Beaconhills College Student Bullying & Harassment, including Cyber Bullying Policy

Overview
This policy addresses the care, safety and welfare of students at Beaconhills and outlines the College position on bullying, including cyber bullying and harassment.

Rationale
This policy is used to provide students with a safe environment where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel physically and emotionally secure.

Underlying Principles
All members of the Beaconhills College Community have the right to attend, learn and work in a school where their safety and well-being is positively promoted, valued and protected. The College aims to encourage respectful relationships between students, staff, visitors and parents and ensure they have a shared and holistic understanding of bullying and its effects.

People who are bullied and harassed can experience:
- Loss of self-confidence and self esteem
- Difficulty sleeping, concentrating and working
- Poor performance and absenteeism
- Desire to avoid social contact
- Poor health

Definitions

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person’s health and safety (either psychologically or physically) or their belongings, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. It can occur in person, electronically or via phone. Incidents may take one or more of the following forms:

- **Physical incidents** are any form of violence such as hitting, fighting, pushing, flicking, pinching, using unnecessary force or making threats to do any of these things.
- **Verbal incidents** can include using offensive language, name calling, spreading rumours, picking on people because of appearance, disease or disability, making threats or teasing.
- **Visual incidents** may include sending offensive notes, emails, SMS messages or inappropriate use of photographs, drawings or graffiti.
- **Victimisation incidents** may include the deliberate exclusion of people from activities, ignoring someone’s presence, not allowing them to join a group on the basis of gender, race, disability, friendships or personal appearance.
- **Sexual incidents** may include offensive questions about someone’s body and/or someone’s private life, touching or brushing against another inappropriately, sexually oriented jokes, drawings, photographs or writing about someone’s body, using rude names or commenting about someone’s morals and unwanted invitations of a sexual nature.

Cyber bullying incidents may include the use of electronic media such as text messaging, email, internet, mobile phones, online discussions to slander, spread rumours, tease, provide unwanted attention, harass or cause discomfort. There is the potential for electronic communication to be spread widely, and a permanent record of the bullying is likely to exist. Under some circumstances cyber bullying is a criminal activity and is illegal.

Harassment covers a wide range of behaviours of an offensive nature. It is commonly understood as behaviour intended to disturb or upset, and it is characteristically repetitive. In the legal sense, it is intentional behaviour which is found threatening or disturbing.

Sexual Harassment refers to persistent and unwanted sexual advances, typically in the workplace, where the consequences of refusing are potentially very disadvantageous to the victim.

Scope
This policy applies to all students at Beaconhills College.
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**Policy statement**
The College takes every report of bullying or harassment seriously and will investigate and respond to all observed or reported incidents giving support to both victims and perpetrators. Bullying and harassment are not only school disciplinary matters but are illegal under Victorian and Commonwealth legislation. Often someone is not even aware their behaviour is a form of bullying.

**Common but inappropriate reactions**

“Can’t you take a joke?”
To put someone down, ridicule them or make them feel uncomfortable is not a joke. This is harassment.

“I’ll ignore it and it’ll go away.”
If you give the impression that the behaviour is okay, things may get worse.

“I don’t want to make things worse.”
Remember helpers will be sensitive to the way you would like to deal with and solve the problem. Most cases of harassment are actually solved with a little help.

“Am I a dobber if I seek help?”
No, you’re not – especially if you have asked the person to stop and they haven’t. You have a right to feel safe.

**Responsibilities**

**The College will:**
- Provide a supportive environment which encourages respectful relationships between students, staff, visitors and parents
- Provide curriculum programmes that develop appropriate social skills, respectful relationships and resilience
- Provide counselling support to all members of the College community involved in conflict resolution
- Provide education and support to staff, students and parents
- Keep parents informed.

**Students should:**
- Promote a respectful and caring school culture
- Refuse to be part of any bullying situation
- Take action to prevent bullying from occurring
- Inform an adult if they experience or observe incidents of bullying
- Complete an incident report form for any bullying issues.

**Staff should:**
- Promote a respectful and caring culture for all especially at the commencement of each school year
- Model appropriate language and behaviour for students at all times
- Intervene immediately and sensitively in any situations of bullying or harassment
- Be a pro-active and visual presence whilst on yard duty
- Discourage activities which enable exclusion
- Be aware of and implement the Anti-Bullying Policy
- Notify parents of any incident and/or outcome via e-mail, phone call or in writing
- Document and report to the appropriate parties, all cases where bullying has taken place.

**Parents should:**
- Actively promote respectful and caring behaviours by modelling respectful behaviour at home and when visiting the College.
- Discuss issues and strategies with their children to enhance respectful and caring relationships with peers and teachers
- Communicate with the College if their child reports any incidents of bullying or harassment or shows any signs of distress through feeling unsafe at school
- Discuss with their children appropriate strategies for managing conflict situations
- Allow the College to take relevant action.