



MORRINSVILLE COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES HARASSMENT POLICY

DEFINITION

Harassment is unsolicited verbal/physical conduct by a person or group that is unwelcome, offensive and often aggressive. It may be intimidatory or discriminatory in relation to gender, race, disability, sexuality or beliefs.

Harassment is:

NOT PERMITTED in the classroom, or school community

OFFENSIVE

NOT based on MUTUAL CONSENT

A SERIOUS MATTER and may include:

- * all forms of bullying
- * verbal abuse
- * cyber-bullying - abusive text messaging, emails, offensive social media comments or taking and sharing private images
- * physical assault - holding, pushing, shoving, punching or pinching
- * intimidation or stand-over tactics
- * offensive gestures or comments
- * making remarks about someone's body and sexuality that they find offensive
- * offensive touching
- * suggestive remarks

Bullying is one particular form of aggressive harassment. Bullying is deliberate, involves a power imbalance, has an element of repetition and is harmful. It compromises the ability of students to learn, achieve and feel safe and healthy in school and teachers to teach and feel safe and healthy. It can be covert or overt in nature. It is influenced by the actions and values of peer groups, families and whanau, and communities.

RATIONALE

All individuals in the Morrinsville College community have a right to be respected and free from harassment and bullying, which are seen as being counter to the social aims of the School Charter and NAG 5.

Morrinsville College will foster:

- 1 a safe, positive physical and emotional school culture to ensure students' and staff members' well-being
- 2 a respectful and inclusive school environment so that each student and staff member is considered an individual of worth
- 3 sensitivity to, and concern for, the needs of others
- 4 tolerance of individual differences, with special regard for racial, cultural, sexual, religious diversity and physical and mental differences, so that every student and staff member is treated with respect and dignity
- 5 skills which enable people to have mutual respect for each other and to work together harmoniously with a sense of belonging and purpose
- 6 positive relationships between staff, students, parents and whanau to effectively ensure inclusive practices and deal with bullying issues.

PURPOSES

- 1 To make the school community aware of forms of harassment/bullying that exist
- 2 To make the school community aware of procedures individuals may follow if they suffer harassment
- 3 To implement strategies that deal with the problems or issues associated with harassment, including bullying
- 4 To fulfil the legal requirement under the Human Rights Act 1993 and the aims of the School Charter and NAG 5.

GUIDELINES

- 1 The school's perception of harassment is defined and communicated to the school community
- 2 The procedures that should be followed when harassment occurs are outlined and publicised
- 3 School-wide Positive Behaviour For Learning interventions establish positive social values that are important to the school community
- 4 School support services and appropriate external agencies are involved wherever appropriate.

PROCEDURES

- 1 Morrinsville College will be part of the Ministry's School-wide Positive Behaviour For Learning initiative and develop procedures and practices for encouraging positive behaviour in all school settings and discouraging negative behaviour, including all forms of harassment and bullying
- 2 Teachers will set clear and explicit standards in their classroom and address all forms of bullying. They will recognise that some students may be more vulnerable to bullying, for instance those with special needs, those who are physically vulnerable and those who are challenged due to poor social skills. When these students are identified, individualised approaches to preventing and responding to bullying behaviour may be included in individual education plans
- 3 Teachers will endeavour, in the first instance at least, to use a restorative approach to solving minor harassment/bullying issues.
- 4 Teachers will understand that digital technology can be a medium for all kinds of cyber-bullying through using emails, cell-phones, chat-rooms, social networking sites and instant messaging. They will be responsible for doing all that they can to ensure that students understand the concept of digital citizenship, including honesty and integrity and ethical behaviour in their use of ICT
- 5 The school will ensure that all students and parents are given a copy of the ICT Acceptable User Policy For Students and that students clearly understand the requirements of this policy
- 6 The school will promote good teaching practice which includes teaching the Key Competencies. Of particular importance to the prevention of harassment and bullying will be developing *managing self* (so that students are self-motivated, show a can-do attitude and see themselves as capable learners), *relating to others* (so that students interact effectively with a diverse range of people in a variety of contexts), and *participating and contributing* (so that students are actively involved in their community and hold good community values)
- 7 Through the Health Learning Area, and the My Friends Youth Project in particular, teachers will inform students about harassment and bullying, how to deal with these issues and the importance of making our school a respectful and inclusive environment
- 8 The Principal will present anti-bullying and anti-harassment messages at some assemblies and in an early newsletter each year and make clear the school's Harassment Policy and the implications for students and staff members who contravene this policy
- 9 Teachers will inform students of appropriate ways of dealing with and reporting incidents, and of appropriate support people
- 10 Teachers will actively promote a culture of confidential 'safe telling', so that harassment/bullying behaviour is reported by victims or witnesses
- 11 In order to achieve the above, Staff will participate in at least one training session facilitated by the Guidance Counsellor at a full Staff meeting every two years
- 12 The main contact people in the school are the Guidance Counsellors, Form Teachers, Learning Coaches, Deans, Senior Leaders and Peer Mediators. They will accept that harassment/bullying exists, that it is a serious issue to be dealt with, provide opportunities for students to learn new ways to manage social behaviours and ensure that support and strategies are put in place for both the victims and initiators of harassment/bullying (in the latter case to change the behaviour of the bullying student)
- 13 Peer mediators will be selected by the Guidance Counsellors (and students if appropriate) and will reflect the diversity of groups within the school. They will receive training and ongoing support from the counsellors and will possess good interpersonal skills, especially the capability of good listening and of respect for confidentiality. The names of all peer mediators will be advertised to students. Complainants may take problems to any one of the contact persons
- 14 Peer mediators initially do not attempt to mediate between the two parties, but listen and explain the possible courses of action the complainant might take. This could include supporting the complainant in:
 - (i) Telling the person complained about that their behaviour is offensive and asking them to stop
 - (ii) Writing to that person as above
 - (iii) Talking to their friends for support, for ideas and/or to go with them when they make a complaint to a contact person

- (iv) Speaking to the person in the company of a supportive friend or senior student
 - (v) Writing to the person advising that a formal complaint may be made if the behaviour does not stop
 - (vi) Keeping a diary of events, including dates, what happened and witnesses
 - (vii) Referring the matter to a peer mediation process if appropriate
 - (viii) Referral to a special facilitator such as a Dean, Counsellor, Deputy Principal, Principal, or person outside the school with expertise such as someone from the Rape & Sexual Abuse Healing Centre, Human Rights Commission, a PPTA representative, Police, or Morrinsville Community House.
- 15 In the case of serious misconduct, with the permission of the complainant, the peer mediator should refer the matter to the Guidance Counsellor, the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.
- 16 If the matter is not resolved by 14 (i) (ii) (iii) (iv) or (v) it is referred to a special facilitator for mediation. The role of the facilitator is to discuss the complaint with the individuals concerned, and as necessary with other relevant people, with the aim of resolving the problem and ensuring that it does not recur. Alternatively, a restorative conference may be undertaken with all affected parties, in an attempt to reach a resolution. If resolution is not achieved the facilitator will refer the matter further in accordance with the complainant's wishes.
- 17 If the situation cannot be resolved by the facilitator or the complaint is very serious, the complainant may wish to do one of the following:
- (i) take the complaint to the Principal
 - (ii) take the complaint to the Human Rights Commission.
- 18 Serious issues of harassment/bullying will result in defined serious consequences through the deputy principals and Principal
- 19 The Board will deal strongly with students and staff members referred to them by the Principal for serious or repeated harassment/bullying. This may include further referral to the local Police for follow-up action
- 20 In the case of the complainant being a staff member, as well as 17 (i) and (ii) s/he may invoke the personal grievance procedure of the Employment Contracts Act 1991.
- 21 The following principles shall apply in all proceedings relating to sexual harassment:
- a) Confidentiality must be maintained by all people involved in a complaint
 - b) No person is to exert pressure on any person making a complaint to withdraw it or continue with proceedings if the complainant wishes to withdraw the complaint
 - c) Records must be kept from the stage of mediation of all discussions, interviews and meetings, and be read and signed by the people involved. They should be stored securely by the mediator until there is a resolution. With the permission of the complainant the Principal should be kept informed.

**IT IS EVERYBODY'S RESPONSIBILITY TO IDENTIFY
POTENTIAL STUDENTS AT RISK - NOT TO DEAL WITH IT**

