# BULLYING & HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY	Charles La Trobe College In partnership with LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

*Charles La Trobe College takes a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse and is fully committed to ensuring that its strategies, policies, procedures and practices meet all **Child Safety Standards as specified in Ministerial Order No. 870 (2015)***

Charles La Trobe College is committed to providing a safe and caring environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching. **Bullying and harassment in any of its forms is not be tolerated at Charles La Trobe College.**

RATIONALE

Everyone **-** children, staff and parents – have the right to a safe school environment which is free from bullying of any kind. Bullying affects everyone and it is the responsibility of all members of our community to address and prevent its occurrence.

As per DET requirements we include a statement about bullying and cyberbullying behaviours in the Rights and Responsibilities section of our Student Engagement Policy.

As required by DET, the College Student Engagement Policy includes a positive statement about the school's values and philosophy, and the related programs and strategies being implemented by the school to promote student engagement, high attendance and positive behaviours (see: Department resources).

PURPOSE

- To create a safe and respectful school environment and prevent bullying, cyber bullying and other unacceptable behaviours.
- To ensure the wellbeing of children and young people through the creation and maintenance of a child safe environment.
- To ensure Charles La Trobe College complies with DET policy and guidelines.
- To further empower children who are key stakeholders within our organisation.
- To ensure the school has in place strategies to enhance compliance with the Child Safe Standards 2, 4 and 7.
- To ensure the school discharges its duty of care towards children.

Definitions

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upsets or hurts another person or damages their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is

an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.

Cyberbullying is direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces.

Homophobic Bullying on the basis of sexuality is a common experience for young people who are same sex attracted or for those who may not behave according to gender stereotypes.

Harassment is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation to a person.

Categories of bullying include:

- direct physical bullying (hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing or damaging property)
- direct verbal bullying (name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, racist remarks or verbal abuse),
- indirect verbal bullying (lying or spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes, mimicking or encouraging others to socially exclude someone) and,
- cyberbullying (direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies including harassment using a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory website or deliberately excluding someone from social spaces).

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

Mutual conflict involves an argument or disagreement between people but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.

- Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others.
- Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If someone is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.
- 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 should be ignored or condoned as these are unacceptable behaviours.

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IMPLEMENTATION

Charles La Trobe College has **zero tolerance of bullying and of harassment in any form.** The wellbeing of every young person at the school is our highest priority. The school encourages all children to speak up when bullying or harassment is encountered. The school will:

− promote and support safe and respectful learning environments where bullying is not tolerated
− provide clear definitions of what is and what is not bullying, including descriptions of the different subtypes of bullying
− put in place whole-school strategies and initiatives as outlined in DET's anti-bullying policy
− provide training for staff and volunteers about the school's child safe culture and the anti-bullying policy
− develop a Student Engagement Policy that includes processes and strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of bullying and other forms of unacceptable behaviour
− include a statement about bullying and cyberbullying behaviours in the Rights and Responsibilities section of the Student Engagement Policy
− involve children, staff and parents in updating the Student Engagement Policy.
− take a whole-school approach focusing on safety and wellbeing
− consistently respond to all incidents of bullying that have been reported to the school and ensure that planned interventions are used to respond to these incidents
− ensure that support is provided to any student who has been affected by, engaged in or witnessed bullying behaviour
− provide regular updates, within the bounds of privacy legislation, to parents or caregivers about the management of incidents
− address cyber bullying as part of its Internet / Social Media Policy.

Constructive strategies to deal with 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 sanctions and negative consequences

The school will ensure the policy is easily accessible within the school community and published on the school's website.

Please refer to the school specific procedures below.

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EVALUATION/CONSULTATION

This policy will be reviewed **annually** as part of preparing the Annual Report or if guidelines change (latest DET update May 2019). This policy was reviewed in June/July 2019.

RATIFICATION

The first update was ratified by the College Council on 15th February, 2018.

This policy does not require school council ratification however consultation is required. The school council was consulted in June 2019.

REFERENCES

Child Safe Policy, the *Duty of Care Policy, the Gender Identity Policy, the Mobile Phones, Use by Children Policy*, the *Internet Use/Social Media Policy* and the *Student Engagement Policy.*

Bullying No Way! and the National Safe Schools Framework.

For further information, including information on sexual diversity, the school will refer to the DET resources at the website below. www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/pages/bullying.aspx

COLLEGE SPECIFIC PROCEDURES

Guidelines

1. A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment in a consistent and systematic way.

2. All new students and staff will be informed of the anti-harassment policy and practices at the commencement of their time at the school.

3. All complaints of harassment will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

4. Charles La Trobe College will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

5. Staff programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies for dealing with these issues.

6. There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Anti-Bullying (including cyber bullying) and Anti- Harassment Policy guidelines and procedures.

Strategies

Constructive strategies to deal with 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 sanctions and negative consequences.

The Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy of the school will be widely promoted to students, staff, parents/carers and the local community.

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

The School Leadership Team and the teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all school members in situations of bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, by thoroughly investigating all complaints while respecting the need for confidentiality, notifying parents/carers and planning interventions.

If a teacher feels that a student is at serious and imminent risk from bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment then it is their professional duty to pass on the information to an appropriate person in order to ensure appropriate support for the student. It is important that teachers document fully their interaction with the student and to verify the actions taken.

Student programs will be organized to raise student awareness about bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment, to provide a forum for discussion of matters and to aid development of attitudes. Some matters will be dealt with formally in the curriculum and in peer support programs, leadership programs, extra-curricular programs and occasional activities run by outside experts and workers. The curriculum will include anti-bullying messages and strategies in line with current DET materials e.g. 'The Friendly Schools' and 'No Blame Approach to Bullying' programs.

Professional development will be provided for staff relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment and proven strategies to address these issues in classrooms will be shared with all staff.

The school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site in-service activities to assist staff in responding appropriately to bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment issues

Disciplinary consequences for bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will comply with the school's Welfare and Discipline Policy. The Principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with DET guidelines.

Why do we have a Policy on BULLYING & HARASSMENT?

To provide a safe and friendly college environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others. All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

What are the effects of bullying and harassment?

- o poor health – anxiety, depression

- o lower self esteem

- o reduced study performance

- o missed classes, social withdrawal

- o reduced career prospects

- o Am I bullying or harassing someone?

- o If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- o check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate.

- o stop it and apologise (seek mediation)

- o take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable

- o talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues.

<u>*What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?*</u>

"I will ignore it and it will go away." If anything it will make things worse – you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.

"I don't want to cause trouble." Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.

"Am I to blame?" Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

"Am I imagining things?" Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

Harassment or bullying can often make people feel:

- o embarrassed or ashamed

- o offended or humiliated

- o intimidated or frightened

- o uncomfortable.

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

Bullying can involve such things as:

- o grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving.

- o publicly excluding a person from your group

- o taking or breaking a person's property

- o knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk

- o teasing a person because of their looks.

Cyber-bullying can involve such things as:

- o Flaming: online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages

- o Harassment: Repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages

o Denigration: Posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships

o Outing: Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online

o Exclusion: Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group

o Cyberstalking: Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Harassment is usually directed at a person because of their gender, race, creed or abilities. It can be subtle or explicit.

Subtle (the most common) may include:

o Offensive staring and leering

o Unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference

o Racist or smutty comments or jokes

o Questions about another's sexual activity

o Persistent comments about a person's private life or family

o Physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body

o Offensive name calling.

Explicit (obvious) may include:

o Grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving etc.

o Unwelcome patting, touching, embracing

o Repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal

o Offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or e-mail

o Sexually and/or racially provocative remarks

o Displays of sexually graphic material– pornography

o   Requests for sexual favours

o   Extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?

o   Tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop.

o   Discuss the matter with a Coordinator, Student Welfare Coordinator or peer mediator, peer support leader or a teacher that you feel comfortable with.

How will your complaint be dealt with?

We will take all concerns seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially.

The flow chart below summarises school procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others.

Level 1   If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:

o   stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences

o   restorative questioning

o   think time detention

o   private conference

o   shared control discussion.

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, the matter will be referred to the Year Level Leader.

Level 2   If the bullying or harassment continues or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Student Welfare Coordinator and Year Level Leader. The SWC or YLL will:

o   meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract

o   provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities

o conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and "target"

o contact the families of both students.

Level 3 For "at risk" students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual "strength building" plan should be developed by the student welfare coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

Level 4 Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represent a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing referred to outside agencies for evaluation.

Note: The College may choose, if bullying or harassment persists or the initial incident is of such magnitude, that parents/carers will be contacted and consequences implemented consistent with the school's Student Code of Conduct. Furthermore, the Principal may commence formal disciplinary action in line with ***Effective Schools are Engaging Schools - Student Engagement Policy Guidelines*** *(DET)* at any stage in the process depending on contextual information relating to the severity of the bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment.