



Heights College Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy

Our Commitment – Heights College is committed to providing staff and students with a working and learning environment free from discrimination and harassment of any kind (subject to lawful exemptions), including sexual and bullying, whether physical, verbal or psychological. Staff and students are expected to honour and support this commitment at all times. The culture of Heights College encourages Christian relational values and practices that benefit others and any form of discrimination, sexual harassment or bullying is entirely contrary to the Christian philosophy of Heights College.

Scope – This policy applies to students and employees, including full-time, part-time, permanent, fixed-term and casual employees, as well as contractors, volunteers and people undertaking work experience or vocational placements at the College and covers information relating to the prevention of discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying at Heights College.

Our Goal – To support this policy, Heights College strives to:

- Create a working and learning environment which is free from *discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying*, where all members are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect;
- Establish Codes of Conduct that explicitly prohibit *discrimination, sexual harassment and bullying* of others in the school community;
- Implement training and awareness raising strategies to ensure that all staff and students know their rights and responsibilities;
- Promote appropriate standards of conduct at all times;
- Provide an effective procedure for complaints based on the principles of natural justice;
- Treat all complaints in a sensitive, fair, timely and confidential manner;
- Protect individuals from any victimisation or reprisal, as much as possible;
- Encourage the reporting of behaviour which breaches this policy; and
- Take appropriate disciplinary action against those who breach this policy.

Responsibilities

Staff are required to:

- model appropriate behaviours at all times;
- be vigilant in observing and responding to complaints;
- follow up all expressed concerns;
- deal with reported and observed incidences as set out in the procedural document;
- ensure that students are supervised at all times; and
- protect the person being bullied from further harm.

Students are encouraged to:

- reject unacceptable behaviour as outlined in this policy and taught not to accept any form;
- not tolerate unacceptable behaviours within their friendship groups;
- talk openly about discrimination, harassment and bullying;
- not be involved with these unacceptable behaviours themselves;
- tell someone they trust if they see bullying taking place; and
- if they are bullied tell someone they trust e.g. parent, teacher or staff member

Parents are encouraged to:

- not discriminate, harass or bully any member of the College community;
- support their child by talking through the situation and agree upon what action will be taken, while assuring them that they have done the right thing in reporting the bullying incident;
- not attempt to sort out the bullies themselves;
- make an appointment with the Head of Primary or Head of Student Management and Administration; and
- work with the College in seeking a permanent solution.

Definitions

Discrimination occurs when a person is discriminated against because of:

- Their race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin (*Racial Discrimination Act 1975*);
- A disability (*Disability Discrimination Act 1975*); or
- Age (*Age Discrimination Act 2004*).

Discrimination can also occur based on sex, marital status and pregnancy as defined under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, however the Act recognises that schools like Heights College are religious institutions. Christian schools are places where children are brought up to understand the values and teachings of the Bible; therefore Heights College makes deliberate choices in employing staff who will teach and model those values.

Heights insists that those who would be role models to young people should not only know about Christianity, but must reflect its values, principles and beliefs in their life to encourage students to also live this way. We believe our community prospers best when people reflect the character of Christ in their own lives. In expression of human sexuality, that includes deliberate choices for heterosexual, monogamous relationships, expressed through marriage. We believe God has clearly shown these relationships are best for individuals, families and children and the whole community. Thus, the Act provides Christian schools, like Heights, with certain exemptions.

In the matters of enrolments, students of any background are considered for acceptance to the College with guidance from the Heights College Enrolment Policy and Procedures.

Sexual Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour of a sexual nature which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended. Sexual harassment can take many different forms and may include physical contact, verbal comments, jokes, propositions, the display of offensive material or other behaviour which creates a sexually hostile working environment.

In the context of a school, the following may also constitute sexual harassment:

- Persistent unwelcome social invitations or telephone calls;
- Being followed home from school/work;
- Offensive hand or body gestures;
- Physical and verbal intimidation such as ogling, leering, deliberately invading another's personal space or blocking access to or exit from an area;
- Referring to another person in a derogatory sexual manner; and
- Other offensive communications, including telecommunications, e.g. through fax machines, computers, posters, graffiti etc.

Sexual harassment is not behaviour which is based on mutual attraction, friendship and respect. If the interaction is consensual, welcome and reciprocated, it is not sexual harassment. However, some sexual harassment could be considered to be harm to a student or sexual assault, abuse and/or stalking which are criminal offences. Policy and processes for these cases are found in the Heights College Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or groups towards one or more persons.

Behaviours that *do not* constitute bullying include:

- Mutual arguments or disagreements (where there is no power imbalance);
- Not liking someone or a single act of social rejection;
- One off acts of meanness or spite; or
- Isolated incidents of aggression, intimidation or violence.

A bully oppresses the victims physically, psychologically or morally by the threat of superior force. The victim feels powerless, unable to defend themselves or to retaliate. The most important factor in understanding bullying behaviour is that bullying is a deliberate act. There is an intent to hurt and an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. There is also the issue of the vulnerability of victims.

Bullying can occur in a number of different forms. These include:

- Physical Bullying – pushing, kicking, punching, hitting, or any use of, or threatened use of, physical violence.
- Verbal Bullying – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, nasty teasing, writing disrespectful things about someone, leaving hurtful notes.
- Emotional Bullying – excluding, being deliberately unfriendly, tormenting, racial taunts, threatening or rude gestures.

- Menacing Bullying – demanding money, possessions or to copy homework, as well as demanding the victim’s or bystander’s silence when bullying has taken place.
- Communication Bullying – sending letters, emails, text messages or phone calls that are threatening, offensive and obtrusive to the recipient. It is widely recognised that this is a growing area with the use of cyberspace in communication.

Harassment is a repeated behaviour, other than behaviour amounting to sexual harassment, that:

- is unwelcome and unsolicited; and
- the person subject to the behaviour considers to be offensive, intimidation, humiliating or threatening; and
- a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, humiliating, intimidating or threatening.

Harassment is not legitimate and reasonable management actions and business processes, such as, actions taken to transfer, demote, discipline, redeploy, retrench or dismiss a worker provided these actions are conducted in a reasonable way.

The terms “bullying” and “harassment” are similar in nature and will therefore be classified as “bullying” for the purpose of this policy.

Relevant Legislation & Related Documents

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)

Age Discrimination Act 2004

Disability Discrimination Act 1975

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)

Heights College Enrolment Policy

Heights College Enrolment Procedures

Heights College Anti-Bullying Procedures