RATIONALE

Our school is committed to providing and managing a safe and caring environment and culture which enables positive relationships to be formed amongst all students and staff and which encourages self-esteem, cooperation, personal growth and a positive attitude to learning and teaching.

A clear policy on bullying (including cyber bullying) and harassment will inform the community that bullying and harassment in any of its forms will not be tolerated.

AIMS:

- To reinforce within the school community that no form of bullying is acceptable.
- 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 and that support is given to both victim and perpetrator.
- Addressing bullying behaviours will be managed in a holistic way.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

DEFINITION:

Bullying is never acceptable. It occurs when any member of the college is subjected to repeated behaviour (physical, verbal or psychological) which is hurtful, threatening or frightening. It is the abuse of power by an individual or a group over others. It may be:

- name-calling, teasing and ridiculing
- putting down others and their achievements
- damaging, removing or hiding others’ belongings
- making comments about others’ of a sexual, racial or religious nature
- physical violence or threats
- spreading rumours
- demands for money or possessions
- purposely leaving someone out of activities or exclusion from a social group
- glaring and menacing gestures
- deliberate intrusion on the personal space of others
- cyber bullying: any of the above via electronic means. This includes but is not limited to email, chatrooms (eg MSN), text messages (SMS) and transferring files via Bluetooth, social media platforms and photo sharing sites.
**Bullying** is repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group, the power imbalance maybe real or perceived.

**GUIDELINES**

A school-wide approach will be taken to deal with bullying (including cyber bullying) in a consistent and systematic way.

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

All complaints of bullying will be heard in confidence and taken seriously.

Our school will organise preventative curriculum programs that promote resilience, life and social skills, assertiveness, conflict resolution and problem solving.

Staff programs will occur periodically 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 (including cyber bullying), guidelines and procedures.

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Constructive strategies to deal with bullying will include: education in coping strategies; assertiveness training; problem solving and social skills; counselling and behaviour modification. These strategies will be employed in preference to punitive sanctions and negative consequences.

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

A summary of the policy will be included in the Student Enrolment Package while new staff will receive extensive documentation as part of the school's induction process.

The school leadership team and the teachers will work together to ensure the safety of all school 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 organized 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 matters 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 DEECD materials e.g. ‘The Friendly Schools’ and ‘No Blame Approach to Bullying’ programs. It will also include education around the role and responsibility of bystanders with respect to bullying and cyberbullying.

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 school will provide specialist resources such as books, videos, kits and off site for 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 school’s Welfare and Discipline Policy. The principal or their nominee will provide disciplinary consequences including suspension in accordance with Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) guidelines.
REFERENCES:

Departmental Links which are connected with this policy are:

- Effective Schools are Engaging Schools: Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- Safe Schools are Effective School's
- Student Engagement Policy Guidelines
- Respectful Schools

BSC Links:

- The school’s Internet Use Policy (re cyber-bullying)
- Appendix A (Attached)

EVALUATION

This policy will be reviewed annually or more often if necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances.

O:\Teacher information\Policies\Wellbeing Policies and stuff\Policies reviewed 2014

Review Date: 29/04/2015

APPENDIX A:

What the College will do:

Provide a supportive environment which encourages positive relationships between all members of the college community by:

- adults modelling and affirming appropriate behaviour
- acting on any reported or observed cases of bullying
- keeping records of incidents of bullying
- supporting all concerned to resolve the issues
- providing in-school programs for students and staff to support this policy
- addressing bullying through the curriculum

Process for dealing with bullying incidents:

Both the person being bullied and the person(s) reported for bullying will initially be interviewed separately in a sensitive and objective manner. Both victim and bully need to have a clear understanding of what happened and why it is unacceptable. A further discussion may take place between all parties using the method of ‘Shared Concern’.

- Records will be kept of essential details.
- Parents will be contacted.
- School-based counselling is available at this stage.

For any subsequent incident of bullying:

- A formal interview will be arranged between parents of the person bullying and the College. The student may be withdrawn from class pending the interview. External suspension may apply at this stage depending on the nature of the incident. (Incidents of a serious nature may be responded to by immediate suspension.)
• The College will encourage the student to attend school based counselling with a view to exploring other acceptable means of expressing anger, frustration or discomfort.

*Any case of retaliation against a person for reporting bullying will be treated very seriously.*

What students can do to help?

**If you have been bullied:**

- If possible, tell the person who has been bullying you to stop.
- If you are being cyber-bullied ignore them by closing any windows or applications straight away.
- Discuss the situation with someone you feel comfortable with, e.g. friend, parent, family member, teacher, Pastoral teacher, Coordinator, SWC or School Captains. This not ‘DOBBING’. You have the right to talk it over in confidence. Confidential phone services like Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) can be of assistance.
- If you experience repeated cyber-bullying try to save copies of any incidents or messages. This can be used as evidence to find the bully responsible. Most cyber bullying can be easily traced to the person responsible if evidence is kept. Consider reporting the threats to Victoria Police.

**If you witness bullying:**

- Don’t join in – being part of a group which is bullying someone is just as bad as bullying.
- Report bullying so that both the person being bullied and the bully can receive help.
- Try to tell those who are bullying to stop.

**What parents can do to help:**

- watch for any signs of distress in your son or daughter
- take an active interest in your child’s social life and friendships
- advise your child to tell a staff member about bullying
- inform the College if bullying is suspected
- do not encourage your child to retaliate
- be willing to come to interviews at the school if necessary
- keep computers in a common area in the house so you can monitor use. Talk to your children about how to handle cyber bullying.

*More information for parents can be found on our College website* [http://www.brunswick.vic.edu.au/](http://www.brunswick.vic.edu.au/) *with links to Safe School's Hub, Anglicare, Parentzone and Parentline.*

**Common reactions to bullying which are not acceptable to the College are:**

“*I was just mucking around. Can’t they take a joke?*”

This is the most common response to attempts to stop bullying. It is not a joke to put someone down, ridicule them, make them feel uncomfortable, push them around or take their things.

“I’ll ignore it and it will go away.”

If anything, ignoring bullying will make it worse. It gives the impression that bullying is okay with you and that you agree with what the bully is doing.

“I don’t want to cause trouble.”

Students have the right to feel safe at school. You are not causing trouble if you want to stand up for yourself in a calm and non-violent way.
“It’s just a natural part of growing up.”
There is nothing natural about being bullied. Students have a right to feel safe at school, as well as at home.

“No-one can do anything about it.”
Most cases of bullying can be sorted out very simply, especially if it is reported straight away. The College is committed to stopping bullying.

“Only wusses dob.”
It takes courage and strength of character to stand up for your rights and those of others. Students gain respect through dealing with the problem rather than allowing it to continue. Bullying continues when people do nothing.