



## Bullying and Harassment Student Policy

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### **Definition and Background:**

Simply described, bullying or harassment is any behaviour that is unwelcome, degrading, intrusive, violent, abusive or offensive to another person.

No such behaviour is acceptable.

Although a person may not intend their behaviour to be bullying or offensive, if the behaviour directed at another person is perceived to be bullying or offensive, steps must be taken to resolve the issues.

Bullying can occur between students and between members of staff; it can also occur between members of staff and students, parents and members of staff, and parents and other children.

### **Some Examples of Bullying:**

- pushing, fighting (physical)
- teasing, offensive remarks (including racial and sexist), continual criticism, rumour spreading (verbal)
- offensive notes, phone, text or email messages; cyber bullying (web pages or false msn accounts), drawings and photographs (including electronic); graffiti, defacing possessions (textual and visual)
- stand-over or gang behaviour, psychological pressure (intimidatory)
- excluding or isolating people (relational)
- abusive texts and emails, hurtful messages, images or videos, imitating others online, excluding others online, nasty online gossip and chat, hacking of accounts, hate pages (cyber bullying)

Bullying occurs for a variety of reasons, sometimes through ignorance, sometimes through a wilful desire to hurt. It can often arise as a result of a perceived difference, whether physical, intellectual, social, behavioural or racial, or sometimes simply because a person appears weaker or is socially less assertive.

Bullying can also be explicitly sexual (a person may be made to feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or upset through unwanted attention or treatment of a sexual nature). This is the subject of a separate policy at The Geelong College.

Bullying can sometimes be difficult to identify in an institution because its occurrences are often covert in nature and because victims often do not report the bullying when it occurs. Indeed, bullying is becoming increasingly covert as anti-bullying strategies become more successful in schools and electronic forms are utilised.

It follows that an effective anti-bullying policy relies on a clear understanding of the nature of this behaviour by every member of the community and a firm commitment from the institution and all its members to its identification, prevention and eradication.

**Title: Bullying & Harassment Student Policy****General Policy:**

The College acknowledges its moral and legal obligation to ensure that its students and staff are not subjected to bullying or harassment of any kind.

The College is committed to providing a safe and secure environment in which bullying does not occur and where all members of the community are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

All students and members of the community are required to honour and support this commitment.

However, if bullying does occur and is detected or reported, the College is committed to its effective and early treatment through intervention and/or the provision of counselling, a restorative practices approach or punitive action, as required.

**A Restorative Practices Approach:**

Generally speaking, the College favours a restorative practices approach to the management of student behaviour. A restorative practices approach focuses explicitly on the relationships between members of the school community and teaches the value of these in achieving enduring outcomes for students.

Our emphasis is on the restoration of positive relationships rather than applying punishment for breaking rules.

Through this process, students are encouraged to recognise the impact of behaviour and conflict on relationships and to recognise how poor and inappropriate behaviour and conflict damage these. When students recognise the potential or actual harm caused by their behaviour and take action to stop and modify this, they also help to restore the relationships that were affected.

Such an approach will generally be used to deal with bullying in the first instance.

In such cases, the school will provide the opportunity for the person who feels bullied and the person perceived to have engaged in bullying behaviour to talk about what happened, discuss who has been affected, how they have been affected, how they are feeling and what is needed to repair the harm -- within small or large group conferences (which may involve parents). It is expected that an understanding will be reached by which a specific behaviour is to be modified: this can range from a verbal agreement to modify or a more formal written agreement.

A formal restorative conference is always conducted by a trained facilitator who leads the group through a scripted, supportive process that empowers all participants to:

- safely express feelings and thoughts
- explore the extent to which others have been affected by the harming incident
- engage everyone in developing a meaningful signed 'Restorative Agreement' which lists specific ways to begin the process of 'healing the harm' and 'making things right'

The restorative conference is a powerful learning experience for everyone and repairs and strengthens relationships. It helps to modify behaviours in a lasting way.

Should those causing bullying or the persons who feel bullied refuse to participate in a conference (or the conference prove unsuccessful) or a restorative conference not be deemed appropriate by the school for the bullying in question, there remains the option for the school to decide how best to proceed in order to achieve a recognition of the effect of negative behaviour.

**Procedures for Dealing with Bullying/Harassment:**

**Title: Bullying & Harassment Student Policy**Person who feels bullied

If a student is being bullied, he/she should be encouraged to deal with the problem in the following ways:

- tell the alleged bully that he/she objects to the behaviour and does not want it repeated

If the alleged bully is a fellow student:

- ⇒ indicate the name of the bully in regular surveys conducted by the school
- ⇒ email the specifics of the event to [NoBullying@student.geelongcollege.vic.edu.au](mailto:NoBullying@student.geelongcollege.vic.edu.au),
- ⇒ log onto the College bullying page and report the incident
- ⇒ discuss the matter with a trained student leader (eg school prefect), who will advise on strategies for dealing with the problem and help to implement these
- ⇒ report the matter to a responsible adult (Head of House, Head /Deputy Head of Student Welfare, Team Leader, Area Leader, Class Teacher, Tutor, Learning Mentor, School Counsellor) who will fill in a behavioural incident report form, offer advice on strategies for dealing with the problem and help to implement these using a no-blame or restorative practices approach in the first instance

If the alleged bully is a teacher:

- ⇒ indicate the name of the bully in regular surveys conducted by the school
- ⇒ email the specifics of the event to [NoBullying@student.geelongcollege.vic.edu.au](mailto:NoBullying@student.geelongcollege.vic.edu.au)
- ⇒ log onto the College bullying page and report the incident
- ⇒ report the matter to a Deputy Head/Director of Campbell House or Head of School, who will advise on and deal with the matter (or to a Team/Area Leader in the Preparatory School or Head of House in the Senior School, or School Counsellor in either school, who will report it to the relevant Head of School)

If the alleged bully is the parent of another student:

- ⇒ report the matter to a trusted member of staff who will report it to an appropriate authority

*If the above fail, it is possible to lodge a formal complaint with a Head of School or the Principal. A victim of bullying can expect ongoing support by appropriate members of staff.*

Person perceived to have engaged in bullying behaviour

If a person is deemed to be bullying someone else, the following procedures apply:

- a restorative approach will be taken where the alleged bully will be encouraged to understand the offence caused by his/her behaviour and to cease it immediately; every effort will be made to ensure a good understanding of the issues concerned. As bullying requires a coordinated response from all members of our school community, parents will generally be involved in any discussion, be it at an informal or formal level.
- if the school believes that a restorative approach is not in keeping with the offence/s, is not practical, is not working, or the bullying has persisted -- consequences such as detention, community service, suspension and even expulsion may be applied. The bully's parents will always be contacted in these circumstances.
- the bullying offence will be recorded in the bully's and victim's file.

**Title: Bullying & Harassment Student Policy****Bystander**

The positive behaviour of the bystander (person observing the alleged bullying) can have a major impact on the reduction of bullying behaviour. Most students report that they wish to support victims by intervening directly or indirectly (by telling a teacher). We encourage students and members of staff to be active bystanders by:

- directly indicating to the alleged bully that you feel the behaviour is bullying and that, if does not stop, you will take action by talking to the appropriate teacher (or Head of School) so the appropriate action can be taken
- telling a responsible adult (or Head of School) that the bullying has occurred and what occurred, so the appropriate action can be taken

*It is crucial that this reporting responsibility be assumed by all members of the community.*

**Prevention:**

Ultimately, it is through the process of education, the active encouragement of positive relationships and good role-modelling that a climate of tolerance and respect is built up within a school which makes bullying unacceptable to all its members.

General awareness of the issues involved will be achieved through discussion in health education or personal development classes, normal classes, assembly, chapel services, tutorials, staff meetings and newsletters, while protective strategies such as assertive and conflict resolution skills must actively be demonstrated and taught to students.

The staff as a whole has a particular responsibility to support and exemplify the policy of the school and to stress the virtues of respect and tolerance both through their personal relationships and in their teaching. The quick and appropriate use of restorative techniques will most certainly assist in this regard.

The school must promote anti-bullying and related policies, providing resources where required. It must set an appropriate code of behaviour for all of its students. It must be aware of stressful situations and times for students and make constructive provision to alleviate them. It must also ensure that the organisation and management of classrooms are such that acceptable behaviour is encouraged. Further, it must provide adequate levels of supervision at all times. Parents must actively be encouraged to support the anti-bullying policy through discussion of its meaning and implications with their children, to accept the school's considered actions if their children are found to be involved in bullying, and to work in partnership with the school towards the resolution of these difficulties. The parents of students who feel bullied must also be prepared to allow the school to take appropriate action (active monitoring or intervention) once they alert the school to the fact that their child is being bullied.

Finally, protection against bullying in a school context comes through the quality and depth of the relationships students, teachers and parents establish with each other. Each and every member of the school community has the responsibility to contribute to the general welfare of the school by assisting the school to promote positive and respectful relations and reporting instances of bullying, if they occur.

**Title: Bullying & Harassment Student Policy**

**Cyber Bullying**

An important component of the prevention of cyber bullying is the education of students through our TripleR program, which has a focus on relationships, resilience and reflection; these are fundamental characteristics of good online behavior and decision making. Making good decisions and digital leadership are a focus of our cyber-awareness programs and consistent with our Vision for Learning.

Monitoring and filtering of digital activity is applied, as outlined in the College Internet Filtering Policy.

Instances of cyberbullying at the College are addressed as they arise and dealt with in a manner consistent with other forms of bullying as noted above. The College reserves the right to monitor digital behaviour on our Network and check the content on school devices and computers.

**Related Documents:**

Cyber Awareness College Strategy  
Internet Filtering Policy