

---

# Harassment policy

## **BASIC BELIEFS**

Yarrowonga Secondary College is committed to providing an environment that is free from harassment. Every person at YSC has the right to experience positive and respectful relationships between all members of the school community. They also have the right to learn and to teach in a happy and safe environment. Harassment is not acceptable at YSC.

### **Definition of Harassment**

Harassment is any behaviour or communication that is offensive and unwelcome.

Harassment occurs in many forms:

**Verbal Harassment** can be name calling; “put downs”; “knocking” achievers; spreading rumours or gossiping; negative comments about someone’s appearance; threatening remarks; negative comments about a person’s life or beliefs; swearing.

**Non-verbal harassment** includes offensive body language and gestures; offensive leering or staring; displaying of offensive material; inappropriate messages via writing, text, internet; exclusion

**Physical Harassment** can be threatening behaviour; fighting or using weapons; unfair exclusion; unwanted touching, interfering with property or clothing; unwelcome physical contact (e.g. bumping or brushing past others on purpose)

**Sexual Harassment** can be obvious or subtle and may involve: unwanted, persistent “come ons”; written or illustrated material or comments which cause embarrassment, offence or discomfort; embarrassing sexual jokes; abusive language; leering or unwelcome comments of a sexual nature or about a person’s sexual attractiveness or appearance.

**Bullying** is when harassment occurs repeatedly with the intention of causing distress, not only at the time of the attack, but also by the threat of future attacks.

## **AIMS**

- To ensure that student’s do not fear harassment.
- To ensure that all members of the College community follow the same process in the event of harassment occurring.

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACTION**

If a student is being harassed he or she should report it to the Year Level Coordinator (YLC), Student Welfare Coordinator (SWC), Sub-School Leader (SSL), Assistant Principal (AP) or a teacher with whom they feel comfortable. The responsible adult will report the incident to the YLC or AP.

The following steps will be followed in the event of harassment or bullying:

1. The incident will be documented and the complaint investigated by the YLC, AP, SWC or SSL.
2. A restorative conference will be held between the harasser and the victim, as well as any others affected by the incident. An agreement will be recorded as a result of the conference. For serious cases, a full conference with parents will be organized by a Restorative Practices trained staff member.
3. If the incident occurs again, the agreement is breached or an initial agreement cannot be reached; then parents will be contacted and invited to be involved in a restorative conference. The “harasser” may need to be removed from the grounds until the incident can be resolved.
4. For further incidents of harassment, or if the agreement is still not adhered to, then the matter will be dealt with in a punitive way, i.e. suspension.

Documentation of all incidents of harassment and bullying is kept by the YLC and is referred to in further incidents involving the same student. This is accessed by the Welfare Team (YLC’s, Principal, AP, SSLs) and is kept for the current school year.

---

If harassment or bullying occurs:

***For students:***

- Tell a teacher immediately. You may also tell your YLC, SWC, AP or SSL.
- Your YLC will be notified either by yourself or one of the above mentioned staff members. They will then ensure that a restorative conference occurs. This process will ensure that the harasser becomes aware of the harm that he/she is causing and also provides an opportunity for that person to repair the harm. An agreement will also be reached by all parties.
- Where harassment involves a serious assault, you should immediately report the incident to the yard duty teacher or another staff member. In these cases, the AP or YLC will remove the harasser from the school grounds and/or classroom. Parents will be notified and the College will follow the Student Code of Conduct.
- Where the harassment continues or recurs after a lapse of time, it is essential to report the continuation of the problem.

***For staff:***

- Listen and acknowledge the seriousness of the report, no matter how trivial it may first appear. Deal with any breach of the school discipline code at that time.
- Refer the incident to the YLC. Inform the student/s of this action.
- The YLC will then deal with the matter or ask one of the RP trained staff to deal with the situation.

***For parents/guardians:***

- It is suggested that you encourage your children to discuss harassment issues with you at home.
- If your child reports that they are being harassed at school, encourage them to speak to a teacher at school. Students who feel strongly that harassment should be reported are our best asset in maintaining a climate that discourages this behaviour.
- We also encourage parents to contact the school where you become aware of situations involving harassment.