



Mernda Hills Christian College

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

Document Control

Revision Number	Review Date	Implementation Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
Gilson College – Mernda					
	Sep 2021	Oct 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General review	Exec Leaders	Gilson College Council
Mernda Hills Christian College					
1	May 2023	Jan 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">General reviewAdded ref. to 'Harassment' throughout	Exec Leaders	College Executive Leaders

Rationale

Mernda Hills Christian College adopts a 'Zero Tolerance Policy' towards all forms of bullying and harassment. All members of the College have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or to be taught, and a right to feel safe and secure in their school environment.

Bullying and harassment is not always easy to identify, and it may not seem serious, but it can have long-lasting effects. Students, parents, and staff of Mernda Hills Christian College are expected to be aware of the importance of preventing this behaviour to maintain an environment which is safe for all. In addition to paying attention to bullying and harassing behaviour in the College, as an eSmart school, particular attention is paid to the online safety of all users of the College technology resources.

The eSmart website, the eSafety Commissioner website, and the Victorian Education Department Bully Stoppers website all provide resources regarding bullying, including cyber bullying:
<https://www.esmart.org.au/> <https://www.esafety.gov.au/educators> <https://www.vic.gov.au/bully-stoppers>

Implementation

What is Bullying?

The nationally agreed definition of bullying, which all Australian schools now use defines bullying as:

1. 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.
2. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).
3. 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 equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

What bullying is not

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.

1. Mutual conflict:
 - a. involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution.
 - b. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
2. Social rejection or dislike:
 - a. is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
3. Single-episode acts:

- a. Nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying.
- b. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.
- c. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different people is not the same as bullying. However, this does not mean that single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.

What is Harassment?

1. Harassment occurs when a person is treated less favourably on the basis of certain characteristics, such as sex (gender), religious belief, ethical belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, disability, and sexual orientation. Within this context the College bases its ultimate determination of behaviour upon the inspired Word of God and the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

General

Students may be the subject of bullying and harassing behaviour by other students or by staff, and staff may also be the subject of bullying and harassing behaviour by students. Bullying between staff is covered in the *Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy*.

Mernda Hills Christian College acknowledges that racism, sexual harassment, and harassment due to a person's personal vulnerabilities such as disability are examples of bullying behaviour that warrant special mention. They may take the form of any of the types of bullying behaviour described below and are not to be tolerated at all – zero toleration.

NOTE: Under regulations 40 and 41 of the Education Regulations 1997, principals can suspend or exclude a student who acts in a manner that threatens the safety or wellbeing of a student or member of staff, or another person associated with the school. These regulations do not preclude an event that occurs outside of school hours or off site.

Identification

1. Bullying and harassment can take many forms, including, but not limited to:
 - Physical:
 - a. Any unwanted physical contact or activities
 - b. Hitting, kicking, punching, pushing, shoving or spitting
 - c. Making rude/inappropriate gestures
 - d. Taking or damaging something that belongs to someone else
 - e. Forcing others to hand over food, money or something which belongs to them
 - f. Making someone do something they don't want to do
 - Verbal:
 - a. Name calling, teasing or threatening
 - b. Making fun of someone because of their appearance, physical characteristics or cultural background or actions
 - Cyber:
 - a. Online name calling, teasing or threatening
 - b. Use of vulgar, obscene or inappropriate language
 - c. Revealing address, phone number or other personal details to unknown individuals

- d. Disrupting the network or the data of others
 - e. Distributing or revealing information belonging to others
 - f. Sharing inappropriate material to others
 - g. Episodes of writing abusive emails, SMS
 - h. Creation of sites with a deleterious impact on others
 - i. Creating a demeaning alias to target individuals, social networking sites or notes
- Indirect:

Indirect bullying is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:

 - a. lying and spreading rumours
 - b. playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
 - c. mimicking
 - d. encouraging others to socially exclude someone
 - e. damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance
 - Social Psychological
 - a. Persistent episodes of excluding from activities
 - b. ignoring
 - c. threatening looks
 - d. "keeping-off"
 - e. threatening and aggressive staring
 - Racism, Sexual Harassment, and Personal Vulnerabilities

Training

1. Staff will be provided with professional development opportunities on the nature of bullying and harassment what action to take against these behaviours
2. Training or information should also be provided to parents
3. Students will be made aware that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated, and that bullying and harassing behaviours will be managed through the *Student Behaviour Policy* and the tiers of the College *PB4L frameworks*
4. Classroom teachers should clarify with students the College *Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy* at the beginning of each year
5. Students will be encouraged to:
 - a. Tell if they are being bullied or if they see someone else being bullied – both at school, in transit and online
 - b. Help and support someone who is being bullied
 - c. Refrain from bullying and harassing others
 - d. Not allow bullying threats to put them off helping others
6. Parents will be encouraged to:
 - a. Familiarise themselves with the College *Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy*

- b. Teach their children traditional values – honesty, tolerance, right and wrong, and resilience
 - c. Be prepared to learn more by attending information sessions
 - d. Watch for signs that their child may be being bullied or harassed
 - e. Support their child emotionally
 - f. Speak to a teacher if they suspect their child is being bullied or harassed
 - g. Instruct their children to “tell” if they are bullied or harassed
7. Staff will be expected to:
- a. Report to leadership any instance of students bullied or harassed at school, in transit, online or by use of any electronic device
 - b. Help and support someone who is being bullied or harassed
 - c. Apply the PB4L tiers to instances of inappropriate behaviour (*See Student Behaviour Policy*)

Prevention

1. Staff should constantly monitor relationships between students to ensure that inappropriate behaviours can be addressed, before they escalate into bullying or harassing behaviour
2. An anonymous feedback Survey, with elements relating to bullying and harassing, should be conducted annually to determine the extent of bullying at the College
3. The PB4L Team will regularly analyse data gathered from a variety of sources including the feedback survey
4. Students, parents and staff will be encouraged to openly talk about bullying and harassing – what it is, how it affects us and what we can do about it
5. Staff and students are to promote the philosophy of ‘No Put Downs’

Intervention

1. The pastoral care program of the College will be strongly linked with bullying and harassing interventions. (*See College Student Behaviour Policies and the tiers PB4L Frameworks*)
2. Incidences of bullying and harassing will be reported and recorded through these procedures
3. Once identified, victim, bully, and witnesses will be interviewed, and all incidents fully investigated and documented
4. Both the victim and bully will be offered support, which may include counselling. They are both victims to some degree
5. If bullying or harassing is ongoing, parents will be contacted and interventions and/or consequences implemented consistent with the *College Student Behaviour Policies*, the *PB4L Frameworks* Tier 2 or 3 interventions
6. Classroom teachers are to remind students on a regular basis to report incidents, and that reporting is not ‘dobbing’
7. Parents should be encouraged to contact the College if they suspect a problem or issue with bullying or harassing

Related Policies and Processes

- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Agreements
- Student Behaviour Policy
- PB4L frameworks
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- Child Safe Protection Code of Conduct,
- Duty of Care Policy
- Digital Technologies Policy and Procedures
- Mandatory Reporting Policy.
- Restraint and Seclusion Policy

Relevant Documentation or Legislation

- Disability Discrimination and Other Human Rights Legislation Amendment Act 2009
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic.)