Girton Grammar School Bendigo

ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

Girton Grammar School is committed to providing everyone in our School with a working and learning environment free from unfair, unwarranted harassment.

It is the School's goal to provide an environment where the physical, emotional, moral and educational health and well-being of students are fostered above all else. Bullying and harassment are not only school disciplinary matters but are illegal under Victorian and Commonwealth legislation.

So is victimisation of those who report bullying.

Bullying and harassment can occur wherever people work or play together. Sometimes people do not realise that their behaviour can be harmful and unfair to others, and also against the law.

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ANTI-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

BULLYING CAN BE:

PHYSICAL
Includes fighting, pushing, pinching, flicking, pulling hair, shoving, gesturing, standing over or invading someone's personal space, interfering with someone's personal property or making threats to do any of these things.

VERBAL
Includes name-calling, offensive language, putting people down behind their backs, picking on people because of appearance, disease or disability, making offensive or nuisance 'phone calls, spreading rumours, making threats.

SEXUAL
Includes touching or brushing against another in a sexual manner, sexually oriented jokes, drawings of, or writing about, someone's body, using rude names or commenting about someone's morals, unwanted invitations of a sexual nature, offensive questions about someone's body and/or someone's private life or encouraging or making others do so.

EXCLUSIONARY
Leaving people out of activities on purpose, ignoring someone's presence, not allowing them to join a group.

DISCRIMINATORY
Includes bullying, harassment or unfair exclusion on grounds of race, nationality, religion, sex/gender, disability, physical appearance, relationships and friendships.

VISUAL
Includes offensive notes, emails, SMS messages, inappropriate use of photographs, graffiti, drawings, posters.

CYBER BULLYING
Includes the use of electronic media to slander, defame, spread rumours, tease, provide unwanted attention, exclude, harass and cause discomfort. Often there is potential for such electronic communication to be spread widely, and a permanent record of the bullying is likely to exist. Under certain circumstances (such as harassment and making threats) cyber bullying is a criminal activity and is illegal. If you feel your safety is at risk, contact '000' or your local police. Police around Australia work together to reduce this type of crime and there are serious consequences if people participate in such activities.

People who are bullied and harassed can feel:

- Unhappy, isolated, frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry, unfairly treated, confused.

People who are bullied and harassed can experience:

- Difficulties in concentrating, working and sleeping.
- Disrupted relationships with family and friends.
- Difficulty with expressing emotions and sharing ideas.
- Loss of confidence and self-esteem.
- The desire to avoid social contact.

ADVICE TO STUDENTS

- Do not ignore comments or actions that upset you or make you feel uncomfortable.
- When another person says or does something which is unfair or bullying, please say one of these two sentences to the person:

  "I do not like you saying that to me."

  or

  "I do not like you doing that to me."
- Report the incident.
- ReachOut's website (www.reachout.com.au) contains valuable advice titled "What to do if you are being bullied".
- Specific advice about CYBER BULLYING, including seven practical steps for stopping cyber bullies, can also be found on the ReachOut website.

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METHODS OF REPORTING

Report in person or email at the earliest opportunity to any member of staff. All reports will then be passed onto a member of Senior Staff immediately. All reports will be dealt with confidentially.

SOME INAPPROPRIATE REACTIONS:

FROM THE VICTIM

"I'll ignore it and it will go away"
If anything, ignoring it makes it worse. It gives the impression that bullying is OK with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.

"I don't want to cause trouble"
Students have a right to feel safe at school. You are not causing trouble, you are standing up for yourself and for your rights, and of others being bullied.

"No-one can do anything about it"
Most cases of bullying are sorted out simply, especially if reported straight away. The School is committed to solving these problems.

"You shouldn't dob"
It takes courage and strength of character to stand up for your rights and those of others. Bullying continues when people do nothing.

FROM THE BULLY

"I was just mucking around, can't they take a joke?"
This is the most common response to bullying. It is not a joke to put someone down, ridicule or exclude them, make them feel uncomfortable, push them around or take their things. This is bullying.

"It's just a natural part of growing up"
There is nothing acceptable about being victimised. Students have a right to feel safe at school, as well as at home.

ROLE OF STUDENTS

If you witness bullying:

- Don't join in – being part of a group which is bullying someone is being a bully.
- Report bullying so that both the person being bullied and the bully can receive help.
- You are obliged to report bullying and harassment.
- Try to influence those who are bullying to stop.

SPECIFIC ADVICE TO BYSTANDERS:

A bystander is a person who does not become actively involved in a situation where someone else requires help and in this way is understood to be a passive observer, an onlooker who watches something happening, but stays on the sidelines and doesn't intervene or get help, even if someone needs it.

A bystanders is a person who is part of a crowd that is watching a playground fight. They are the audience that engages in the spectacle, and watches as a drama unfolds. Though they don't actively participate, they encourage the perpetrators, who will feel driven on by the audience.

A BYSTANDER COULD INCLUDE:

- Observing an incidident in the playground.
- Reading inappropriate online interactions.

BYSTANDERS SHOULD KNOW THAT:

- When they do object, in more than half the cases the bullying actually stops.
- The behaviour of the bully is wrong.

IF YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED:

- Let the person doing the bullying know what they are doing is bullying
- Refuse to join in with their bullying and walk away
- Support the student who is being bullied
- Ask a teacher or support person for help

- Support your friends and protect them from bullying by being there for them. Students who are alone are more likely to be the target of bullying so encourage your friends to be aware of other students who are left out or on their own in the schoolyard.

ADVICE TO FRIENDS OF VICTIMS:

If your friend is a victim of bullying, you will know this by his or her behaviour or as a result of someone, perhaps them, telling you.

AS A FRIEND YOU SHOULD:

- Listen and support your friend.
- Encourage assistance eg, approach your teacher, House Tutor, Head of House or trusted adult.
- Be sure that your friend is not left on his or her own, so include him or her in your activities.
- If you are aware of the incident (you saw or read it) you should be willing to provide an honest account of it.

ROLE OF PARENTS

DO NOT IGNORE BULLYING

What to look out for: Symptoms such as not wishing to go to School; failing to meet deadlines; apparent sadness; uncharacteristic quietness may be some indicators of a person being bullied.

WHAT TO DO

No matter what Year your child is in, if you feel he/she is being bullied please contact a member of staff. In many cases your child may not wish you to contact the School in case "things get worse". It is very difficult to deal effectively with bullying if it is not reported. Most bullying takes place away from teachers' eyes, and often outside the School's grounds.

ROLE OF STAFF

All Staff have an important role to play in detecting and reporting incidents of suspected harassment, whether these be inside or outside the classroom. This applies especially to any repeated or chronic behaviour.

Any of the following staff members should be notified:

- House Tutor
- The relevant Head of House
- Deputy Head
- Head of Student Wellbeing & Pastoral Care
- Head of Transition
- Head of Junior School
- Deputy Head of Junior School
- Junior School class teacher

Any staff member receiving a notification must report it promptly to a member of Senior Staff, who must then take action.

MANAGEMENT OF REPORTS

STAGE 1: SHARING THE CONCERN

Once a person lodges a Report alleging bullying or unfair harassment the following shall occur:

- The person who claims to have been bullied will be interviewed and may be asked to give an account of the problem orally or in writing. Specific (and sometimes very detailed) questioning about any background or history to the incident may be asked. This may include questions about previous incidents or the relationship with the alleged bully and whether any possible provocation or misunderstanding has occurred.
- As soon as possible the accused person will be seen and informed of the allegation. The person will provide his or her version of the events. Specifically, he or she will be asked to comment on whether the allegation is true. Other relevant questions as outlined in point 1 above may also be asked.

- A Senior Management staff member will then consider the version of events. Witnesses may be interviewed. It may be appropriate to conduct a meeting between the parties or take other action considered appropriate.

If it is clear that harassment has occurred, then further action may include the following:

- The victim and bully will be advised of the findings.
- The person accused will be taken through the events and the inappropriateness of harassing behaviour will be fully explained. Responses, such as "I was only joking" or "he's too sensitive" and the like will be explained as unacceptable. The demanded guidelines for future behaviour will also be set out.
- At this point resolution will normally occur, with both parties understanding how they must act appropriately in the future.
- The victim of the harassment will be seen regularly over the next few weeks and periodically after this, to determine whether the perpetrator has fulfilled his or her commitments.

STAGE 2: DISCIPLINARY

- If the bullying behaviour does not recur, the matter will end. If the unacceptable behaviour does not stop, then contact will be made with parents who may be asked, together with their student/child, to meet with the Deputy Head, Head of Junior School or the Head. At this meeting, a firm commitment to the Anti-Bullying and Harrassment Policy will be demanded of the student. Significant penalties under the School's disciplinary practices are likely to be imposed at the discretion of the Head or Deputy Head.
- The parents of any victim of such bullying behaviour will be informed of the School's handling of the matter as deemed necessary.
- The perpetrator's behaviour will be monitored regularly in the following months.

STAGE 3: SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION

Withdrawal/Exclusion

A repeat of an issue dealt with via the second stage could lead to the Head suspending the guilty party/parties from Girton Grammar School. Failure to amend behaviour after this step may lead to total exclusion from the School.

Shades of Grey

The Head and Staff must take into account the degree and extent of bullying behaviour along with any extenuating circumstances. For example, more extreme behaviour may require a Stage 2 or Stage 3 response at the outset.

The School reserves the right, subject to State and Commonwealth law, to assess each situation on its merits and to respond accordingly. The final decision at School level is the Head's.

Further useful internet links are available through the electronic version of this policy available on the School's website (***www.girton.vic.edu.au***)

USEFUL LINKS:

Kids Helpline - Phone: 1800 55 1800 (www.kidshelpline.com.au)
This site provides information about the Kids' Help Line free 24 hour telephone and online counselling service. Other useful information can also accessed through this site, including strategies to help children and parents deal with bullying.

Beyond Blue - Phone: 1300 22 4636 (www.beyondblue.org.au)
This site provides contact details and professional advice for people who feel as though they may be suffering from depression.

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner (www.esafety.gov.au)
The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner is a one-stop-shop for online safety for children, parents and educators.

ReachOut (www.reachout.com.au)
An excellent site which provides advice about a range of youth related issues including bullying.

Evelyn Field OAM (www.bullying.com.au)
This site contains valuable information for parents, teachers and students.

Childnet International (www.childnet.com)
Award winning website providing practical advice about internet safety. Specific sections for students, teachers and parents are included on this site.

Bullying. No Way! (www.bullyingnoway.com.au)
Plenty of useful information and fun resources for young people and adults can be found on this site.

Friendly Schools (www.friendlyschools.com.au)
Another site containing valuable information with sections for young people, parents and teachers.

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