
HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

As with all behaviour at Hillbrook, our guide is the Declaration of Rights & Responsibilities and the Rules of the Road.

At Hillbrook everyone has:

1. The right and responsibility to learn.

Everyone has the right and responsibility to learn and help others to do the same.

2. The right and responsibility to seek to understand ourselves, others and the world around us.

We should encourage thinking and questioning in ways that are critical, compassionate and creative.

3. The right to be heard, and the responsibility to listen.

We have the responsibility to give our full attention by listening, and respectfully responding to the concerns, feelings and experiences of others.

4. The right to belong and the responsibility to help others to experience the same.

We should treat each other with kindness, good manners and consideration, and help others to be safe, and feel supported and valued.

5. The right to be treated with respect, fairness and dignity, including the right to our name, and the responsibility to treat others in the same way.

We should take responsibility for our actions, the language we use, and to treat each other with respect, fairness and dignity regardless of ability, gender, race, age, culture, sexuality or faith.

6. The right to be accepted, and the responsibility to accept others.

We give others the freedom to express themselves without fear of being judged. We believe that others have good intentions and act with integrity.

How Do I Know If I am Harassing or Bullying Someone?

If you are unsure, you can:

- Read the Hillbrook Declaration of Rights & Responsibilities.
- Check the Rules of the Road.
- Watch the effect of your actions and words on other people and consider whether they are really comfortable with your behaviour or just trying to cover their embarrassment.
- Check your behaviour and language by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate.
- Stop behaving in that way.
- Apologise if you are in doubt.

- Always treat other people as equals rather than as inferior due to sexual or other differences.
- Discuss your behaviour with someone who has an understanding of the issues.

1.0 What is Harassment?

Harassment is any unwelcome attention that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating or physically hurtful.

Harassment can be:

- physically hurting someone.
- threatening behaviour.
- causing people to be excluded from groups.
- teasing, calling names or making rude signs.
- telling smutty jokes or making suggestive comments that offend others.
- displaying offensive pictures, posters or graffiti.
- staring or ogling.
- following someone home from school.
- patting, pinching or touching another person.
- pestering someone to go out or making other unwanted approaches.
- sending offensive messages in writing, by telephone or computer.
- ridiculing, leering or wolf-whistling at, or making unwanted sexual comments about a person or group of people.
- spreading rumours about someone's sex life or other activities.
- making belittling or ridiculing comments.

If someone's behaviour makes you feel:

- offended or humiliated,
- intimidated or frightened,
- uncomfortable in the class or playground,

then you have the right to object or make a complaint.

Harassment is not:

- paying genuine compliments.
- behaving with common courtesy.
- showing friendship.
- sharing humour.

Harassment can occur:

- between students.

- between students and staff – harassment of a student by a staff member or of a staff member by a student.

Anyone can be harassed, female or male. Harassment can also be related to a person's negative feelings about members of minority groups, for example, people from other cultural groups and people with disabilities or illnesses, or people who are different.

Harassment can:

- cause distress.
- lower self-esteem.
- reduce self-confidence.
- affect study performance.
- lead to academic results that do not reflect ability or effort.
- cause absenteeism.
- result in withdrawal from school or from particular courses and hence reduced career prospects.
- discourage participation in school activities.

2.0 Some Common Myths

MYTH: *But it's all good fun.*

FACT: If everybody is enjoying it, then it is good fun. Harassment is not fun for the victim.

MYTH: *They asked for it*

FACT: There is no excuse for harassment. We are all responsible for our behaviour and cannot blame others for our offensive or unlawful actions.

MYTH: *Nice people don't get harassed*

FACT: Women and girls, men and boys of all types get harassed – young and old, married or single, of all body types and from all backgrounds (including all cultures and races).

MYTH: *Those who complain are wimps or prudes*

FACT: All students have the right to a safe educational environment free from harassment. To complain of bullying or harassing behaviour is not prudish – it is simply a matter of protecting your basic human rights.

MYTH: *I don't mind it - I wish someone would sexually harass me*

FACT: What you want is attention and respect, not harassment.

Harassment and bullying are unwanted actions. They are unacceptable, and against the law.

3.0 What to do if you are being harassed or bullied?

If you believe that you are being bullied or harassed – be it verbal, physical or sex-based – by anyone in the School community, your options are to:

- Tell the person who is doing it to you that you don't like it and that you want it to stop.
- Be absolutely clear in your response. Don't smile or give 'mixed messages'.
- Talk it over with your parents.
- Speak with the School Counsellor.
- Talk with a Year Coordinator.
- Discuss what you should do with an adult at School you know you can trust.
- Talk to a teacher you feel comfortable with.
- Report it to a member of the School Leadership Team.
- Make a complaint to the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission.

4.0 Actions following a formal complaint

These actions could be taken on your behalf:

- Arranging for support for you as the complainant.
- Arranging separate meetings with you and the harasser to hear both versions.
- Arranging a meeting with you and the harasser together to resolve the situation, if you desire it.
- Counselling the harasser.
- Disciplining the harasser.

First Occasion of Harassment by Student

1. The behaviour will be clearly identified with the student identified as the harasser to ensure that the student has a clear understanding of the issue. The student will be given the opportunity to respond. If it is clear that harassment has occurred, then it is expected that the student will make a commitment to change to appropriate behaviour.
2. The rights and responsibilities of Hillbrook students will be discussed. The student will be asked to identify which rights and responsibilities relate to the incident.
3. The legal implications of harassment will be stated.
4. Mediation between the students concerned, under the supervision of the Year Coordinator, may be conducted depending on the situation.
5. The student will be required to inform his/her parents and this will be confirmed by the parents in writing or by phone.
6. The consequences for a further infringement will be clearly stated.

Second Occasion of Harassment

1. The behaviour will be clearly identified with the student to ensure that the student has a clear understanding of the issue. The student will be given the opportunity to respond. If it is clear that harassment has occurred, then it is expected that the student will make a commitment to change to appropriate behaviour.
2. The rights and responsibilities of Hillbrook students will be discussed. The student will be asked to identify which rights and responsibilities relate to the incident.
3. The legal implications of harassment will be stated.
4. Parents of the student will be contacted.
5. The student will be withdrawn internally or externally from school activities for up to one week. During this period the student will draw up a contract detailing how the student proposes to change his/her behaviour. If requested/recommended, counselling will be made available.
6. The student will re-negotiate his/her way back into school with the Year Coordinator and/or the School Leadership Team by means of an interview and discussion of the contract.
7. The consequences for a further infringement will be clearly stated.

Third Occasion of Harassment

1. The behaviour will be identified in detail with the student to ensure that the student has a clear understanding of the issue. The student will be given the opportunity to respond. If it is clear that harassment has occurred, then:
 - The rights and responsibilities of Hillbrook students will be discussed. The student will be asked to identify which rights and responsibilities relate to the incident.
 - The legal implications of harassment will be stated.
 - Parents of the student will be contacted.
 - The student will be withdrawn from school and it would be difficult to see how the student could continue at Hillbrook without undertaking a program of counselling outside the school.

Note: If the initial infringement is severe it may be appropriate to by-pass step one or two and go directly to the procedure for the second or third occasion.

Underlying these procedures is a humane, pro-active educative approach.

On Work Experience

Bullying and sexual harassment are unlawful. This principle applies equally to a student on work experience.

If you feel you are being bullied or harassed while on work experience, you can report it to the manager at your work experience site, the Principal, the School's work experience coordinator, or a teacher. If you wish to make a formal complaint, however, you must lodge it through the manager at your work experience site or the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission.

The person you discuss it with can help you get in touch with the Anti-Discrimination Commission to discuss the matter and to lodge a formal complaint, if that is what you want to do. The decision on whether or not to lodge a formal complaint is left to you and your parent or legal guardian.

Whatever you choose to do, the School will take whatever action is necessary to ensure that the harassment stops or remove you and other students from any situation where it may occur.

5.0 Conclusion

Above all, remember you have a right to feel safe. If you believe you're being bullied or harassed, take action by following the advice in this document. If you feel that a concern you have raised has not been addressed satisfactorily, it is important for you to know that your view needs to be shared with a member of staff or with a member of the SLT.