Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

ST ANDREWS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy

PREAMBLE

All policy, protocols and procedures flow from the St Andrews Christian College Mission Statement:

"To educate our students so that they are well skilled, understand life on the basis of biblical truth, and are motivated to walk with God and serve Him in their lives, so that they will be a positive Christian influence in the world."

POLICY DOCUMENT INFORMATION

TITLE:	Bullying & Harassment Prevention
AUTHORS:	C. Wansbrough; M. Brewer; S Leslie
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:	DET Victoria Crest Education
PURPOSE:	To provide policy and direction for all the College Community.
RELATED DOCUMENTS:	Digital Technology Use Agreements Pastoral Care & Student Wellbeing Policy Behaviour Management & Restorative Practices Policy

KEY DATES

FIRST ISSUED:	November 2020
ISSUE DATE:	October 2026
REVIEW DATE:	2028

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1. RATIONALE

As a Christian learning community our purpose is to work together as the body of Christ, for the glory of God.

We are committed to providing a nurturing environment where everyone feels safe, secure and valued, where students and staff are helped, encouraged and built up by each other.

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."

1 Thessalonians 5:11-13 (NIV)

St Andrews Christian College does not tolerate harassment or bullying in any form. Students and staff will have the right of respect from others, the right to learn or teach and a right to feel safe and secure in the school environment, an environment that is free from unlawful discrimination, violence, sexual harassment, victimisation, vilification and bullying.

2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Zero tolerance for harassment or bullying, in all their forms.**
  Our College is a **'No Put Down' Zone.**
- **Vigilance to maintain cyber safety.**
- **Effective management of investigation into allegations of harassment and bullying.**
- **Simple, well-known processes for lodging a complaint**.
- **The restoration and healing of broken relationships.**
- **Staff training and resourcing.**

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 *Bullying and harassment within the school* are 'broadly defined as intentional and repetitive actions taken to intimidate or discomfort.

3.2 *Forms of Bullying and Harassment*

3.2.1 Physical

Examples:
Pushing, hitting, fighting, punching, poking, spitting.
Hiding, damaging or destroying property.

3.2.2 Sexual

Examples:

- Touching or brushing against another person in a sexual manner.
- Sexual assault, or enacting sexual acts in front of another person.
- Sexually-oriented jokes.
- Drawings of, or writing about someone's body, using crude language.
- Comments about someone's morals or appearance.
- Unwanted invitations of a sexual nature.
- Intrusive questions about someone's private life.

3.2.3 Verbal

Examples:

- Comments about appearance, race, cultural beliefs, disability, weaknesses, family, etc.
- Put-downs, offensive names/sounds, teasing, taunting, rude comments, joking, mocking, mimicking, threats and shouting.

- Public criticism or ridicule of another's actions or appearance, particularly without having first given the person the dignity of discussing the issue personally and privately.
- Malicious gossip, rumours or words to cause embarrassment.

3.2.4 Non-verbal

Examples:

- Rude gestures.
- Taunting looks or body language used to intimidate others.

3.2.5 Extortion

Examples:

- Forcing students to hand over lunches/money.
- Forcing students to do acts of service.

3.2.6 Exclusion

Example:

- Excluding others from activities or friendship groups to hurt, frighten, embarrass or humiliate.

3.2.7 Victimisation

Examples:

- Threatening or harming a person who has made a complaint or intends to make a complaint.
- Threatening or harming a person who acts as a witness or intends to act as a witness.
- Threatening or harming a person who supports a victim or intends to support a victim.

3.2.8 Pictures and Written Material

Examples:

- Insulting or vilifying notes or electronic messages (also see Internet Usage Policy) about, or to a person.
- The display or presentation of sexually suggestive or offensive pictures or materials with views to embarrass or give unwanted attention to a person.
- Graffiti about others, including crude words or drawings.
- Posting of online images or text to humiliate, frighten or offend another person.

Note 1: Many types of harassment are against state and/or federal anti-discrimination laws which include:

- race
- ethno-religion
- age
- marital status
- disability (including physical, intellectual, psychiatric, learning disability, infectious disease)
- sexual preference (real or perceived) and transgender identity

4. CYBER BULLYING

Cyber-Bullying is becoming a major issue for schools and students. It involves bullying that is carried out through the internet using a digital device. It is extremely invasive and more likely to occur outside of school hours. Cyber-Bullying includes:

- **Pranking:** Repeated hang ups, anonymous mocking or threatening phone calls.

- **Image sharing:** Forwarding or sharing unflattering or private images without permission.
- **Sexually explicit images:** People of any age, who forward or share images of a sexual nature of a person under 18 need to be aware that this is a criminal offence (child pornography) that may result in prosecution.
- **Text and email:** Sending insulting or threatening text messages or emails.
- **Personal online information:** Publishing online someone's private, personal or embarrassing information without permission, or spreading rumours online.
- **Identity theft:** Assuming someone's identity online and negatively representing them in a way that damages their reputation or relationships.
- **Hate sites:** Creating hate sites or implementing social exclusion campaigns on social networking.

Note 2: ***There are situations or behaviours which, although unpleasant or distressing, do not constitute harassment or bullying***. These include:

- **Mutual conflict** – where two people disagree or are in conflict, but there is no imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation or spite.
- **Single episode acts** - nastiness, hurtful acts or physical or verbal aggression will occur and should incur the disciplinary consequences of the College. However, they do not constitute bullying, which is repeated, and targeted to one person.
- **Social rejection or dislike** – Some personalities clash and there are always people with whom we don't wish to share a close relationship. Whilst this may cause disappointment or other emotional reactions, it is not classed as bullying or harassment, as long as it isn't expressed as personal attack doesn't seek to cause others to dislike a person, or exclusion is used as a form of social control or punishment of a single person by a group.

5. GENERAL PRACTICES

5.1 *Staff employed at the College are expected to:*

- Be role models in word and action at all times.
- Be alert to signs of distress or evidence of bullying.
- Make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by active patrolling during yard duty.
- Arrive at class on time and move promptly between periods.
- Take steps to support both victim and perpetrator and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk.
- Report suspected incidents to the appropriate Staff member, Home Room Teacher, Year Level Coordinator / Section Head, promptly, and ensure that all reported incidents are followed up appropriately.
- Ensure that you aren't addressing bullying behaviour by responding in an overbearing or derogatory manner.
- Provide programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving. Education will include age specific programs within appropriate school curriculum to help students recognise and prevent bullying.
- Increase the College community's awareness on the characteristics of bullying and harassment and suggest strategies to counteract them via newsletter items and assemblies.

5.2 *Students at the College are expected to:*

- Take a stand and lend a hand against bullying at the College.
- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.
- If present when bullying occurs, and if appropriate, take some form of preventative action.
- Report the incident or suspected incident to staff and / or parents and help break down the code of secrecy.
- Work collaboratively to ensure that the College is a bully-free school where no-one is put down.
- Encourage each other and build each other up, God's way.

5.3 *Parents are expected to:*

- Watch for signs of distress in their children, e.g. an unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothing, or bruising.
- Take an active interest in their child's social life and acquaintances, including online networks.
- Advise their child to tell a staff member about the incident. If possible and depending on severity, allow their child to report and deal with the situation themselves. Children can gain much respect through taking initiative and dealing with the problem and reporting the incident without parental involvement.
- Communicate to their child that parental involvement if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation.
- Inform the College if bullying is suspected or if their child is reluctant to speak with staff.
- Keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how).
- Not encourage retaliation.
- Be willing to attend interviews at the College if their child is involved in any bullying incident.
- Be willing to inform the College of any cases of suspected bullying – even if their child is directly / indirectly involved.
- Work directly with staff to find effective solutions.
- In cyber bullying cases, keep copies of any offensive emails or messages.

6. CONSEQUENCES / INTERVENTION

- Consequences of bullying will be in line with our *Student Nurture and Discipline Policy*.
- All incidents of bullying are treated seriously regardless of the type of bullying that takes place, however the consequences may vary depending upon the type of bullying and frequency.
- All students who are identified as behaving in a bullying manner will receive appropriate support, be exhorted by a member of staff to desist and given consequences as outlined in our *Student Nurture and Discipline Policy*. In very serious cases, the Police may be notified by the College.
- There will be ongoing communication with parents with regard to the bullying and the maintenance of the College as a safe environment for all members of our school community.
- The degree of severity will depend on the nature of the incident, the age and maturity of those involved and the duration of the bullying.

6.1 The consequences will include one or more of the following:

- Withdrawal of privileges.
- Letter home to parents.
- Community Service.
- Detention(s) – lunchtime or after school.
- Interview with parent / student / Year Level Coordinator / Head of Section.
- Internal or external suspension.
- Written apology to the victim and the College.
- Referral to external professional counselling.
- Referral to a social welfare agency.
- Referral to a behavioural change program.
- Police involvement.
- Expulsion, if severe behaviour continues unabated and if the nature of the incident warrants this level of response.
- Ongoing support as well as ongoing counselling for the 'victim' of the bullying may also be recommended.

6.2 The process of dealing with cyberspace bullies will be as follows:

- If a student is the victim of intimidating or denigrating information, the student will print the offensive material, or bring in the relevant mobile phone, SMS message or screen shots and present it to the relevant Section Head. ***Do not forward the email, text or image to anyone as this could be interpreted as spreading inappropriate material.***
- Parents of the victim and perpetrator of the bullying incident will be fully informed of the incident and the intended consequences.
- If, after investigation, the offensive material is found to be genuine then the perpetrator will receive a punishment ranging from a one day internal / external suspension to immediate expulsion (at the discretion of the College), depending on the severity of the offensive material. Under certain circumstances and at the discretion of the Principal, the student may be able to return to the College. They will need to prove that that the offensive material has been removed where possible and suitable restitution of the victim has been made or organised. This may involve a written apology or supervised mediation.
- The College will take a proactive stance on this form of bullying by regularly reminding the student body of their responsibilities towards one another as well as to the proper and wise use of technology. This will be done through sectional assemblies, the use of the ICT agreement contract, student diary and the College's newsletter.

6.3 Privacy considerations

- The College is not required to share information with a victim or his / her family about consequences given to a perpetrator.
- The College understands that aggrieved people desire that fair discipline be given. Leadership will seek always for the best interest of children. The College seeks Godly wisdom and guidance how to best deal with each situation. It is expected that all parties respect and trust the decisions of College leadership.
- Parents and students are not to advise the College on any disciplinary action they desire to be given to other parties.

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7. RESOURCES

The Bully Stoppers Program provides practical advice, information and strategies to support everyone to 'make a stand, lend a hand' and stop bullying. **www.education.vic.gov.au/bullystoppers**

7.1 Information and resources for staff can be found on the Bully Stoppers website

Information and help on the website include:

- Identifying and Addressing Bullying.
- Individual Strategies.
- Classroom Strategies.
- Behaviour Support Plans.
- Case Studies.
- Classroom Resources.
- Classroom and Cyber Safety.
- Interactive Learning Modules.
- Helpful Resources.
- Being Cool Online.

7.2 Information and resources for students can be found on the Bully Stoppers website

Information available includes:

- I'm Being Bullied.
- Why am I Being Bullied?
- I've Been Called a Bully.
- I Know Someone who's Being Bullied.
- Students and Cyber Safety.
- Interactive Learning Modules.
- Helpful Resources.

7.3 *Information and help for parents can be found on the Bully Stoppers website*

Information available includes:

- My Child is Being Bullied.
- Warning Signs of Bullying.
- My Child Has Seen Bullying.
- My Child Is Using Bullying Behaviour.
- Why Might a Student Bully?
- Talk to Your School.
- Adult Bullying.
- Parents and Cyber-Safety.
- Interactive Learning Modules.
- Helpful Resources.

8. DIRECTION

It is expected that all staff and volunteers follow this policy.

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APPENDIX 1
Sexual Harassment or Assault

The sexual harassment of students or staff is unlawful under the Federal Sex Discrimination Act 1984, which prohibits:

- The sexual harassment of an adult student (i.e. a student who is aged 16 years or older) by another adult student; and
- The sexual harassment of staff or applicants for staff positions by other staff members or adult students.

The sexual assault of any person is ***a crime*** and will be reported to the Victoria Police.

As a Christian school, the College will uphold the highest standards of Christian behaviour and adhere to our **Statement of Belief**. We stand against unjust or unfair discrimination against any member of the College community and will not permit any form of harassment to go unpunished.

Appropriate action, including dismissal or expulsion, will be taken in any proven instances of harassment or unfair discrimination.

Awareness and Duty of Care

Like most forms of harassment and bullying, sexual harassment is covert, that is, it is kept secret or hidden, and this forms a significant part of the hurt and fear perpetrated on the victim. Fear, shame and confusion often prevent the victim from disclosing the harassment or making a formal complaint. This is particularly the case where actual assault or rape has occurred.

Teachers therefore need to be extremely alert to changes in behaviour or emotional state, unexplained absence or any other signs of distress in students, especially your class or homeroom group.

- Follow-up any reports a student may make, however vague or uncertain.
- Consider age and maturity in your response, and be balanced and appropriate.
- Investigate further, by asking other students.
- Be vigilant where there is a previous history of sexually-inappropriate behaviour.
- Be prepared to make a formal complaint to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) via the Complaints Report Form – Internal (staff). *(@Hub Policies, Forms and Templates)*

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APPENDIX 2

Investigation Process

The following principles apply to the investigation of alleged unacceptable conduct / harassment complaint:

- The process is **fair and transparent:** You will be given details of the alleged unacceptable conduct and a fair opportunity to respond; nothing will be decided until a full investigation has occurred. The College will ensure that all parties are kept up to date about its progress.
- The process is **supportive:** You are entitled to bring a support person to any interviews.
- The process is **flexible, respectful, thorough and as quick as possible:** Investigations may be simple or complex and time consuming, with many people needing to be interviewed. The College aims to complete investigations as quickly as we can while ensuring that the investigation is thorough and fair.
- The process is **confidential:** Although the College cannot guarantee confidentiality, so as to protect everyone involved in an unacceptable conduct investigation, the investigation is generally kept confidential and only those who strictly need to know will be aware of it.

Role of Witness

The College may ask participants to take part in an investigation as a witness to alleged unacceptable conduct. This is to ensure that alleged unacceptable conduct is properly investigated.

Where staff participate as a witness they can be assured that they will be fully supported and that the College will not tolerate reprisal action or victimisation against them.

Role of Support Person

People may bring a support person to any interview that they are asked to participate in during an unacceptable conduct / harassment investigation – whether they are participating as the person under investigation or as a witness.

A support person must be an independent person who is not likely to be otherwise involved in the investigation. For example, it may be a family member, a colleague, Chaplain or friend.

A support person may:

- Participate in the meeting. They are not there to advocate or answer questions for you and must not be disruptive.
- Meet with you prior to the meeting.
- Call for a short break (or breaks) during the meeting so long as this is reasonable.

The selection or availability of a support person must not unduly delay the process.

POSSIBLE OUTCOME OF INVESTIGATION

The possible outcome of the investigation will depend on the circumstances and the nature of the complaint and the procedure followed to address the complaint.

Where an investigation results in a finding that a workplace participant has engaged in unacceptable behaviour in breach of this policy, that person may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or in the case of students, suspension or expulsion from the College.

Any disciplinary action is a confidential matter between all parties.

The College staff may take a range of other non-disciplinary outcomes to resolve a complaint, depending on the particular circumstances. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Training / counselling to assist in addressing the problems underpinning the complaint.

- Monitoring to ensure that there are no further problems.
- Implementing a new policy.
- Requiring an apology or an undertaking that certain behaviour will stop.
- Changing work arrangements or class arrangements.

Raising an allegation of harassment / unacceptable behaviour against another person in the workplace is a serious matter. Regardless of whether the complaint is substantiated, the act of raising the complaint will have significant and often permanent consequences both personally and professionally for the other party.

If someone is found to have raised a malicious or false complaint against another person in order to prejudice that person, they may also be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or ending their enrolment at the College.