A POLICY AGAINST BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

RATIONALE

Forest Hill College does not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form. All members of the College Community are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

PURPOSE

1. Provide working definitions of bullying and harassment at Forest Hill College
2. Provide examples of behaviours that are considered bullying and or harassment
3. Outline the effects that bullying and or harassment may result in.
4. Identify the importance of Restorative Practice in changing behaviours
5. Outline the preventative strategies that all members of the community should undertake in relation to bullying and harassment

GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. What is bullying?
   Bullying is when someone, or a group of people, who have more power at the time, deliberately upset or hurt another person, their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.
   • It is an abuse of power
   • It can be planned and organised or it may be unintentional
   • Individuals or groups may be involved.

There are three broad categories of bullying.
   • Direct physical bullying e.g. physical violence, demands for money or possessions, damaging property.
   • Direct verbal bullying e.g. name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, verbal abuse.
   • Indirect bullying – e.g. spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, social exclusion, damaging someone’s reputation and social acceptance, cyber-bullying which involves the use of email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

Some examples of bullying may include:
   • any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others.
   • any form of verbal aggression, such as threats of violence, “put-downs”, teasing, name calling, etc
   • any form of non-verbal intimidation, such as invasion of personal space, leaving someone out of activities on purpose, giving people “looks” or verbal signs aimed at intimidation, etc
   • cyber bullying - using email, text messages or chat rooms to humiliate and distress.

2. What is harassment?
   Harassment is any behaviour, verbal or physical which is:
   • unwelcome;
   • degrading, intrusive, violent, abusive, sexual in nature;
   • offensive to a person.

Some examples of harassment may include:
   • unwelcome physical contact;
   • unwelcome questions about a person’s private life;
   • comments about a person’s sexuality or sex life;
   • sexual jokes;
   • wolf whistles, cat calls or unwelcome noises;
• graffiti about people;
• offensive pictures and written materials;
• suggestive or offensive comments about a person’s appearance or lifestyle.
• racist comments

3. Effects of bullying and harassment
• Some signs that a child is being bullied may include:
  • An unwillingness or refusal to go to school;
  • Feeling ill in the mornings
  • Doing poorly in their school work;
  • Becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence;
  • Suffering sleep difficulties, feeling ill in the mornings;
  • Asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
  • Having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches or damaged clothes or property;
  • Becoming aggressive and unreasonable;
  • Refusing to talk about what’s wrong.

4. Values Important To Our College

Students and staff have the expectation that they will be free of harassment of any kind when attending school. All members of the College Community have an involvement in preventing and reducing bullying. This means that everyone should report incidents of bullying so that they can be thoroughly investigated. Forest Hill College is committed to the implementation of Restorative Practices which places a clear emphasis on the values of building positive social relationships, working and learning in teams and managing and resolving conflict. The College’s aim is to make those who demonstrate inappropriate behaviour aware of the situation and subsequently repair the harm done and change their behaviour. Wrong doers are encouraged to be accountable for their behaviour and take responsibility for their actions by making amends to those affected. Restorative Practices empower young people, victims and offenders, to act in socially responsible ways through its focus on rebuilding relationships.

5. Preventative strategies

As a School Community we will not allow cases of bullying and harassment to go unreported but will speak up.

a) This requires staff to:
   i) be role models in word and action at all times;
   ii) be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying or harassment;
   iii) make efforts to remove occasions for bullying or harassment by active patrolling during supervision duty;
   iv) arrive at class on time and move promptly between lessons;
   v) take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk;
   vi) report suspected incidents to the Year Level Leader who will follow the designated procedures;
   vii) be committed to developing positive, supportive and psychologically, safe classrooms.

b) This requires students to:
   i) Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation. Being part of a group which is bullying someone else or being a bystander watching someone being bullied is just as bad as being the bully
   ii) Report the incident or suspected incident of bullying or harassment to the Year Level Leader, or any other member of Staff, or encourage and support the victim to report the incident
   iii) If they are being bullied or harassed:
        a) make it clear that the person’s behaviour is causing distress and request him/her to stop
        b) do not retaliate
        c) stay cool and walk away calmly
        d) report the incident to the Year Level Leader or a member of staff with whom you feel comfortable, who will follow the designated procedures
        e) speak to your parents
        f) seek peer mediation and/or peer support (Year 7)
c) The College recommends that parents:
   i) watch for signs of distress in their child, e.g., unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes, bruising, etc;
   ii) encourage their child to tell a staff member about any incident of bullying or harassment;
   iii) inform the college if bullying or harassment is suspected, even if their own child is not directly affected;
   iv) assist their child to develop positive strategies and do not encourage their child to retaliate;
   v) do not directly approach any other students who they believe may be involved in bullying their child or the parents of other students. This will make the situation worse.
   vi) work with the College to solve the problem. The College takes their responsibilities in relation to bullying seriously and will have more success when parents work with the college to establish a plan for dealing with the current situation and future bullying incidents.
   vii) be willing to attend interviews at the College if their child is involved in any bullying or harassment incident.

6. What the College Will Do
   • Include material on bullying, tolerance and assertive behaviour in the curriculum.
   • Provide a safe environment for students, teachers, other staff and visitors.
   • Provide a supportive environment which encourages positive relationships between students, their peers and teachers.
   • Implement College policies in a consistent and fair manner.
   • Respond to all reports of bullying by students.
   • Model appropriate behaviour on a consistent basis.
   • Use Restorative Practices to assist students to develop skills for resolving conflict and dealing with bullying behaviour.

NB: The Forest Hill College Anti-bullying Policy should be read in conjunction with the Forest Hill College Learning Culture Framework

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