

ANTI-BULLYING Policy



OVERNEWTON
ANGLICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Overnewton Anti-bullying Policy

- Overnewton Anglican Community College is an inclusive Anglican educational community and therefore does not tolerate harassment or bullying in any form.
- Our Christian values and foundation inform our actions and expectations.
- We are proud to belong to the college community and to respect the college values and culture.
- We aim to provide a safe and caring environment where personal growth and a positive self-esteem are nurtured.
- We accept that all people are different and acknowledge that everyone has a right to feel safe, supported and respected in his or her own right in an environment that is free from harassment and bullying.
- Every person has the right to be treated with respect as a worthwhile individual.
- It is the responsibility of all members of the Overnewton community to work collaboratively to ensure that this happens.



Prevention strategies and other anti-bullying programs

Overnewton aims to achieve an environment free from harassment and bullying and has implemented a range of programs and structures across all levels of the college. These include specific classroom strategies and regularly reviewing the playground and surrounds (hot spots) where bullying is likely to occur. Raising awareness through student curriculum, up skilling staff and providing parent information and education is also vital to minimise bullying. Furthermore, the importance of community cannot be overstated at Overnewton and we aim to provide a safe and caring environment for the whole college community.

How the College will investigate harassment or bullying

At Overnewton, incidents of harassment or bullying may be reported by a student, parent or staff member to the relevant Home Group Teacher, House Mentor or Head of House. In accordance with the *Taking Responsibility Policy*, the incident is then investigated and managed by the student's Home Group Teacher, House Mentor or Head of House and depending on the circumstances, the incident may be referred to the Deputy Head of School (Pastoral Care) or a member of the College Leadership Team (CLT), (Head of School, Head of Campus or Principal). At this latter stage, the parents of all students involved will be notified of the incident. If a person persists in harassment or bullying behaviour, the child's parents will meet with a member of College Leadership Team (CLT) to discuss the repercussions for the person/s involved – (see Appendix A).

At each stage of the investigation, records will be maintained. These documents are confidentially stored and remain on file for the entire time a student is at Overnewton.

What is harassment and bullying?

Harassment

Harassment is considered to be any unwelcome or unwanted behaviour or conduct which may be anticipated to offend, humiliate or intimidate another person. Harassment often involves ridiculing the characteristics of another person's identity, such as their race, creed, ethnicity, physical features, gender or sexual orientation in order to achieve power over them.

Harassment can include, but is not limited, to the following:

- **PHYSICAL** – fighting, kicking, punching, hitting, shoving, pinching, abusive gestures, moving in on one's personal space.
- **VERBAL or WRITTEN** – use of words in an insulting and malicious way, teasing, swearing, put downs, spreading rumours, repeated abusive phone calls.
- **EXTORTION/INTIMIDATION** – blackmailing, threatening, forcing one to give money.
- **VISUAL** – insulting letters, graffiti, rude and suggestive gestures, intentionally mimicking another's actions to mock or embarrass, drawing on someone's equipment. This may include on-line images or comments.
- **SEXUAL** – Obscene drawings and gestures, rude jokes about the target, touching, brushing up against the target, asking questions of a sexual nature displaying rude and embarrassing photographs.
- **RACIAL** – Can be expressed verbally, physically, socially or psychologically when one is labelled negatively as being different from others according to one's race.



Bullying

At Overnewton we define bullying as an intentional, deliberate, hurtful and persistent form of harassment. Bullying is often repetitive and causes distress not only at the time of the attack, but also by the threat of future attacks. It is characterised by an imbalance of power and can be defined by the negative impact on the vulnerable person who is targeted (McGrath & Noble, 2006).

Bullying comes in many forms and in addition to the behaviours listed above can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- **EXCLUSION** – Being deliberately left out of a game or group activity, being ignored, made to feel invisible, the group runs off and hides.
- **CYBER BULLYING** – Use of any communication technology to bully others through the use of phone calls, text messages, email, internet sites or digital images.
- **HOMOPHOBIC** – can be expressed verbally, such as name calling against people who are or who are assumed to be same sex attracted or gender questioning, or any homophobic language if it is referring to something that is inferior or stupid.

What is not bullying?

There are numerous behaviours that may require staff intervention and management that are not examples of bullying. *Mutual conflict* is one such example where there is a recognised disagreement but no imbalance of power between the two parties.

Social rejection and exclusive friendships are also not examples of bullying unless there is a deliberate and repeated effort to cause the excluded student/s distress. Thirdly, *a single, random episode of meanness* whilst aggressive may not be categorised as bullying as it is not repetitive.

The effects of harassment and/or bullying

Individuals can be affected physically and emotionally by harassment and bullying in a number of ways. Typical symptoms include feeling frightened, embarrassed or unsafe; decreased self-esteem; disturbed sleep patterns; difficulty concentrating and reduced work ethic; social isolation and withdrawal from activities; increased anxiety; somatic complaints; school refusal.



The College approach to the management of harassment or bullying

Overnewton utilises a multi-level restorative approach to the management of reported incidents of harassment and bullying. In all instances, our focus is on the student taking responsibility for their actions to help them understand the seriousness of the incident and to appreciate the feelings of the other person/s involved.

■ **Level 1** – for the least serious forms of harassment or bullying. Research indicates that reflection activities, counselling, and Support Group approach are most effective over the long term.

■ **Level 2** – for more serious forms of harassment and bullying, an interview process would take place and Method of Shared Concern utilised. Expectations for future behaviour would be clearly agreed to through this process and written agreements or contracts may be drawn up.

■ **Level 3** – for the most serious situations such as sexual or physical assault or repeated instances of bullying. At the Principal's discretion, a behavioural contract would be negotiated outlining the behavioural expectations and consequences should a breach arise. A community conference would be convened involving parents and an agreement formed. In serious cases, a student's position at the College may be forfeited.

As well as appropriate and consistent consequences and support for the person reported of bullying, the College also aims to provide guidance and appropriate support for the recipient that will aim to develop conflict resolution skills and positive wellbeing.



What to do...



WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO

If you experience harassment or bullying, please consider the following strategies:

- Tell the person/s that their actions offend you and ask them to stop. They might not understand that their actions were offensive.
- If possible, ignore the behaviour and remove yourself calmly from the situation.
- If the other person/s does not change their behaviour, approach a teacher, School Counsellor or a peer mediator and ask for help.
- Speak to an adult that you can trust (this could be a parent, guardian, teacher or member of staff).

Often ignoring harassment or bullying allows it to continue

If you witness or are aware of another student/s being bullied, please consider following these strategies:

- Approach the person who is being bullied and ask them if the behaviour you saw has offended them.
- Provide your support to the person being bullied and try to encourage them to do something about it.
- Encourage the person to speak to a teacher or peer mediator and tell them you are happy to support them.
- Speak to an adult that you can trust about what you saw and what you already understand about the situation (this could be a parent, guardian, teacher or member of staff)

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

As a member of the College community, we ask you to take the time to communicate with your child and encourage alternative responses to bullying behaviours. The strategies below apply equally whether your child is the recipient or the perpetrator of harassment or bullying. Watch for signs of distress and possible sources of anxiety.

- Encourage your child to speak up.
- Be careful and realistic about taking the attitude of, *"Not my daughter/son, she/he wouldn't..."*
- Be role models in word and action.
- If your child appears unhappy or unsettled with their life at school, talk to them and encourage them to seek support from the peer mediators or relevant staff.
- Do not interrogate them.
- First point of contact is the home group teacher or house mentor. Matters will be referred to the appropriate staff member according to the Taking Responsibility policy.
- Be careful of the anecdotal and emotional reporting of incidents.
- Monitor telephone calls and electronic communication from school friends and peers.
- Be prepared to discuss issues openly, honestly and objectively.
- Do not encourage retaliation. Instead, discuss ways to problem solve and work towards a solution.
- Be willing to support the College's processes in dealing with bullying.

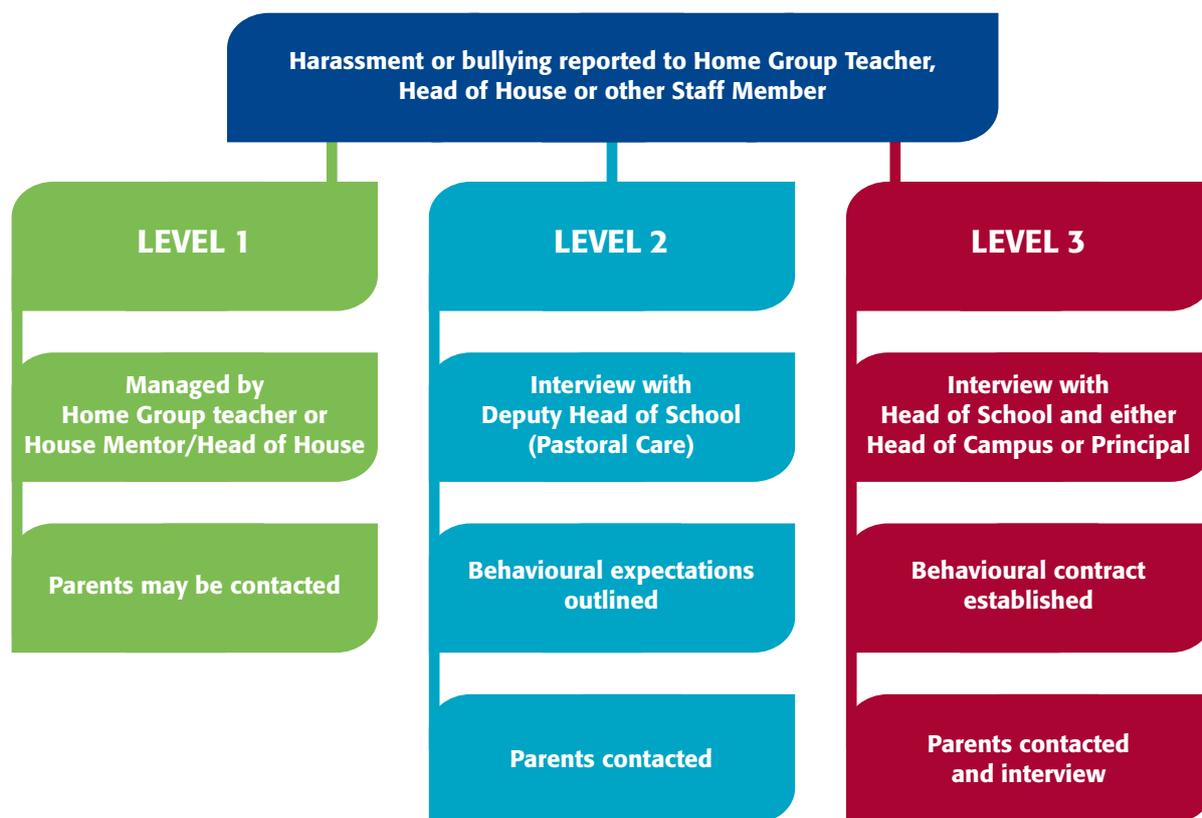
WHAT STAFF CAN DO

As a school community, minimising the effects of harassment and bullying is the responsibility of all staff. This requires them to:

- Support the prevention and management of bullying through a range of restorative approaches.
- Be role models in word and action.
- Actively supervise students whilst on yard duty to minimise opportunities for bullying and harassment
- Arrive at class before students, before class, after recess and lunch and move promptly between classes.
- Be available and actively listen to students who report incidents of bullying or harassment.
- Organise a meeting with the students during your break and avoid making conversations public.
- Observe signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying and intervene where appropriate.
- Support recipients of bullying without placing them at further risk.
- Report instances of bullying to an appropriate staff member (using the *Taking Responsibility Policy* as a guide).
- Foster positive social interactions between students within the college community.
- Actively participate in ongoing professional learning and skills development to minimise the incidence of bullying at Overnewton.

Appendix A:

How the College will investigate harassment or bullying



EVALUATION AND MONITORING

At Overnewton we have developed an anti-bullying policy to provide all members of our community with clear guidelines for responding to incidents of bullying as well as outlining strategies, support and processes. We are committed to ensuring that our policy is current, informed and it is best practice in responding to bullying behaviours. As part of this commitment, our policy will be reviewed every three years.

REFERENCES

- McGrath, H., & Noble, T. (2006). *Bullying solutions: evidence-based approaches to bullying in Australian schools*. Sydney: Pearson Longman
- Rigby, K. (1996). *Bullying in schools: and what to do about it*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.
- Rigby, K. (2007). *Children and Bullying: How Parents and Educators Can Reduce Bullying at School*. Brisbane: Wiley-Blackwell

WEBSITES

- <http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au/>
- <http://www.ncab.org.au/>
- <http://www.bullying.org>



OVERNEWTON
ANGLICAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Keilor Campus A | 2-30 Overnewton Rd Keilor 3036 T | 03 9334 0000 F | 03 9336 1835
Taylors Lakes Campus A | 27-57 Robertsons Rd Taylors Lakes 3038 T | 03 9334 0000 F | 03 9390 5144
overnewton.vic.edu.au