([www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au))

*An excellent site which provides advice about a range of youth related issues including bullying.*

#### **Cyber Bullying and Cyber Safety**

**Cybersmart Online** ([www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au))

*A great site with plenty of fun links for young people, as well as a section for parents and teachers.*

**eSmart** ([www.esmartschools.org.au](http://www.esmartschools.org.au))

The College is currently undergoing the accreditation process for becoming an eSmart school. The eSmart website contains information for schools, parents and students.

**Kidsmart** ([www.kidsmart.org.uk](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk))

*This is an award winning website providing practical advice about internet safety. Specific sections for students, teachers and parents are included on this site.*

## ***Review, evaluation and communication of this policy***

*This policy will be shared and/or discussed with students once each term.*

*This policy will be next reviewed in 2013*

*Feedback about this policy is still welcome before the time of the official review. Feedback should be delivered to the Assistant Principal for Student Engagement and Wellbeing.*