

Student Bullying & Harassment Policy

1. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

The Geelong College is a Child Safe School. We have a zero-tolerance stance on child abuse and are committed to the protection of all children from all forms of abuse. The Geelong College recognises that in order to achieve a child safe environment at the College which meets students' intellectual, physical, social, emotional and moral needs, students need to be involved in the creation and maintenance of such an environment.

We are committed to taking a preventative and proactive approach to providing a child safe environment where children and young people are safe and feel safe; they are empowered to use their voices when decisions are being made that affect their safety. We are also committed to providing simple and accessible processes to assist all children to identify and communicate when they do not feel safe. Particularly, this includes those who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, from culturally diverse backgrounds and those with a disability.

We are clear about our behavioural expectations of every person in our community and are committed to having a shared understanding of and responsibility for child safety. All staff are expected to uphold a culture that protects children from all forms of harm.

2. Purpose

The College has a responsibility to foster a community that is free from bullying and harassment and where all members of the community are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. It strives to create a school in which relationships between students are positive and harmonious based on respect for others irrespective of their appearance, gender identity or sexual orientation, marital status, race, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, state of health, age, financial circumstances or physical ability.

3. Scope

This policy applies to Day Students- Domestic and International Boarding in all year groups from Foundation to Year 12 and members of The Geelong College community. All are expected to honour and support this commitment to the care of students of The Geelong College.

4. Harassment & Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records).

Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between peers, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

The College considers that bullying and/or harassment of students and staff is unacceptable behaviour and is committed to its prevention and elimination from the College community.

5. Unlawful Harassment

Some acts of harassment are unlawful under State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws. They include harassment relating to a person's:

- a. sex, marital status;
- b. sexual orientation, Intersex status or gender identity;
- c. race, national or ethnic origin, or religious background;
- d. Indigeneity;
- e. Disability; and/or,
- f. age.

A student subjected to unlawful harassment may seek a resolution under this Policy.

6. Guiding Principles in response to Instances of Bullying and/or Harassment:

6.1 Reporting by students

Students should report any experience of bullying or harassment they experience or observe to any of the following: their Home Room Teacher, Learning Mentor, Year Coordinator, Head of House, Child Safety Officer or to another trusted member of staff. Students who need support to do this may ask a prefect, a friend or a trusted adult to accompany them.

6.2 Reporting by others who are not students

The College actively encourages all adults to be vigilant in caring for all students in our community and to respond appropriately by sharing concerns with appropriate College staff.

A parent/carer or guardian of a student who has been bullied or harassed or another person who becomes aware that a student is being harassed, should report the matter to the student's pastoral care teacher or others listed above in 6.1.

6.3 Investigating Bullying/ Harassment

The relevant Head of School shall normally oversee or undertake an investigation of the reported behaviour. This investigation may include: a teacher delegated by the Head of School, Head of House, Year Coordinator or Deputy Head of School. In some cases the Deputy Principal may be involved in the investigation. Normal practice would see the Deputy Principal informed of the investigation and the outcome.

Documentation (appropriate note taking) must be made throughout the investigation to record the facts of the situation and actions taken in response to information disclosed.

All records relating to a student are to be kept on the student's file.

6.4 Courses of Action/Consequences

Once the investigation has been completed the Head of School (or delegate) will consider the following courses of action in order to resolve the issue:

- a. undertaking a restorative approach between the student and those responsible for the poor conduct. This approach is conditional upon the agreement of all parties to participate; and/or,
- b. advising the targeted student on strategies for dealing with the bullying / harassment;
and/or,
- c. taking disciplinary action appropriate to the seriousness of the conduct. This may include detention, community service, suspension or termination of a student enrolment. In the most serious cases the Principal will be consulted. In imposing a sanction, the age of the student who was responsible for the incident, the seriousness of the incident and whether there have been repeated occurrences are all factors which will be taken into consideration.

7. Referring a Matter to an Outside Body

In cases where the bullying or harassment is of a particularly serious nature and/or is unlawful under State or Commonwealth anti-discrimination laws (see 4 above), Child Safety Standards or Reportable Conduct, the Principal may refer the matter to the appropriate authority, tribunal or to the Police for guidance.

The Principal may report such referrals to the next ordinary meeting of the College Council. The Principal's report shall not normally identify the staff or student who is the subject of the referral.

8. Complaints arising from an intervention

Students and their parents/carers or guardians who feel they have a grievance as a result of an investigation or intervention to a report of bullying or harassment are to be guided in their actions by the Community Grievance Policy (COM14).

9. Rules relating to Harassment

The Principal may make Rules, consistent with this Policy including but not limited to:

- a. procedures for reporting and investigating allegations of harassment; and
- b. protocols for the conduct of staff and students that aim to prevent and eliminate harassment within the College.

10. Relevant Documents

- a. Reportable Conduct Scheme - <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safety/resources/reportable-conduct-scheme-information-sheets/>
- b. Parent Conduct Guidelines
- c. Student Code of Conduct Guidelines
- d. Child Safety Policies
- e. STU Student Management Policy
- f. [Community Grievance Policy](#)
- g. [Student Wellbeing Policy](#)