



## **Bullying / Cyber bullying/ Harassment Policy and Procedures Student Wellbeing Department**

### **RATIONALE**

Al-Taqwa College recognises that a safe school environment requires active, consistent efforts by all staff members to promote awareness of bullying behaviour, reinforcement of pro-social behaviour and encourage reporting of bullying incidents. Islam explicitly forbids all forms of oppression and injustice. Thus the College strives to promote an environment of mutual support and respect based upon Islamic values and fostering positive relationships among students and staff members. This policy seeks to improve the school environment by addressing the problems of the bullying, the roles of the staff members and ensuring that all the students feel safe and happy at the College. Al-Taqwa College recognises the seriousness of bullying behaviour and strives to prevent bullying of any sort through a combined effort between teachers, parents and students.

### **AIMS**

- To reinforce within the College community what bullying is, including Cyberbullying, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and the fact that it is unacceptable.
- To alert everyone within the College community of the signs and evidence of bullying and to ensure bullying is reported to staff whether a person is an observer or a victim.
- To provide a fair and supportive environment free from all forms of harassment, that promotes personal respect, as well as providing physical and emotional safety for all.
- To provide a safe environment for all students, employees, board members, contractors, visitors and volunteers free of sexual harassment.
- To allow people in the workplace to have redress against unfair and unreasonable treatment.
- To ensure that all reported incidents of bullying are followed up appropriately.
- To seek parental and peer-group support and co-operation at all times.

### **Implementation**

- Bullying may consist of physical harm, harassment, verbal insults, hurtful remarks, or actions designed to hurt somebody's reputation, social standing or to cause humiliation. Bullying may be carried out directly or indirectly, and may include the use of digital technologies such as social network sites, websites or on-line chat rooms.
- Al-Taqwa College has adopted a zero tolerance position on bullying.
- Al-Taqwa College will combat bullying by providing a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment.
- Restorative practices to be implemented throughout Al-Taqwa College so that students may understand the consequences of their actions.
- Community awareness and input relating to bullying, its characteristics and the College's programs and response, complemented by clear processes for reporting suspected bullying.
- Anti-bullying messages and posters will be displayed around the College.
- Parents are encouraged to contact the College if they suspect a bullying or behaviour problem.
- The College will reinforce with students the importance of appropriately reporting incidents of inappropriate behaviour involving themselves or others, and the imperative that staff respond appropriately and proportionally to each allegation consistent with the College's Student Code of Conduct, including the proper reporting and recording of the incident.
- Parents are to be contacted if their child is alleged to have been bullied or experienced inappropriate behaviour, or if their child appears to have behaved inappropriately or bullied someone else.
- Staff, students and members of the College community will be familiar with the College's approach to harassment and will be provided with information relating to their rights and responsibilities.
- School-level protocols for resolving issues or complaints will be developed and well publicised.
- Staff members will not allow themselves or their colleagues to be subjected to harassment from parents or students – all such issues must be immediately reported to the principal.
- Bullying and harassment by students will attract consequences consistent with our Student wellbeing and behaviour guideline.

## **Definitions**

### *Bullying*

Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, deliberately upset or hurt another person or damage their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion. There is an imbalance of power in incidents of bullying with the bully or bullies having more power at the time due to age, size, status or other reasons.

This table describes the categories of bullying:

Category	Includes
Direct physical bullying	•hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property
Direct verbal bullying	•name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
Indirect bullying	•action designed to harm someone’s social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Indirect bullying includes: -lying and spreading rumours
Cyberbullying	-playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate -mimicking -encouraging others to socially exclude someone -damaging someone’s social reputation or social acceptance  •direct verbal or indirect bullying behaviours using digital technologies. This includes harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately  excluding someone from social networking spaces.

*Harassment*

Harassment is the exertion of power by one person over another – often presenting as bullyish behaviour – which makes another person feel embarrassed, offended, upset, devalued, degraded, afraid, frustrated or angry. It is unwelcome, unreciprocated, uninvited and usually repeated. It is behaviour that breaches proper and professional conduct.

### *Sexual Harassment*

Sexual harassment can be physical, verbal or written. It involves behaviour that could be expected to make a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated, even if the behaviour is not intended by the individual to be sexually harassing, it may still be unlawful. Both males and females can be subjected to sexual harassment from either persons of the same or opposite gender.

Examples of behaviours that may constitute sexual harassment include (but is not restricted to):

- Sexual jokes, lewd suggestions, whistling, foul language, leering, obscene gestures
  - Belittling comments on a person's anatomy or based on sex-role stereotypes
  - Persistent demands for participation in social activities or repeated request for dates
  - Asking about a person's private sex life, explicit sexual suggestions in return for 'reward'
  - Unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature including touching, brushing, kissing,
  - Display of pornographic and /or sexually suggestive pictures, screen savers, jokes etc. and/or sexual objects
  - Sexually offensive written, telephone or electronic communications including posts on social networking sites
  - Indecent exposure
  - The school will provide counselling if required.
- \*Sexual assault is a criminal offences and the person assaulted will be advised to report the offence to the police.

### **Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Bullying**

*Teachers are required to increase supervision and duty of care awareness:*

- Emphasise and promote positive discipline practices amongst all staff
- Regularly identify play ground 'hot spots' and evaluate supervision requirements.
- Continue to create structured activities and well organised play areas to ensure a safe play environment
- Vulnerable students need to be reminded to play where they can easily be seen by yard duty teachers
- Plan and promote a positive playground environment at Al-Taqwa College.
- Promote an inclusive and equitable classroom
- Be role models at all times

- Use positive classroom management and discipline strategies

*Students are required to:*

- Refuse to participate in bullying behaviour
- Take appropriate preventative action if they witness a bullying situation and report the incident to the appropriate person, i.e. teachers, coordinators, student counsellors
- Show support for targets of bullies

*Parents are advised to:*

- Watch for signs of distress in their child – reluctance to attend school, damaged clothes or unexplained injuries or bruising, missing equipment
- Take an active interest in their child's social life and friends
- Advise their child to notify staff about a bullying incident
- Inform the school if bullying is suspected
- Keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why) of bullying incidents
- Do not encourage your child to retaliate with bullying behaviour (teasing, swearing, punching, kicking)
- Attend meetings with teachers to address the problem

### **Repetitive or Serious Incidents:**

- Serious incidents and/or repetitive incidents of bullying / cyber bullying / harassment or unacceptable behaviour must be reported, responded to by staff and documented.
- Serious incidents are those that include physical assault, sexual assault, criminal activity involving theft or serious damage of property, serious threats or homophobic bullying etc.
- All such incidents or allegations will be properly investigated and documented. Depending upon the nature of each incident, they may be also be reported to and investigated by police.
- The College may contact support professionals such counsellors and psychologists for assistance and support.
- Students, staff and parents identified by others as bullies will be informed of allegations.
- Both bullies and victims will be offered counselling and support.
- All repetitive or serious incidents must be brought to the attention of the relevant sub-school-heads / level coordinators of Al-Taqwa College

- The most appropriate staff member will contact parents of the targeted child. Sub-school heads / Student Wellbeing & Behaviour Team will contact alleged perpetrators unless advised by police etc. not to do so.
- Consequences of repetitive or serious incidents may include:
  - Criminal charges
  - Suspension or loss of privileges
  - Counselling
  - Conciliation or any other consequences consistent with the College's Student Code of Conduct and the Student Wellbeing and Behaviour Management Guidelines.
  - Expulsion
- A management strategy for all parties will be developed in consultation with the students and parents involved.
- Parents or community members who bully or harass or abuse staff will be provided with official warnings, and if necessary referred to the police, and/or have trespass restrictions placed upon them by the Principal consistent with the Summary Offences Act.<sup>1</sup>

### **Post Incident:**

Discipline consequences for bullies (depending on severity) may involve:

- After school detentions
- Removal from class
- Behaviour Contracts
- Internal suspension
- External suspension

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<sup>1</sup> SUMMARY OFFENCES ACT 1966 - SECT 17

Obscene, indecent, threatening language and behaviour etc. in public

- (1) Any person who in or near a public place or within the view or hearing of any person being or passing therein or thereon—
- (a) sings an obscene song or ballad;
  - (b) writes or draws exhibits or displays an indecent or obscene word figure or representation;
  - (c) uses profane indecent or obscene language or threatening abusive or insulting words; or
  - (d) behaves in a riotous indecent offensive or insulting manner— shall be guilty of an offence.

- Formal apology
- Expulsion

The severity of the incident along with the level of remorse and previous behavioural history of the bully will affect the severity of the discipline involved.

It is imperative that appropriate strategies are put in place after the incident has been resolved for all students involved. Strategies may include:

- Ongoing monitoring of students
- Follow up meetings with students involved
- Ongoing communication with parents
- Counselling – internal/external
- Reinforcement of positive behaviours and appropriate behaviour strategies

Parents, teachers, students and the community will be aware of the College's position on bullying / cyberbullying, through the College website.

#### Resources

Student Wellbeing and Behaviour Guideline

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/bullying.aspx#2>

[http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Sexual\\_Harassment\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/Sexual_Harassment_Policy.pdf)