



*"Caring for Excellence"*

## Cyber Bullying Policy

### Child Safe

Viewbank College is a child safe environment in accordance with the Victorian Government Guidelines. Viewbank College actively promotes the safety and wellbeing of all students, and all school staff are committed to protecting students from abuse or harm in the school environment, in accordance with their legal obligations including child safe standards. Viewbank College has a Child Safety Code of Conduct consistent with the Department of Education and Training's exemplar.

Viewbank College is committed to safety and wellbeing of all students in all school environments, which also includes school related activities that are outside regular school times.

At Viewbank College, we have an expectation that everyone will be treated with respect. Everyone should feel safe and valued at our College and that it is everyone's responsibility that this should happen. This refers to the way people conduct themselves at the College and their interaction with others.

Everyone has the right to:

- Feel safe and comfortable at school.
- Travel to and from school safely.
- Learn free from harassment and interference.

### What is Bullying and Harassment?

This is any ongoing or targeted behaviour, which may cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or a general sense of feeling uncomfortable, because of someone's deliberately hurtful actions or words. It can be expressed physically, verbally, through social behaviour or electronically.

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome and which is reasonably likely to humiliate, offend, intimidate or distress a person. For example, teasing a student because of their speech impediment.

**Bullying** is when someone, or a group of people, upset or create a risk to another person's health and safety - either psychologically or physically - or their property, reputation or social acceptance on more than one occasion.

All forms of bullying and harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

### Cyber Bullying

Young people have fully embraced the use of information and communication technologies to maintain contact with friends and make new ones. They send emails, create their own websites (Facebook), post intimate personal news in blogs (online interactive diaries), send text messages and images via mobile phones, message each other through text messaging, chat in chatrooms, post to discussion boards, seek out new friends in teen community sites or through virtual games.

While most interactions are positive, there are increasingly reports of these technologies being used to harass and intimidate each other and this has become known as Cyber Bullying.

## **How is Cyber Bullying the same as face-to-face Bullying?**

Cyber Bullying is the same as face-to-face bullying because such actions:

- Are deliberate and designed to hurt, threaten, intimidate or humiliate.
- Involve an imbalance of power
- Are often repeated.
- Leave the victim feeling defenceless and vulnerable.

## **How is Cyber Bullying different to face-to-face Bullying?**

Cyber Bullying is different to face-to-face bullying. This is verbal and psychological bullying.

The Cyber Bully's actions are:

- Very deliberate in targeting of people online and usually intend to hurt, threaten, intimidate or humiliate.
- Often designed to reach a much wider audience.
- Written or videoed and so have greater impact.
- Possible to be accessed 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.
- Able to be stored and have transmission point anywhere.
- Often seemed to be anonymous.
- Not always detected by adults.
- Often generated from home but can affect a student or students at school.

## **Policy**

Viewbank College is committed to developing a safe environment where the students act respectfully, positively and in non-threatening ways towards each other and to members of staff. Viewbank College provides access to a range of ICT applications, including email, Stile, intranet and internet. Both staff and students are expected to use this system and adhere to the protocols for usage. (Refer to College Student Planner for 'Computer Facilities and Internet Acceptable Use Policy'.)

**Students at Viewbank College** have a responsibility to ensure that they:

- Do not participate in Cyber Bullying.
- Do not use mobile phones, cameras or other digital devices to record audio and visual material that is not authorised as part of the school curriculum program.
- Do not invade the privacy of students, staff and members of the school community through any unauthorised contact, recording or filming.
- Do not create or pass on inappropriate information through digital media or other ICT means.
- Report incidents of Cyber Bullying to a member of staff.
- If someone is being victimised by Cyber Bullying, give support and advise them to talk to an adult.
- If the bullying originates on the intranet, turn the screen off and then alert your teacher and/or parent/guardian.

**Staff at Viewbank College** have the responsibility to ensure that:

- All forms of Cyber Bullying are prohibited at Viewbank College.
- Staff are aware of Cyber Bullying and are able to identify and look for signs of occurrence among the students.
- Students are aware of the consequences of Cyber Bullying.
- A code of conduct is in use for ICT, including computers and mobile phones, whilst on the school premises.
- Appropriate programs and tutorials are implemented. The use of "Cybernetrix" and "Wise up to IT" programs have been created to educate students about safe cyber communication and usage.

- All cases of Cyber Bullying are reported to the classroom teacher, Year Level Wellbeing Leader, Student Welfare Counsellor or Assistant Principal and responded to promptly.
- There is supervision of ICT that is effective for monitoring and deterring Cyber Bullying.

**Parents have a responsibility** to ensure that they:

- Are aware of Cyber Bullying and are able to identify and look for signs of occurrence if their child is distressed by material sent to them.
- Check if there are recurrences of such materials.
- Do not participate, encourage or support Cyber Bullying.
- Need to understand that if their child engages in Cyber Bullying outside the school grounds and it impacts on another child's learning or wellbeing within the College, then the College will proceed with disciplinary actions.

**Positive online Behaviour:**

**What is positive online behaviour?**

As a digital technology and internet user, you have the right to be respected online. You also have the responsibility to interact appropriately with others in cyberspace and to respect them in return.

To keep safe online and have positive experiences, remember these simple steps:

Messaging and email

- Never share your passwords, no matter how much you trust your friends.
- Do not reply to confronting or offensive messages. Block senders of inappropriate or unpleasant messages, or delete the person if they are in your contact list.
- Set your account to 'offline', even when you are online.
- Save all emails and turn on history in your Messaging service to keep a record of all messages. Print out the history.
- Create a screen contact capture of any negative correspondence by pressing "PrtSc" on your keyboard. Paste the message into a word processing program and save a copy as well as printing a copy as evidence.
- Go to the program's website [e.g. email or messaging site]. Find the 'help' menu and type in 'how to report abuse.' Follow the guidelines.
- Create a new email account to contact friends.
- Report the sender to the messaging or email provider. Remember that unknown, private and anonymous communication can be traced.

Gaming

- Leave or avoid the gaming site.
- Ignore confronting or offensive messages or do not reply.
- Change your profile's ID.
- Delete the person if they are in your gaming list.
- Capture screen dumps of messages.
- Find out if the chat rooms or gaming site you are using has a moderator, and if so, report the abuser.
- Go to the program website, find the 'help' menu and type 'how to report abuse' and search.

Mobile Phone

- Do not give out your mobile number to people you do not know or trust.
- Do not take images of other students, nor post them without their permission
- Do not reply to confronting or offensive messages.

- Turn your phone off or onto silent when it is bedtime.
- Save all offensive or bullying messages as evidence. Give this information to your parents or to College staff.
- Tell a trusted adult or call the Cybersafety Contact Centre – 1800 880 176.
- Contact your telecommunications carrier to block known numbers.

### **Who do I contact for help?**

If you feel you, or someone you know, is being bullied online, there are a number of ways to get help.

Try contacting:

- Your friends
- Teachers
- Parents
- Local Police
- Phone support
- A trusted adult
- Kids Help Line -1800 55 1800
- Local welfare groups
- Cybersafety Contact Centre -1800 880 176

### **Strategies of the College to deal with Cyber Bullying.**

If the Student Code of Conduct has been violated, responses will depend on the severity of the issue.

These may include:

- Consultation and counselling. It is hoped that the cycle of Cyberbullying can be successfully broken at this point and both the concerns and problems of the victim and perpetrator can be successfully addressed.
- School detention.
- Parent contact.
- Parent Interview and student contracts.
- An Official College Warning.
- Suspension and counselling as per DET guidelines.
- Involvement of other external agencies( psychologists, police ,etc. as required).

### **Cyber Bullying - major escalation**

If you fear that you are at risk of physical harm through Cyber Bullying, the police can become involved.

Report it by dialling 000. While police may require strong evidence to investigate Cyber bullying, it is advisable to report the matter. Reports can be made to local police.

To address a significant issue:

- Contact your telecommunication carrier to block known numbers.
- Contact the police or Crime Stoppers:-
  - [www.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.crimestoppers.com.au)
  - Tel: 1800 333 000
- Contact the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman:-
  - [www.tio.com.au](http://www.tio.com.au)
  - Tel: 1800 062 058