

## Anti-Harassment Policy

The main aim of Saint Ignatius' College's harassment policies and programmes is to encourage students and teachers to behave with care, courtesy and consideration towards others at all times and to follow grievance procedures that are understood and supported by the whole school community.

### 1. What is Harassment?

Harassment is an ongoing process of causing pain or discomfort to another.

- Harassment can take a number of forms: verbal, gesture, exclusion, physical, sexual, and extortion
- Harassment involves a continuing process of the exercise of power to cause discomfort to another person(s) and in the case of sexual harassment it can be uninvited, repeated or unwelcome advances of a sexual nature.
- Harassment can sometimes be planned and organised, or the harasser may be unaware of the hurt being caused
- Harassment is any behaviour which is repeatedly used with the intention of making someone's life unpleasant
- An individual can harass others, but often, groups can harass others.

### 2. Common Forms of Harassment:

- making verbal and/or electronic conversation, comments, gestures or displaying of images which are intended to embarrass or offend
- making degrading comments about another's cultural, religious, social background, and exclusion from groups on grounds of gender, race/nationality
- ridiculing another's body appearance
- using nicknames or making silly noises
- using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their family
- using put-downs, belittling another's weakness
- using put-downs, belittling another's strengths
- interfering with another's property, by hiding, damaging or destroying it
- writing mean or spiteful notes, or graffiti about others
- making suggestive comments or using other forms of sexual abuse
- threatening or frightening others
- jostling, pushing and spitting on others
- hitting or being violent
- forcing others to do jobs or making them follow instructions

**IN RECENT YEARS CYBER-BULLYING HAS BECOME AN INCREASINGLY PREVALENT PHENOMENON. CYBER-BULLYING REFERS TO ACTIONS TAKEN BY INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS TO USE MSN, WEB PAGES, CHAT ROOMS, TEXT MESSAGING OR ANY OTHER ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS MEDIUM TO MAKE COMMENTS, HAVE CONVERSATIONS, CONVEY THREATS OR DISPLAY IMAGES TO DISTRESS OTHERS.**

### 3. If a student is harassed:

- s/he may feel frightened, unsafe, lonely, embarrassed, angry and unfairly treated.
- His/her work, sleep and ability to concentrate can suffer.
- s/he may find it hard to relate well with friends and family.
- s/he may feel confused and not know what to do about the problem.

- s/he may be reluctant to attend school.
- s/he may find morale and self esteem is low.

**NO-ONE SHOULD HAVE TO PUT UP WITH BEING HARASSED**

**4. What does Saint Ignatius' College do about Harassment (of all types)?**

As a whole and caring community, we affirm that there is no place for harassment (in any of its forms) in the College.

- We reject any suggestion that Harassment or intimidation is part of growing up, or 'the way things are done' at our school
- We will not allow cases of such unwanted behaviour to go unreported but will speak up, even at risk to ourselves

**5. What can Staff do?**

- Be appropriate role models in words and actions at all times i.e. use inclusive language and be aware of attitudes and behaviours in classrooms.
- Report suspected incidents to Year Directors, Dean of Students or Student Counsellor.
- Take steps to help victims and restrict source of distress, without putting victim into further danger and risk.
- Listen to students (individually and in groups) and be sympathetic/take appropriate reaction to reports of possible Harassment.
- Make efforts to remove occasions for harassment by:
  - actively patrolling during supervision duty
  - punctual arrival at class
- Be sympathetic to the needs of the victim and the alleged harasser, and not be too quick to judge guilt
- Be alert to situations of harassment, in their own actions, or in those of their colleagues

**6. What students can do if they are being Harassed**

**If you are being harassed:**

1. Initially try to ignore it and not show that it upsets you. If the harasser is not rewarded by your response, the harassment may stop.

**If the unwanted actions persist:**

2. Approach the persons harassing you and tell them that their actions are unwanted and must stop.

**If the Harassment continues or you feel uncomfortable approaching the harassers then:**

3. Students can report incidents (or suspected incidents) of harassments to a trusted friend, Senior Leader, Student Counsellor, teacher, or Year Director, and help break down the code of secrecy. If students who are being harassed refuse to remain silent, their courage in speaking out may help to reduce pain for themselves and may protect potential victims.

**If you see others harassed:**

4. Report the incident
5. Refuse to be present in any harassment situation. Your presence contributes to the crime against the victim

**7. What happens after an harassment situation is reported to staff:**

When an Harassment situation is reported to staff members then they will act in whatever reasonable way they can, to ensure that the harassment ceases and the victim once again feels comfortable and safe within our school community.

There is no one single response to harassment which adequately covers the range of situations which can occur. It is possible to say, however, that in all situations, the needs of the victim will remain foremost in any considerations.

In general terms the following is an outline of the various stages which could be followed as a result of an harassment situation being reported to staff.

- The victim is interviewed and permission sought from the victim to enable staff to intervene in the situation.
- If possible other students who may have information are also interviewed.
- The harasser is interviewed and made aware of the inappropriate nature of his/her behaviour – insistence on harassment stopping is made.
- Parents of concerned parties are informed of this process.

If harassment ceases at this time then regular follow-up is conducted to ensure that undesirable patterns of behaviour are not re-established.

It is vital at this stage for victims of harassment to maintain communication with staff, since in some cases, harassers will not respond sensibly in the first instance.

If harassment continues:

- Further interviews are conducted.
- The harasser may be internally suspended.
- Parents are interviewed.

If harassment ceases then regular follow-up is conducted.

If harassment continues:

- The harasser is suspended.
- A review of the harasser's position in the College is made.

At each stage both victim and harasser are counselled and supported with an emphasis placed on protection of the victim and education of the harasser.

The Student Counsellor and other appropriate support staff may play a constructive role at any of these stages.

Individuals who harass others must accept the consequences of their actions.

If harassment continues:

- The harasser is removed from the school community.

## **8. What should parents do?**

- Watch for signs of distress in your child: unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- Ask your child "what could you do?" to assist problem solving. Ask about progress and affirm efforts. Be prepared to talk to the school only after your child has made genuine attempts to help him/herself. This develops self-confidence, self-esteem and independence
- Take an active interest in your child's social life and acquaintances
- Encourage your child to seek support from a trusted adult.
- Inform Year Director, Dean of Students or Student Counsellor if harassment is suspected
- Keep written record (who, what, where, when...)
- Do not encourage your child to hit back or respond aggressively. Encourage and model appropriate assertive language and behaviour responses.
- Be willing to attend interviews at the College where your child is part of suspected harassment incidents.
- Be willing to advise the school in cases of suspected harassment, even if your own child is not directly affected.

Ensure you know what computer games your child is playing, what web sites they are visiting and what videos they are watching. These have been identified as contributing to aggressive behaviour among young people by Professor Ken Rigby of the University of South Australia.

*Extracted from the 2010 Information Handbook & 2010 College Diary*