

Anti-Bullying (Student) Policy

1. RATIONALE

The Verity Christian College Community is committed to maintaining a work and student environment that manifests Christian relational values and practices. This policy is directed specifically at ensuring that people feel safe from all kinds of harassment or un-Christian discrimination whether implied, or actual, physical or verbal. It is designed to define proscribed unacceptable behaviours, and to prescribe procedures for dealing with perceived or alleged occurrences of those behaviours.

2. SCOPE

All staff will be made aware of this policy as part of their induction and annual professional development.

3. RELATED POLICIES / DOCUMENTS

- *VCCP7.01 - Detention Policy*
- *VCCP7.5 - Student Discipline Policy*
- *VCC11.61 - Anti-Bullying Information for Parents*
- *VCCF12.7 - Anti-Bullying Complaint Form*

4. LEGISLATION / REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)*

5. DEFINITIONS

Bullying: is defined as actions taken to intimidate or discomfort another person in the workplace, classroom or playground. It may be the result of malicious intent, insensitivity or a misuse of legitimate power. For example:

- **Because of Position** - a person who is in charge of a function within the College will have power of position over those they lead.
- **Because of Personality** - a person who is outgoing, confident, or physically imposing may have a sense of power or intimidation over those he/she works with.

Any bullying and misuse of power which seeks to exalt the ego or achieve personal gain of the one with power are both un-Christian and unacceptable in the College community. The existence of position and personality are God-given for the purposes of good leadership, investing in the benefit of others, and pursuing the good of the college community. That is, leadership and working relationships are to be constrained by the Christian imperative of caring for and serving others.

Cyber-Bullying: refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as social media sites, the internet or private messaging.

Sexual Harassment: If the harassment is seen to be on the basis of gender or sexuality, it may be regarded as Sexual Harassment. In particular:

- Intimidation because of gender – intimidation, manipulation, or degrading another person because of the perception of gender differences or vulnerability.
- Discomfort, embarrassment, or threat of a sexual nature.

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Discrimination: If harassment is seen to be on the basis of gender, race, colour, parentage, marital status, pregnancy, breastfeeding, age, political belief or activity, trade union activity, language, culture, disability, or religion, they may be regarded as acts of illegal discrimination. Further, if exclusions from involvement or privilege are made on the basis of the above issues, they may be regarded as acts of illegal discrimination. By way of exception, in matters where Biblical Christianity clearly draws distinctions, the College will not regard such distinctions as illegal discrimination. For example, if a student identified themselves as homosexual, the College would regard their disposition as a violation of Biblical Christian morality. The College would not regard its position as illegal discrimination; however, any vilification or harassment of such a student would be considered unacceptable and dealt with accordingly under this policy.

6. PROCEDURES

6.1. Forms of Bullying

The College recognises its responsibility to be vigilant to identify and deal with occurrences of bullying that become evident among students or other members of the College community, including staff and parents.

Note: Workplace bullying is detailed in *VCCP2.01 - Anti-Bullying (Staff) Policy*.

We regard the following actions to be included as forms of bullying:

- **Extortion:** e.g., forcing students to hand over lunches/ money or to do homework etc.
- **Language or body gestures:** that have the effect of causing discomfort, fear or intimidation; e.g., offensive or sexually suggestive words or gestures, hiding possessions, writing rude or suggestive notes, looks and body language used to intimidate others.
- **Malicious embarrassment:** actions or words that are calculated to cause embarrassment to another person.
- **Malicious exclusion:** maliciously excluding others from activities.
- **Malicious gossip:** the deliberate action of speaking to others about a third party with the intent of spreading rumours and non-truths which have the potential to cause hurt and embarrassment.
- **Physical harassment:** e.g., pushing, fighting, punching, kicking, damaging property, or touching in sexually suggestive or offensive ways.
- **Pictures or written material:** The display or presentation of sexually suggestive or otherwise offensive pictures or written material with view to embarrass or give unwanted attention to a person.
- **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.
- **Unreasonable or gratuitous demands:** making unreasonable or gratuitous demands in matters which are unwarranted, unjustified and done for no good reason.

6.2. Anti-Bullying Officer

An Anti-Bullying Officer will be appointed by the College Principal in recognition of their competence in the skills involved in the role. Initially this will be the College Chaplain.

6.2.1. Role of the Anti-Bullying Officer

The Anti-Bullying Officer's roles will be:

- To be the first point of contact for a person who perceives that they are a victim of bullying.
- To gather information regarding the alleged incident.
- To assure the complainant of the College's support and commitment to a proper and just resolution of the issue.
- To inform the complainant of their rights under College policy and the law, and the correct procedures for accessing those rights.
- Facilitation of mediation process.

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- Facilitation of report to Principal.

6.2.2. Professional Development of the Anti-Bullying Officer

The College will undertake to provide the Anti-Bullying Officer with appropriate training and professional development to ensure that they are equipped to properly carry out their responsibilities.

6.3. Procedures for addressing Students involved in Bullying

The appropriate action for a student who feels they are a victim of bullying is to report the incident or concern to a teacher. Parents, who become aware that their child may be a victim, should immediately contact their child's teacher. In most cases, the teacher will carry out the necessary disciplinary and reconciliation measures. Some cases may be immediately referred to the Principal. Details of reported incidents are to be recorded on **VCCF12.7 - Anti-Bullying Complaint Form**.

If students who have been dealt with over such behaviour continue to violate, they be appropriately disciplined and counselled by or on behalf of the Principal. Parents will be informed of the issues surrounding the disciplinary action.

Continuation of such behaviour could later result in the case being referred to the Principal for consideration of further disciplinary actions in accordance with **VCCP7.01 - Detention Policy** and **VCCP7.5 - Student Discipline Policy**.

6.4. Investigation

The Anti-Bullying Officer will request of the Principal instruction regarding investigation of the issues surrounding the complaint with view to understanding with whom the fault(s), if any, may lie.

A full written report of the investigation will be made and the Principal will instruct the Anti-Bullying Officer regarding the use of the information contained in the report. If the investigation yields evidence of criminal behaviour, the Principal be responsible to report the incident to the Youth Liaison Officer.

If both parties agree to a mediation meeting, the Anti-Bullying Officer will facilitate such a meeting within 7 days of agreement. The Anti-Bullying Officer will report to the Principal in regards to the progress of such arrangements.

If both parties do not agree to mediation, the Anti-Bullying Officer will present a report to the Principal who will determine one of the following courses of action:

- If there appears conclusive evidence of fault, the Principal will carry out necessary disciplinary action.
- If no clear fault can be established, the Principal may require the people concerned to show cause why they are not willing to attend a mediation meeting.

If the mediation process fails to produce its objectives, the Principal will give appropriate directions to either or both parties involved in the complaint.

6.5. Procedures for addressing allegations of Bullying of a student by a member of the College staff or another adult.

The student (or parent on behalf of the student) should report the matter to the Anti-Bullying Officer. The following steps will be taken:

1. The Anti-Bullying Officer will meet with the parent and student to clarify the allegation and inform them of the procedures in place within the College for the resolution of bullying issues. Full notes need to be made of this interview.
2. The Anti-Bullying Officer should meet with the staff member to discuss the issue and prepare for a meeting with the parents and student.
3. The Anti-Bullying Officer will invite the parent, with the student, to meet with the Anti-Bullying Officer and the staff member concerned to air the complaint and seek reconciliation and restitution.
4. If this meeting resolves the issue to the parents' and student's satisfaction, no further action need be taken. The Anti-Bullying Officer will make report of the meeting and give a copy to the Principal.
5. If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved, the Anti-Bullying Officer will:
 - ask the parent to make a written complaint on **VCCF12.7 - Anti-Bullying Complaint Form**

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- request of the Principal instruction regarding investigation of the issues surrounding the complaint with view to understanding with whom the fault(s), if any, may lie. A copy of the complaint and the investigation report should be given to the Principal.
- meet with the staff member against whom the complaint has been made, to:
 - show them the written complaint
 - invite them to make a written reply to the allegations
 - inform them of the processes which will be followed to resolve the issue
- facilitate a Mediation Meeting by agreement between the Anti-Bullying Officer and the parents. The student may or may not be involved in the Mediation Meeting.

6. The procedures now follow from **Section 6.6 - The Mediation Meeting**

In the absence of an Anti-Bullying Officer, the Principal will act in this role.

6.6. The Mediation Meeting

Generally, the aim of the mediation meeting will be to resolve the issue at stake with minimal disruption to the people concerned and the life and ministry of the College. In particular, the objectives of the meeting will be:

- To facilitate open and honest communication between the parties
- To bring an awareness of the wrongdoing and its effects on people.
- To facilitate repentance and the restoration of the relationships.

The following people should attend a mediation meeting:

- The parties in dispute
- A support person for each party (e.g. Counsellor, pastor, spouse)
- Anti-Bullying Officer
- A Christian Mediator from outside of the College and Church staff.

In preparation for the Mediation Meeting, the Anti-Bullying Officer will meet with the mediator before the Mediation Meeting to brief the mediator and give them copies of relevant documents. The protocols of the Mediation Meeting will be:

- The Anti-Bullying Officer will introduce all parties to each other, briefly state the purpose and protocols of the meeting, and then hand the meeting over to the mediator.
- The Mediator will be in charge of the meeting and will be assisted by the Anti-Bullying Officer.
- Participants in the meeting will speak through the mediator at all times unless asked by the mediator to address others directly.
- At the conclusion of the meeting the Anti-Bullying Officer will summarise the current position, indicate future action, and then close the meeting.
- The Anti-Bullying Officer will be responsible for making full report of the meeting to the Principal.

To achieve the goals of mediation, several meetings may be necessary. A follow up process and evaluation meeting may also be needed.

6.7. Staff, Student, and Parent Orientation

The staff will be involved in one session each year where the spirit and details of this policy are explained and discussed.

Students will be instructed at school assemblies and in PDHPE classes concerning their responsibilities and support in matters of Harassment, Bullying, and Discrimination.

Parents will be given **VCC11.61 - Anti-Bullying Information for Parents** each year. The issue will also be addressed

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at Parent Orientation Meetings.

7. CONTACTS

Anti-Bullying Officer: to be appointed

Youth Liaison Officer: Griffith Police Youth Liaison Officer - Jasmine Hussain (02 69694 299)

Griffith PCYC Youth Case Managers - Jason Pietroboni (02 6964 2004)