

Background & Purpose

Feeling safe, supported and respected at school is both the fundamental right of all students and fundamental to effective learning. It is widely acknowledged that for many young people, schools are among the safest places in the community. However, it is also true that some students are victims of bullying, harassment and racism at school, and that some students are subjected to abuse and neglect at home. All students have the right to live their lives free of the threat or the reality of abuse. The impact on young people of repeated victimisation can be devastating in the short term, and have lifelong consequences. Racism, bullying and harassment, in all its forms (including cyber-bullying, sexual harassment etc), are unacceptable.

Schools have serious responsibilities in regard to all these issues, not only because they impact negatively on students' capacity to learn, but also because teachers and school administrators stand in a special relationship (*in loco parentis*) to the young people in their care. For significant numbers of young people at risk, schools are the most likely place for them to find responsible adults who will advocate for their wellbeing.

The school community has high expectations that Open Access College will continue to be both vigilant and proactive in ensuring that the most supportive learning environments possible are made available to all members of its community. The most effective way to build strong support for such initiatives in the college community is to ensure that the process of developing and implementing strategies to increase school safety engages as wide a cross section of stakeholders as possible. Bullying, harassment, racism, violence, child abuse and neglect are issues that are of great concern to the Open Access College community. The extent to which we protect the vulnerable transition from childhood to adulthood in a safe school environment is a critical measure of our caring community.

Rationale for an Anti Racism, Bullying and Harassment specific policy

- Educating and keeping all young people safe is the core business of the college community and is everyone's responsibility.
- Anti racism, bullying and harassment should take on a whole college approach as reflected in the Health Promoting Schools Approach and be implemented in safe and supportive environments.
- Develop and implement policies, programs and processes to nurture a safe and supportive college environment through processes that engage the college community.
- Develop and implement policies and programs ensuring that roles and responsibilities of all members of the college community in promoting a safe and supportive environment are explicit, clearly understood and disseminated.

- Young people have the right to health education that is age appropriate, relevant and helpful to them both now and in the future.
- Health education should be underpinned by values promoting respect, equality, diversity and anti-discrimination and teach the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for positive relationships.
- As a diverse community, schools seek to find common ground for a whole school approach, taking into consideration diversity, identity, family, culture and faith while not compromising outcomes for young people.
- The bullying and harassment of students affects their performance and interaction.

Policy Statement

In reflecting the principles of social justice and equity, all students are entitled to have equal access to educational opportunities. To enable this to occur the college setting must not only work towards addressing ongoing bullying, harassment, discrimination and intimidation, but put in place positive acknowledgements and/or interventions which support all members of the college community in this area of anti-racism, bullying and harassment.

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure racism, harassment and bullying does not become an issue at Open Access College.

- Racism refers to the dislike, unfair treatment, or harassment of another person or group of people on the basis of differences mainly due to nationality, ethnicity, language, culture, colour or ancestry.
- Harassment is any deliberate, on-going and hurtful action that makes you feel uncomfortable. It can be physical, verbal or non-verbal, sexual or emotional and is unwanted, unwelcome and unsolicited, and may be offensive. It can happen anywhere – in the classroom or via the telephone or computer (cyber-bullying). It can occur among and between administrators, staff members, parents and students.
- Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyber-bullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones.

The offence of racism, bullying or harassment does not necessarily lie in the behaviour itself, but on its impact on the other person. The perpetrator needs to desist.

This is achieved through:

- clearly defining and identifying racism, bullying and harassment issues within the college setting.
- moving beyond a reactive approach to racism, bullying and harassment to one that is integrated, proactive and sustainable.
- ensuring that the issue of racism, bullying and harassment is the responsibility of the whole college community.
- promoting care, respect, cooperation, and valuing diversity among all members of the college community.

- preventing and intervening in cases of racism, bullying and harassment.
- taking action to protect students or young people from all forms of abuse and neglect.
- creating a structure that enables ongoing dialogue between all members of the college community to ensure that interventions remain accurate, relevant and helpful to all.

Key Responsibilities

Principal

- Ensure that the college has an Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy which is reviewed annually.
- Ensure that the Anti Bullying and Harassment policy has an easily locatable and well publicised link on the college website.
- Provide the Governing Council updates each term in relation to school bullying related data and trends and any anti-bullying programs/initiatives in place or being considered

Assistant Principal - Student Welfare

- Ensure the planning, implementation and sustainability of an anti racism, bullying and harassment strategy is in conjunction with the Counsellors, and Youth Worker.
- Clearly identify and articulate to the school community the specific nature of racism, bullying, harassment, discrimination and marginalisation that occurs within a school setting.
- Plan for professional learning opportunities for staff to develop personal and school based strategies for addressing racism, bullying and harassment issues.
- Ensure that *Harassment in the Workplace* workshops are in place for all students (eg PLP, VET etc) students prior to their Work Experience.
- Ensure that Cyber Safety information is disseminated with any OAC laptop/computer/iPad loaned to students.

Staff

- Participate in ongoing professional development, provide programs/information and maintain awareness around racism, bullying and harassment issues.
- Be proactive and resourceful in supporting students to be safe.
- Identify and address inappropriate behaviour in a proactive manner and document in Daymap/EDSAS.
- Support students who seek help or advice on issues so that their safety and wellbeing is considered.
- Seek support if necessary for challenging situations so as to ensure prevention of student racism, bullying and harassment remains a priority.
- Teachers conduct *Harassment in the Workplace* workshops for all their students prior to the student undertaking any Work Experience.

Students

- Do not bully or harass any member of the school community.

- Report any racism, bullying or harassment that happens to them or others.
- Do something about racism, bullying or harassment – for example ask the perpetrator to stop, do not re-act or show emotion, ignore them and walk away, tell someone you trust.
- If the racism, bullying or harassment does not stop, speak to a, staff member, Counsellor, Intervention Officer or parent to seek support. They will help you work out the best way to handle the situation.
- Provide feedback on the review of the anti-racism, bullying and harassment policy annually.

Parents

- Listen and support your daughter/son.
- Be consulted and informed.
- Provide feedback on the review of the Anti- Bullying and Harassment Policy annually.
- Support the OAC's anti-racism, bullying and harassment policy.

Procedures

You have the choice to have the matter dealt with by the college or an outside agency.

Dealt with by the college

A student who is harassed and chooses to have the matter **dealt with by the college** has the following options:

Discuss/report the matter with/to a

- Staff member
- Counsellor
- Principal/ Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal
- Education Director
- Parent Complaint Unit
- Parent

In all cases, other than Mandatory Reporting, the person dealing with the complaint will not take any action without the permission of the complainant.

The person receiving the complaint will, in consultation with the person making the complaint, determine whether the matter can be dealt with initially within the school, dependent on the gravity of the complaint.

Advice may be sought from the following, with permission of the complainant:

- Counsellors
- Principal/ Deputy Principal / Assistant Principal

Procedures used by the person dealing with the complaint may include:

- supporting the complainant to deal directly with the harasser
- counselling the harasser

- other procedures aimed at resolving the matter through conciliation.

In cases where conciliation fails or complaints are repeated over a period of time or the complaint is serious enough, disciplinary action may be required.

Dealt with out of the school

A person who is harassed and is **not prepared to have the matter dealt with** internally has the right to:

Report the matter directly to:

- the police
- Education Director
- Parental Complaint Unit

Consequences of Inappropriate behaviour

(see the OAC Student Behaviour Management (SBM) Policy)

