BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

FCS is committed to creating an environment in which all members of the school community feel safe and secure, free from bullying or harassment. Schools are the most important setting for the socialisation of young people after the home, and the values and attitudes gained during education are crucial for the wellbeing of the child.

FCS has a zero tolerance policy towards bullying which all staff are expected to implement.

Definition: What is bullying, cyber bullying and harassment?
- Bullying is persistent and repeated negative behaviour directed at a person that creates a risk or physical or psychological health and safety.
- Cyber-bullying bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as mobile phones, web-logs and web-sites, online chat or experience rooms. It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

Acts of bullying include:
1. Verbal: being teased, sworn at, taunted, threats, name calling, offensive language, picking on people because of their race, gender, religious beliefs, age, physical characteristics or family background.
2. Physical: unwanted pain, being hit, kicked, punched, pushed, hair pulled or spat on, equipment being taken and other unwanted action.
3. Social: being excluded from games or activities, ganging up on an individual.
4. Psychological: being made to feel uncomfortable, standover tactics used.
5. Bullying can occur face to face, by innuendo and gossip, online on web pages and social networking opportunities, in text messages and other contemporary technologies.
6. The school is aware of the diverse and insidious potential of bullying in the cyber world.
7. The school is aware that the nature and potential of bullying changes and can be sophisticated.

Guidelines:

1. The school will regularly communicate to its whole community that it has a zero tolerance policy towards bullying.
2. All staff will respond immediately when matters of bullying are brought to their attention.
3. Students should be encouraged and empowered to play a support role in the mediation process for their peers involved in conflict and bullying.
4. The school will promote the positive values of tolerance, mutual respect and equality to the broader community as well as students
5. Everyone in the school community has the right to feel safe and secure and to be able to learn or teach, grow, socialise and improve their self-esteem in a happy, healthy environment.
    5.1. All students will be taught appropriate behaviours and assisted to recognise those which are not acceptable.
    5.2. All members of the school community will seek to stop bullying by indicating to bullies that certain behaviour is unacceptable.
    5.3. Individuals who bully or harass other people will be made to accept the appropriate consequences of that unlawful behaviour.
    5.4. All members of the school community (students, staff and parents) will be expected to implement the strategies introduced to reduce and ultimately eliminate bullying.
6. Curriculum content and teaching styles should at all times reflect the anti-bullying policy.
7. The Department of Education and Training has a comprehensive policy on bullying called Bully Stoppers which can be accessed on http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/bullystoppers/Pages/default.aspx
8. See also our processes on Bullying, Cyber Bullying and Harassment

Discrimination

Discrimination is treating, or proposing to treat, someone unfavourably because of a personal characteristic protected by the law. This includes bullying someone because of a protected characteristic.

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 – Victoria's anti discrimination law – protects people from discrimination and harassment in areas of public life such as workplaces, schools, clubs, shops or places that provide services.

BULLYING, CYBER BULLYING AND HARASSMENT
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 upset or hurt 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
   · 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 two socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:
1. 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.

2. 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 mobile phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line 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, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

The purpose of having a Policy on these
To provide a safe and friendly school environment for students and staff and to encourage care, courtesy and respect for others.
All persons have a legal right to protection from harassment under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act.

What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?

- · poor health - anxiety, depression
- · lower self esteem
- · reduced study performance
- · missed classes, social withdrawal
- · 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
- · 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
- · uncomfortable

What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?
- · Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.
- · Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

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
·   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
·   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
·   offensive name calling
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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 e-mail
·   sexually and/or racially provocative remarks
·   displays of sexually graphic material – pornography
·   requests for sexual favours

·   extreme forms of sexual harassment will lead to criminal prosecution

What do you do if you are being bullied or harassed?
·   tell the person you don't like what they are doing and you want them to stop
·   discuss the matter with the Student Welfare Coordinator or a teacher that you feel comfortable with
·   the school will take your concerns seriously - all complaints will be treated confidentially

How will your complaint be dealt with?
·   Your concerns will be taken seriously.
·   All complaints will be treated confidentially.

School procedures for responding to a student who bullies or harasses others are set out below.

Level 1
If the bullying or harassment incident is minor or first time occurrence, teachers may elect to use one or more anti-bullying practices:
·   stopping the bullying/re-statement of rules and consequences
·   restorative questioning
·   think time detention
·   private conference
·   shared control discussion

If the student does not take control over his/her behaviour, an Incident Report Form should be completed and submitted to the principal.

Level 2
If the bullying or harassment continues, or in instances of severe bullying or harassing, a referral should be made to the Student Welfare Coordinator. Here, the Student Welfare Coordinator (or another who has responsibility for student welfare) may:
·   meet with the student to develop a behaviour contract
·   provide discussion/mentoring of different social and emotional learning competencies including structured learning activities
·   conduct a restorative conference separately with the perpetrator and "target"

Level 3

For 'at risk' students (many risk factors, few protective factors) whose bullying or harassing behaviour is severe and for other non-at risk students whose bullying or harassing and other aggressive behaviour is resistant to change, an individual 'strength building' plan should be developed by the student welfare coordinator in consultation with student, parents/carers and teachers. Individual strength-building plans and associated interventions help connect the student to positive people, programs and actions in the community, school and home as well as develop the student's inner social and emotional strengths (skills, values).

Level 4

Students whose severe bullying or harassing behaviour resists school efforts and represents a significant threat to the safety and wellbeing should be referred to outside agencies for evaluation. The Student Welfare Coordinators will be familiar with those community agencies and organisations that can offer more intensive services to the student and student's family.

Note: The school 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 Endorsement
This Policy has been endorsed by the FCS Governing Body.
Date: July 2021
Review Date: July 2022
Review Cycle. Every 12 months.
Exceptions: This Policy may be reviewed earlier than the date stated subject to circumstance.