

ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

St Mary's College is a community built on Christian values. Fundamental values of respect, acceptance and compassion guide and influence whatever we do. Acceptance of these values would mean that harassment of any nature is unacceptable amongst the St Mary's Community.

Our College seeks and affirms each boy's worth, dignity and vocation. Students are entitled to receive their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse.

What is harassment?

If a particular behaviour embarrasses, upsets or hurts another person, then it can be classified as harassment.

Bullying is the unwanted oppression of one person by another person or group. Harassment is the continual process of such negative action.

Bullying includes:

- *Physical bullying* – pushing, punching, tripping, spitting, poking, belongings are stolen/damaged.
- *Verbal bullying* – name calling, teasing, taunting, threatening, and spreading rumours.
- *Psychological bullying* – intimidating, demanding money, food or other belongings, instilling fear, rejecting, excluding.

Racial harassment:

- Repeated and deliberate comments, gestures or actions against others based on their nationality, skin colour, beliefs or traditions.

Sexual harassment:

- Uninvited and deliberate sexual behaviour which is perceived by the recipient to be offensive, demeaning or embarrassing.

Effect of harassment

Harassment must be addressed as it has the ability to:

- Cause distress
- Lower self-esteem
- Reduce self-confidence
- Affect study performance
- Lead to academic results that do not reflect ability or effort
- Cause truancy
- Result in withdrawal from school
- Discourage participation in College activities

You can act against harassment

If you are guilty of harassment, stop now. If you witness harassment you can do something about it and thereby protect others.

- Change your friendship group if it becomes involved in bullying or hurting others.
- Report harassment, so that both the bullies and victims can receive help.

What should students do?

If you believe that you are being harassed, your options are to:

- Tell the person who is doing it that you don't like it and that you want it to stop.
- Be absolutely clear in your response. Don't smile or give mixed messages.
- Talk it over with your parents.
- Discuss what you should do with an adult at school you know you can trust.
- Talk to a teacher you feel comfortable with.
- Report it to your Mentor Teacher, House Coordinator or Assistant Principal.

What should parents do?

- Look for warning signs
 - student not wanting to attend school;
 - bruises, scratches, cuts;
 - damage to clothing, unexplained tears;
 - unexplained anxiety symptoms;
 - school work falls off in quality;
 - wanting changes in the way he travels to and from school.
- Talk to your child about any incident.
- Help your child identify parts of his behaviour which may contribute to bullying.
- Avoid over-reacting and resist temptation to confront the bully, but give support.
- Keep a record of incidents (times, dates, etc.)
- Inform the College through his Mentor teacher, House Coordinator or Assistant Principal.
- Try to keep an open mind, remembering you are hearing one part of the story only.

It does not help if parents: *

- Get angry or upset.
- Feel guilty or ashamed.
- Make the child think it is not important.
- Blame the child.
- Blame the school.
- Accuse people without knowing the facts.
- Look for scapegoats.
- Look for easy solutions.

**Taken from BULLYING INFORMATION FOR PARENTS, Dept of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2000*

WHAT DOES THE COLLEGE DO?

- Watch for early signs of distress in students.
- All instances of harassment observed or reported will be clearly recorded and action taken.
- The welfare and concern of all students underpins all lessons and activities – no payouts or putdowns will be tolerated.
- Staff are role models in word and action at all times.
- Offer victims immediate support and help.
- All accessible areas of the College are patrolled at breaks and before and after school.
- All students upon entry to the College are educated about the Anti-harassment Policy.
- The College gathers confidential information about bullies and victims on a number of occasions throughout the year through surveys. Perceived victims and bullies are interviewed by the Assistant Principal – Mission and Student Welfare confidentially. Where appropriate, students are referred to the counsellor and parents are informed of potential problems.

The College operates on a ‘Hands Off’ policy.

When serious incidents are reported to the Assistant Principal - Mission and Student Welfare, he will employ one or all of these strategies:

- one to one discussion;
- mediation meeting;
- conflict resolution session;
- referral to counsellor;
- referral to police;
- consequences for the harasser.

If a student chooses not to modify his behaviour following one or all of these strategies, the College may enlist the assistance of outside agencies, in consultation with parents, to help bring about a change.

The Principal may recommend, to the Director of Catholic Education Office the exclusion of the harasser from the St Mary’s College Community, at his discretion and at any stage of the process.

Remember:

- Confidentiality will be respected at all times unless you state otherwise.*
- You may stop or start at any stage of the grievance procedure. In all cases the person dealing with the complaint will not take any action without your permission.*
- Students should be aware that the College is legally required to notify Child Protection Queensland if it believes that a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of physical injury or sexual abuse, and the child’s parents/carers have not protected or are unlikely to protect the child from such harm.

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