

Bullying & Harassment Policy

Prahran Community Learning Centre Inc. (PCLC) does not tolerate bullying or Harassment in any form.

All staff of PCLC are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all. Students and staff are entitled to study and work in an environment free from the stress of intimidation or bullying.

PCLC regards bullying as:

An act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another OR an abuse of power.

PCLC regards harassment as:

Behavior intended to disturb or upset, and it is characteristically repetitive. Harassment is intentional behaviour which is found threatening or disturbing.

Bullying & Harassment :

- can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, gesture, extortion and exclusion
- it can be planned and organised or it may be unintentional (ie. effects may not be fully understood), individuals or groups may be involved

Some examples of bullying & harassment include but are not limited to:

- any form of act such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others or unwanted physical contact
- interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it
- using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families
- using put-downs, belittling others' abilities and achievements
- writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- making degrading comments about another's culture, religious or social background (See Equal Opportunity Policy)
- making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse (see Sexual Harassment Policy)
- ridiculing another student's appearance
- forcing others to act against their will
- extortion
- intimidation
- Unnecessary physical contact; jokes of a sexual nature; displaying sexually explicit material; indecent demands or requests for sexual contact (see Sexual Harassment Policy)
- Intrusive or inappropriate questioning, derogatory name-calling, offensive remarks or jokes
- Making fun of personal circumstances or appearance
- Any inappropriate communication sent via social media

Aims

1. That students and staff will recognise, refuse to tolerate and will be proactive against anti-social behaviour
2. That staff will provide role models in their staff-staff and staff-student relationships, be vigilant for evidence of bullying and promote positive classroom and out of classroom environments
3. That parents be educated to be aware, supportive of their children and supportive of this policy
4. That the VCAL curriculum be inclusive of activities, contexts and content that reflects a pro-social approach to interacting with others

Guidelines

1. PCLC will maintain, publish and review procedures that are to be used in bullying incidents

2. Students will regularly and frequently be exposed to activities that educate and reinforce positive pro-social behaviour.
3. Students will be regularly and frequently informed of the contents, consequences and procedures of this policy via individual meetings, classes and notices / letters.
4. Parents will be regularly and frequently informed of the Centre's policy and consequences and educated as to their role in preventing bullying via the newsletter, letters and the website
5. Staff will use activities and relevant content and contexts to promote the development of positive relationships that model intimidation-free personal problem solving
6. The administration will monitor incidents both in classroom and out of classroom and take necessary actions to prevent reoccurrence of similar incidents

Procedures / Disciplinary actions against bullying

In the event of a student found bullying or harassing another user of the Centre, PCLC will follow the "Student discipline policy & procedures" & "student discipline & misbehaviour chart".

It is recognised that:

- Bullying & Harassment may make the victim feel frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- work, sleep and ability to concentrate may suffer
- relationships with family and friends may deteriorate
- s/he may feel confused and not know what to do about the problem

How can bullying & harassment be prevented?

At PCLC, we strongly encourage the reporting of bullying and/or harassment incidents as they occur with the view of curbing it quickly. We understand that by not reporting bullying or harassment, it may escalate. This requires staff to:

- be positive role models
- be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying or harassment
- make efforts to remove opportunities for bullying & harassment by active patrolling during supervised breaks
- move promptly between lessons and arrive at class on time
- take steps to help victims and address the problem without placing the victim at further risk
- report suspected incidents to the Principal Executive Officer and Education Manager, who will follow the designated procedures

This requires students to refuse to be involved in any bullying or harassment situation. If students are present when bullying or harassment occurs they should:

- if appropriate, take some form of preventative action.
- never condone or encourage or be a spectator to bullying;
- report the incident or suspected incident and help break down the code of secrecy

If students who are being bullied have the courage to speak out, they may help to reduce pain for themselves and other potential victims.

PCLC recommends that Parents / Guardians:

- watch for signs of distress in their son/daughter e.g. unwillingness to attend classes, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- take an active interest in their son's/daughter's social life and acquaintances
- advise their son/daughter to tell a staff member about the incident. If possible allow him/her to report and deal with the problem himself/herself. S/he can gain much self respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem without parental involvement
- inform PCLC that bullying or harassment is suspected, if student is reluctant to do so
- keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- discourage their son/daughter from retaliating
- communicate to their son/daughter that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- be willing to attend interviews at PCLC if their son/daughter is involved in any bullying incident
- be willing to inform PCLC of any cases of suspected bullying even if their own son/daughter is not directly affected

Consequences for Bullies

- counselling will be provided by key staff to first offenders with the view of behaviour modification. This may also involve the student who was bullied.
- attend a group that may include colluders, bystanders and the victim to share information and produce an empathetic response. A Restorative Practices approach will be used where appropriate. There are times when first offenders may be suspended.
- This policy should be read in conjunction with the "Student Discipline / Misbehaviour policy & procedures" & "Student discipline / misbehaviour chart".

Some or all of the following consequences may also apply:

Parent Interview, Internal Suspension, External Suspension . Repeated offences may result in Expulsion.

Bullying & Harassment

The following provides some suggestions for parents in helping their children and in doing so, working together with PCLC to make sure that all our students feel safe, that their VCAL experience is a positive one.

Bullying and/or harassment is an ongoing aggression by a child or a group of children against other children. It can be done with words or actions. Bullying can include threatening, teasing, preventing others from going where they want to or doing what they want to, pushing or hitting.

Bullying is not just a problem for the victim, it is also a problem for the bully and for the people who know it is happening e.g. the school. PCLC has a responsibility to make all students feel safe, but we need the help of parents. Bullying should not happen to anyone. If bullying is allowed to continue it can have a very bad effect on the child who is being bullied. If students are allowed to go on bullying they are more likely to grow up to bullying or hit their partners and their own children. Being bullied is very distressing for the victim and needs to be dealt with.

Children who are bullied sometimes pick on just anyone, and sometimes choose other children who seem to be easy to hurt. They may pick on children who :

- Look or are different in some way
- Are stressed, either at home or at school
- Have a disability
- Struggle with schoolwork
- Are not good at sport\
- Lack social confidence
- Are anxious
- Are unable to hold their own because of being smaller or weaker or younger.

Occasionally children provoke other children to bully them by teasing first.

Signs of being bullied or harassed : Children who are being bullied may not always tell adults. They may be afraid or ashamed. Some signs of being bullied may be :

- " Not wanting to go to PCLC classes
- " Finding excuses for staying home, eg feeling sick
- " Wanting to go to class a different way to avoid the students who are bullying them
- " Being very tense, tearful and unhappy after classes
- " Bruises or scratches
- " Talking about not having any friends
- " Refusing to tell you about what happens at PCLC

Children may also show other signs of unhappiness as well eg problems with sleeping. These signs may not necessarily mean being bullied but you need to check out what is worrying your child.

What parents can do

- " Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously
- " Try not to take everything into your own hands, unless it is absolutely necessary, because this is likely to make your child feel less in control

" Help your child to work out what ideas they have about coping with the problem. Write them down. Include a few of your own if needed to get started. Then talk with your child about which ones might help or not help and why. Choose an idea that they would like to try and then check out how it works

" Don't call your child names eg weak or a sook and don't let anyone else do so

" If the bullying is verbal teasing you may be able to help your child to learn to ignore it, so the child who is doing it does not get any satisfaction out of it. You could practise at home ways to help your child gain confidence eg the way to walk past with their head up

" Help your child think of ways to avoid the situation eg by going a different way home, or staying with a group

" Some children are helped by imagining a special wall around them which protects them so that the hard words bounce off

" Work on building your child's confidence in things they do well

NB - Be very careful that your child does not feel that being bullied is their fault.

Talking to the Centre

When bullying happens it is often at PCLC and you will need to talk to PCLC staff about it. Contact should be made immediately with the Principal Executive Officer and/or the Education Manager.

Make a list of the things that have happened to your child. Be clear and be firm about their suffering. Be prepared to name the children who bully.

Special Note If :

- This is an ongoing problem rather than an occasional one for your child
- It happens to your child a lot, in different situations and with different children it is important to get some professional counselling for support.

Reminders

" Let your child know that bullying is wrong

" Take your child's fears and feelings seriously

" Reassure your child that being bullied is not their fault, and that something can be done about it

" Let your child know that they are not the only one who is bullied. It happens to lots of children

" Help your child as far as possible to work out their own ways of dealing with the problem

" Don't allow the bullying to continue

" Protect your child - involve the school or club or wherever it is happening

" Help your child to feel good about the other things in their lives.

Recommended Reading

Evelyn M. Field : "**Bully Busting**": Section "The Six Secrets of Bully Busting" is excellent.

It focuses on:

- 1) dealing with your feelings
- 2) understanding why you are bullied
- 3) building your self esteem
- 4) becoming a confident communicator
- 5) creating your own "powerpack"
- 6) developing a support network