



# BENTON JUNIOR COLLEGE

## ANTI-BULLYING, CYBER-BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### Rationale

Benton Junior College is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which promotes self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude toward learning and teaching. Our college fosters a culture in which positive relationships are developed amongst all students and staff. The intention of this policy on bullying (including cyberbullying) and harassment is to inform the community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated. Our collective endeavour is to provide a safe college environment free of harassment and bullying.

### Aims

#### The purpose of this policy is:

- to explain the definition of bullying as set out through Appendix 1;
- to provide a safe and friendly college environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others;
- to provide a safe environment for all through diligent yard supervision, astute classroom observation and adherence to the Student Code of Conduct 'The Learning Deal';
- to provide a supportive environment that encourages and allows children to develop feelings of belonging and trust with adherence to all codes of practice;
- to incorporate a social and resilience skill programs into the curriculum; Highway Heroes and Circle Time;
- to reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated at Benton Junior College;
- to ensure everyone within the school community is alerted to signs and evidence of bullying and has a responsibility to report it to staff whether as observer or victim;
- to ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up by the teacher, members of the school's leadership and Principal Team and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator; and
- to seek parental and peer-group support in addressing and preventing bullying behaviour at Benton Junior College.

All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the *Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act* and the *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act*.

When responding to bullying behaviour, Benton Junior College aims to:

- be proportionate, consistent and responsive;
- find a constructive and positive solution for everyone;
- stop the bullying from happening again;
- restore the relationships between the students involved.

Benton Junior College acknowledges that school staff owe a duty of care to students to take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of reasonably foreseeable harm, which can include harm that may be caused by bullying behaviour.

### Scope

This policy applies to all school activities, including camps and excursions.

### Implementation

Staff will monitor all reported incidents and ensure that these are addressed consistent with our college's Behaviour Management procedures and Safe Internet use policies.

- Through The Learning Deal, Highway Heroes Program, the IB Attitudes and Learner Profile and Circle Time all staff will address the development of social skills, self-esteem, resilience building and two-way communication. Student leadership programs will be implemented within the school.
- The DET “Attitude to School” Survey will be undertaken in Years 4, 5 and 6 to assist staff’s understanding of children’s perceptions concerning safety and wellbeing.
- Children, parents, staff and the wider community will be reminded, on a regular basis through newsletter articles and Compass, that no form of bullying will be accepted.
- Staff will be provided with professional development in the area of student wellbeing.

Concerns regarding bullying of any form will be taken seriously. All complaints will be treated confidentially. College procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out in Appendix 1. Staff responses are tailored to the individual circumstances of the incident and involve three levels of intervention.

### **Guidelines**

All staff will respond to and manage bullying (including cyber-bullying) and harassment in a consistent manner.

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

Our college will facilitate preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving (The Learning Deal, Highway Heroes Program, the IB Attitudes and Learner Profile and Circle Time).

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

There will be disciplinary consequences, covering a range of strategies, for those in breach of the Anti-Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy, guidelines and procedures (see Appendix A).

### **Bullying Prevention**

Benton Junior College has a number of programs and strategies in place to build a positive and inclusive school culture. We strive to foster a school culture that prevents bullying behaviour by modelling and encouraging behaviour that demonstrates acceptance, kindness and respect.

Constructive strategies to deal with harassment will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills; counselling and behaviour modification. The response from the college and staff will depend on the characteristics of each incident and available resources in addition to those listed below may be discussed with Department of Education and Training Student Support Service Officers.

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

The college Principal Team and the teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all college 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 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 organised 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 issues 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. ‘Highway Heroes’ and resources from ‘Bully Stoppers’.

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 college 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 college's Welfare and Discipline Policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education and Training (DET) guidelines.

Links and Appendices (including processes related to this policy):

- DET [Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#);
- DET [Safe Schools are Effective School's](#);
- DET [Student Engagement Policy Guidelines](#);
- The school's Internet Use Policy (re: cyber-bullying);
- DET [Respectful Schools](#); and
- DET Bully Stoppers

Appendices which are connected with this policy are:

- Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures;
- Appendix 2: Reporting on Incident of Bullying / Harassment and Incident Response;

## Appendix 1.

### Anti-Bullying (including cyber-bullying) and Anti-Harassment Procedures

#### What are Bullying, Cyber-Bullying and Harassment?

##### Bullying

###### *Definition of Bullying*

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upsets or hurts another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

###### *Types of Bullying*

There are three broad categories of bullying:

1. **Direct physical bullying** – e.g. hitting, tripping and pushing or damaging property.
2. **Direct verbal bullying** – e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
3. **Indirect bullying** – this form of bullying is harder to recognise and often carried out behind the bullied student's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes:
  - lying and spreading rumours;
  - playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate;
  - mimicking;
  - encouraging others to socially exclude someone;
  - damaging someone's social reputation and social acceptance; and
  - cyber-bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to humiliate and distress.

###### *What Bullying is Not:*

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

###### *Mutual Conflict:*

In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

###### *Social Rejection or Dislike:*

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.

###### *Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation:*

Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.

Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

##### Cyber-Bullying

Consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as cellphones, web-logs and web-sites, online chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on

different characters) and Xangas (online personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

### **Harassment**

Is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcomed or offensive to a person.

### **What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?**

- poor health - anxiety, depression;
- lower self-esteem;
- reduced study performance;
- missed classes, social withdrawal; or
- reduced career prospects.

### **Am I bullying or harassing someone?**

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate;
- stop it;
- apologise;
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable or
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues.

### **What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?**

*"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.

### **Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:**

- embarrassed or ashamed;
- offended or humiliated;
- intimidated or frightened; or
- uncomfortable.

**Bullying can involve:**

- grabbing, aggressive staring, hitting, pinching kicking, pushing and shoving;
- publicly excluding a person from your group;
- knocking a person's books or belongings out of their hands or off their desk; or
- teasing a person because of their looks.

**Cyber-bullying can involve:**

- *Flaming* – online fights using electronic messages with angry or vulgar messages;
- *Harassment* – repeatedly sending nasty, mean and insulting messages;
- *Denigration* – posting or sending gossip or rumours about a person to damage his/her reputation or friendships;
- *Outing* – sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online;
- *Exclusion* – intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group; or
- *Cyber-stalking* – 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*) they include:

- offensive staring and leering;
- unwanted comments about physical appearance and sexual preference;
- racist or smutty comments or jokes;
- questions about another's sexual activity;
- persistent comments about a person's private life or family;
- physical contact e.g. purposely brushing up against another's body; or
- offensive name calling.

**Explicit** (*obvious*) they include:

- grabbing, aggressive hitting, pinching and shoving, etc;
- unwelcome patting, touching, embracing;
- repeated requests for dates, especially after refusal;
- offensive gestures, jokes, comments, letters, phone calls or email;
- sexually and/or racially provocative remarks;
- displays of sexually graphic material – pornography;
- requests for sexual favours; or
- extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution.

## **Appendix 2. INCIDENT RESPONSE**

### **Reporting concerns to Benton Junior College**

Bullying complaints will be taken seriously and responded to sensitively at our school.

Students who may be experiencing bullying behaviour, or students who have witnessed bullying behaviour, are encouraged to report their concerns to school staff as soon as possible.

In most circumstances, we encourage students to speak to your child's teacher. However, students are welcome to discuss their concerns with any trusted member of staff including teachers, wellbeing teacher or Principal Team member.

Parents or carers who may develop concerns that their child is involved in, or has witnessed bullying behaviour at Benton Junior College should contact Student Wellbeing Coordinator or member of the Principal Team.

### **Investigations**

When notified of alleged bullying behaviour, school staff are required to:

1. Record the details of the allegations in the students file; and
2. inform the relevant staff members involved i.e. Classroom Teacher, Year Level Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Team, Principal Team.

The Student Wellbeing Teacher is responsible for investigating allegations of bullying in a timely and sensitive manner. To appropriately investigate an allegation of bullying, the Student Wellbeing Teacher may:

- speak to the students involved in the allegations, including the victim/s, the alleged perpetrator/s and any witnesses to the incidents;
- speak to the parents of the students involved;
- speak to the teachers of the students involved;
- take detailed notes of all discussions for future reference;
- obtain written statements from all or any of the above.

All communications with the Student Wellbeing Teacher in the course of investigating an allegation of bullying will be managed sensitively. Investigations will be completed as quickly as possible to allow for the behaviours to be addressed in a timely manner.

The objective of completing a thorough investigation into the circumstances of alleged bullying behaviour is to determine the nature of the conduct and the students involved. A thorough understanding of the alleged bullying will inform staff about how to most effectively implement an appropriate response to that behaviour.

Serious bullying, including serious cyberbullying, is a criminal offence and may be referred to Victoria Police. For more information, see: Brodie's Law.

### **Responses to bullying behaviours**

When the Student Wellbeing Teacher has sufficient information to understand the circumstances of the alleged bullying and the students involved, a number of strategies may be implemented to address the behaviour and support affected students in consultation with teachers, SSS and Principal Team.

There are a number of factors that will be considered when determining the most appropriate response to the behaviour. When making a decision about how to respond to bullying behaviour, Benton Junior College will consider:

- the age and maturity of the students involved;
- the severity and frequency of the bullying, and the impact it has had on the victim student;
- whether the perpetrator student or students have displayed similar behaviour before;
- whether the bullying took place in a group or one-to-one context;
- whether the perpetrator demonstrates insight or remorse for their behaviour;

- the alleged motive of the behaviour, including any element of provocation.

Benton Junior College may implement all, or some of the following responses to bullying behaviours:

- Offer counselling support to the victim student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, Shine Assist.
- Offer counselling support to the perpetrator student or students, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, Shine Assist.
- Offer counselling support to affected students, including witnesses and/or friends of the victim student, including referral to the Student Wellbeing Team, SSS, Shine Assist.
- Facilitate a meeting with all or some of the students involved to consider the views of all. The objective of the meeting is to repair relationships that have been damaged by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the person who has bullied someone and forgiveness by the person who has been bullied.
- Facilitate a mediation between some or all of the students involved to help to encourage students to take responsibility for their behaviour and explore underlying reasons for conflict or grievance.
- Implement disciplinary consequences for the perpetrator students, which may include removal of privileges, detention, suspension and/or expulsion consistent with our Student Wellbeing and Engagement policy, the Ministerial Order on Suspensions and Expulsions and any other relevant Department policy.
- Facilitate a Student Support Group meeting and/or Behaviour Support Plan for affected students.
- Prepare a Safety Plan or Individual Management Plan restricting contact between victim and perpetrator students.
- Provide discussion and/or mentoring for different social and emotional learning competencies of the students involved.
- Monitor the behaviour of the students involved for an appropriate time and take follow up action if necessary.
- Implement year group targeted strategies to reinforce positive behaviours.

The Student Wellbeing Teacher is responsible for maintaining up to date records of the investigation of and responses to bullying behaviour.

Benton Junior College understands the importance of monitoring the progress of students who have been involved in or affected by bullying behaviour. Our ability to effectively reduce and eliminate bullying behaviour is greatly affected by students reporting concerning behaviour as soon as possible, so that the responses implemented by Benton Junior College are timely and appropriate in the circumstances.

**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.

## **Policy Review**

This policy was last updated on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018 and is scheduled for review in May 2020.