

Geelong Grammar School

a policy on

Harassment and Bullying

The key to a good school, in fact any community, is the existence of good relationships. We have over the years developed a reputation of being a school which is caring, where a variety of personalities can grow and feel free to express themselves, without fear of ridicule and without detriment to others.

The vast majority of our community interact in a positive and thoughtful manner. However, like any school, we do experience problems, and it is important that we all realise behaviour that involves harassment, victimisation or bullying of any form between individuals, or between individual groups and individuals, is socially unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any part of the school.

All members of our school community (staff, both academic and non-academic, students and parents) must share the responsibility for contributing to, and ensuring an environment free of harassment, bullying and victimisation.

This means that it may sometimes be a responsible action to make a complaint on behalf of others.

It is important that to reinforce positive relationships, we state unequivocally what is unacceptable behaviour. This policy document is for all members of our community and is an attempt to create a better understanding of the issues involved.

Serious harassment of any type may result in a person being asked to leave the school.

Bullying

Bullying is found in most schools and is one of the most important problems raised by students. To minimise this kind of behaviour in our school it is important to understand what we mean by bullying. It is an abuse of power that one person or group has over another. It comes in many forms:

- persistent teasing or name calling.
- racist or sexual harassment (which we shall deal with in greater detail later on in this document).
- victimisation.
- emotional abuse.
- extortion.
- ostracism of individuals by the group.
- physical abuse.

Much work has been done in recent times to combat bullying. This must be continued by all sections of our community working together to eradicate the problem. It is very important that we continuously reinforce what are positive relationships.

Harassment

Harassment can be based on gender, sexual preference, disability, race, religion or physical appearance. All are equally unacceptable but we feel that especially in our environment, a co-educational Australian school with international connections, it is important to go into some detail as to what constitutes racial and sexual harassment.

Racial Harassment:

This school has a long association with other countries. It was as long ago as the 1930's that the possibility of overseas students joining the school was first mooted. In fact, because of the war, it was not until the late 1940's that the school admitted its first overseas student.

Since then we have had students from over 30 countries at the school and they have brought a richness to Geelong Grammar School which has made the educational experience for all so much more special.

We still experience incidents (mainly verbal) of racial intolerance. It must be remembered that integration does not mean "the same as", it implies understanding, recognition and accepting differences. The mix of students here, whether it be the international sector, the interstate folk or our traditional rural and city base, offers us a unique opportunity to learn.

Sexual Harassment:

Harassment of a sexual nature is now prohibited under the Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act and the Victorian Equal Opportunity Act. Anyone engaging in it is subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Not meaning to harass is no defence. What matters is what was actually said or done, not what might have been intended!

What is sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is any form of sexual attention or behaviour from another student, group of students or adult which is unwelcome to the person receiving it.

Examples include any of the following:

- physical contact such as kissing, patting, pinching or touching in a sexual way; unnecessary familiarity such as deliberately brushing against a person or putting an arm around another person's body,
- sexually explicit conversation,
- remarks about a person's private life or gender, spreading information of a sexual nature about a person or using such information to humiliate or bully a person,
- suggestive comments about a person's appearance or body,
- gender-based insults or teasing, including remarks of a sexual nature called out to passing individuals,
- persistent requests for dates,

- sexual jokes, abusive language, cat calls, whistles, innuendos or leering; offensive telephone calls,
- displays of sexually suggestive or pornographic photographs, pictures, posters, reading matter or objects,
- sexual propositions,
- indecent exposure,
- sexual assault or rape.

The last two of these are most serious and are criminal offences.

Sex-based harassment:

This consists of any non-sexual abusive treatment, intimidation or rudeness which is gender-biased; for instance rudeness directed towards women, when it is not directed towards men in a similar circumstance. This is known as sex-based or sexist harassment.

Under some circumstances behaviour including any of the above on a single occasion may be regarded as serious harassment, particularly if linked to granting or denying favours.

What to do if you are harassed by another student, students or an adult:

- The first and important thing to do is to state quite clearly that the behaviour is unwelcome and offensive.*
- Then, if the behaviour continues, talk to someone with whom you feel comfortable discussing such things. (Head of House, Chaplain, Head of Campus, in fact anyone).*
- If the matter cannot be sorted out simply, or if that person advises, then talk to one of the people responsible for dealing with Equal Opportunity issues on your campus; (the names of those people are shown at the end of this document). Such a person is expected to take up the matter quickly, confidentially and impartially. A parent or friend may accompany a person making a complaint.*
- If the matter cannot be settled by discussion and agreement at the school, then the person complaining may also make contact with the Victorian Commissioner for Equal Opportunity, for information and advice. (Full details are readily available from those mentioned below).*

What to do if you witness harassment, victimisation or bullying.

All incidents of socially unacceptable behaviour should be reported to the appropriate authorities. This is sometimes difficult for students. The mythology of the "lagger" or "dobber" has grown to such epidemic proportions in schools that it is now out of perspective and distorts the sense of justice which should prevail. In the long run students will earn enormous respect from significant numbers, if they are strong enough to uphold justice.

A warning:

A complaint must be made in confidence to someone in a counselling role. If it is appropriate, they will take the matter up with the person against whom the complaint is made.

- **It is illegal to talk to others and spread unsubstantiated accusations against a person or group.** This can lead to the serious charge of defamation.
- **It is also illegal to retaliate, by victimising or bullying anyone who has made a complaint.**

If either matter goes to a court substantial damages may be awarded against offenders.

1. Complaints on any matters may be taken in the strictest confidence to any of the Heads of Campus or the Principal.
2. Complaints on matters of Equal Opportunity may be taken in the strictest confidence to any of the following Contact Officers:

At Corio campus:Teaching area:

Ms J.L.Cooper Language Dept.
Mr G.J.Hunter Physical Education Dept
Ms A.F.Turnbull Art Dept.
Mr B.R.Harvey Physical Education Dept.

Non-Teaching areas:

Ms P.G. Stevenson Matron
Ms N. Patterson Main Office

At Bostock House:Teaching area:

Mr S. Kearney

Non-teaching areas:

Mrs M. Hill

At Timbertop campus:Teaching area:

Ms H. Thompson

Mr P Esmonde

Non-teaching areas:

Mr L. Jacob

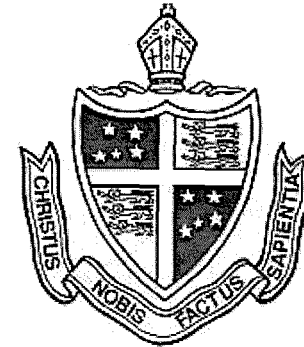
Ms J. Purcell

At Glamorgan campus:Teaching area:

Mr J. Ring

Non-teaching areas:

Ms J Cross



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