**Bullying and Harassment**

## Rationale

Mount Alexander College is committed to providing a safe and caring environment that promotes learning, personal growth and positive self-esteem.  The college aims to develop healthy, positive and supportive relationships where individual differences are respected.

The college has a zero tolerance for child abuse. Everyone working at Mount Alexander College is responsible for the care and protection of the children within our care and reporting information about suspected child abuse.  Our Child Protection Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct include a zero tolerance for bullying or harassment in any form: verbal, written or physical.  All members of the college community have the responsibility to ensure a bullying and harassment free environment.

Bullying and harassment is unwelcome and offensive and hurts people whether or not the perpetrator intends or understands it to be hurtful.  Bullying and harassment of any kind is an infringement of human rights and the College's Student Engagement and Inclusion policy.

Bullying and harassment can take many different forms - subtle or explicit and all are unacceptable and should be reported. The college will respond quickly and effectively in the event of a bullying or harassment incident.

## Definitions
### Bullying

Bullying is when a person, or a group of people upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety, either psychologically or physically - their property, reputation or social acceptance, on more than one occasion.

- Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour and can be differentiated from teasing and violence in three ways:
  - Bullying is a deliberate hurtful action directed towards another person or persons, by one or more persons.
  - Bullying is often repetitious in nature, where incidents occur more than once and are not random acts. However, sever 'one-off' bullying also occurs and is recognised as potentially very harmful.
  - Bullying usually involves a person having more power or strength at the time.

As distinct from playful teasing, bullying is a mean action intended to hurt the victim and create subordination as well as a feeling of superiority for the bully.

Bullying behaviour includes:
- Direct Physical Bullying: hits, trips, pushes, pokes, damage to or theft of property, physical threats, intimidating looks, touching and brushing up against (sexual in nature)
- Direct Verbal Bullying: name calling, insults, homophobic, racist, sexist, ethnic, disability or religious remarks, abuse of name, family or other individual characteristic, laughing at, put downs and threats, sexual jokes and innuendo.
- Indirect Bullying: This is sometimes referred to as socially bullying and can be harder to recognise.  It is often carried out behind a person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation.  It includes lies and the spreading of rumours, playing nasty jokes that embarrass and humiliate, mimicking and exclusion.
- Cyber Bullying: This involves being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or other digital technologies.  The main forms include:

- flaming: online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages
- harassment: repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages
- denigration: posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage reputation and friendship
- outing: sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online
- exclusion: intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
- cyber stalking: repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Being involved in online spaces - either at home or at school - requires students to behave responsibly. This includes:
- the language you use and the things you say
- how you treat others
- respecting people's property (e.g. copyright)
- visiting appropriate sites.

Behaving safely online means:
- protecting your own privacy and personal information selecting appropriate spaces to work and contribute
- protecting the privacy of others (this can be sharing personal information or images)
- being proactive in letting someone know if there is something is 'not quite right'. At home this would be a parent or carer, at school a teacher.

**Harassment**
Harassment is any verbal, written or physical behaviour which is unwarranted and hurtful.
Severe harassment is often persistent, planned, blatant and derogatory.

Harassment can be:
- Subtle:  The intention to hurt may or may not be obvious.  The actions include leering and staring, comments about a person's physical appearance or sexual preference, offensive e-comments or jokes about race, religion or ethnic origin, comments about people's sexual activities, offensive name calling, physical contact e.g. bumping.

- Explicit:  This form is easier to identify as usually the intentions are obvious or overtly offensive and intimidating.  It includes:
    - Physical harassment such as pushing, shoving, threatening gestures, punching, touching, grabbing and invasion of personal space.
    - Verbal harassment such as name calling, putting people down, offensive jokes or comments, sexually provocative remarks or asking about a person's private life and requests for sexual favours.
    - Visual harassment such as displays of sexually graphic material, offensive notes or material, graffiti or damaging other people's possessions.
    - Victimisation such as stand over tactics, picking on others, threats to 'get' people and exclusion.

- Criminal:  This may include some of the above but also assault, indecent exposure, sexual assault, obscene letters and telephone calls.

**Guidelines**
- A school-wide approach will be adopted to redress bullying and harassment and will involve students, teachers, Heads of House and parents/guardians.  Strategies will be implemented to inform and educate the college community and to respond to incidents of harassment.

- Issues regarding bullying and harassment will be addressed within mentor groups and across the curriculum.

- A range of intervention strategies and procedures will be employed to respond to incidents of bullying and harassment.

- All incidents and complaints of harassment will be treated seriously and where possible confidentiality will be maintained.

- The Assistant Principal, Heads of House and the wellbeing leader will act as a resource to staff in their responses to harassment issues.

**Implementation**
- The Bullying and Harassment policy of the college will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/guardians and the local community.

- The policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package.

- The Wellbeing Leader and Heads of House will be responsible for implementing School-wide preventative programs from the commencement of each year.  These will include the following strategies:
  - students will be provided with clear definitions of bullying and harassment and complaint procedures in the student diary
  - students will be educated regularly about the policy and the need for appropriate social behaviours in assemblies and mentor groups
  - all staff will be provided with a copy of the policy and details of procedures for dealing with harassment inside and outside the classroom
  - staff will receive regular in-service training on implementation of the policy.

- Preventative curriculum programs will include:
  - Clubs & Societies with guest speakers
  - Quest/Induction program for Year 7 students
  - 2018 Rights, Responsibility, Respect (Respectful Relationships DET)

- Constructive strategies to deal with bullying and harassment will include education in coping strategies, assertiveness training, problem solving and social skills, counselling and behaviour modification.  These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive measures.

- The school will conduct a range of intervention strategies to deal with bullying and harassment including:
  - the provision of clear complaint procedures
  - an annual school safety survey to ascertain the type and extent of bullying and harassment
  - the procedures to make anonymous complaints via bullying elections
  - the provision of counselling support through the wellbeing team to develop and encourage pro-social behaviours.

- Heads of House will be provided with an implementation kit, with information on how to conduct interviews with bullies and victims and procedures for handling complaints of harassment.

- The Assistant Principal and Heads of House will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of harassment, by investigating complaints, notifying parents/guardians and planning interventions.

- The Wellbeing Leader will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to harassment issues.  The Wellbeing Leader will also provide support and assistance for students, parents and guardians.  This support may include advice in

interviews and referrals to external agencies.

- The Assistant Principal and Heads of House will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with the DET Student Code of Conduct.

- Led by the Wellbeing team, all community members will:
  - model supportive behaviour in words and actions
  - be vigilant for signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
  - assist the person being bullied by removing sources of distress, without increasing any risk to their wellbeing
  - refer suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member: mentor teacher, Head of House, Student Wellbeing Leader, Principal Class who will follow the College's procedures to deal with the behaviour.

- Heads of House and Wellbeing staff will complete the Response to Bullying templates and procedures and assist those who exhibit bullying behaviour by:
  - applying Restorative Justice practices
  - consistently applying the College's Bullying and Harassment Policy
  - providing ongoing counselling, whenever necessary, to reinforce the value of supportive relationships.

**Expectations of students:**
- Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.
- Refuse to be involved in any form of bullying, either alone or as part of a group.
- Report any incident or suspected incident to a trusted adult at the College (Teacher, Mentor Teacher, Head of House, Student Wellbeing Leader).
- Take some form of preventive or supportive action (e.g. speak up on a person's behalf) if you feel safe to do so.

**Advice for parents and family members:**
- Watch for signs of distress in your child such as unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing personal belongings, request for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising.
- Take an active interest in your child's social life and acquaintances, encouraging out of school social contact.
- Encourage your child to take the initiative by immediately telling a staff member about any bullying incident.
- Keep a written record of what is happening – who, what, when, why, how.
- Discourage retaliation.
- Be willing to attend interviews at the College if your child is involved in any bullying incident.
- Be willing to inform college personnel of any cases of suspected bullying, even if your own child is not directly affected.
- Teach your child the value of supportive relationships.
- If the problem continues get back in touch with the college.

**Procedure**
The following consequences will apply to a student identified as engaging in bullying behaviours or harassment. Heads of House may also invoke detention consequences or suspension in accordance with DET Student Engagement Guidelines when warranted.

First Offence
- Formal warning issued that the bullying behaviour must cease.
- Mediation and conferencing with involved parties undertaken to attempt resolution.

Second Offence
- Bullying/Harassment Notice issued informing parents of the College's concerns and consequences of further unacceptable behaviour.
- A Student Support Group meeting may be convened.

Third Offence
- Suspension procedures will be instigated.
- Repeated bullying behaviour may lead to exclusion from the College.

**Related Policies and Codes**
Child Protection
Child Safety Code of Conduct
Student Code of Conduct
Staff Code of Conduct
Parent Code of Conduct
Student Engagement and Inclusion
Student Behaviour
Equal Opportunity

**Evaluation**
This policy will be reviewed every three years.
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| Key Reviewer | Date Ratified | Next Review |
|---|---|---|
| Wayne Haworth | 30 October 2017 | 30 October 2018 |

| Signatures | |
|---|---|
| | |
| Wayne Haworth | Richard Frazer |
| **Principal** | **School Council President** |