



HARASSMENT POLICY

At Maitland Lutheran School we aim to grow in a relationship with the triune God and each other. As Jesus tells us in Matthew 22, the basis of these relationships is love, which means there is no place for harassment in our dealing with each other. In reality however, harassment will in all probability take place in schools. Despite the fact we are forgiven by God's grace we are still sinful. Therefore harassment needs to be addressed and as a result this policy applies to all members of the Maitland Lutheran School community.

Being Harassed

Harassment is behaviour that is unwelcome and if repeated some forms of harassment are unlawful, if it is done with the intent to disrupt physically and/or emotionally. When we become angry, embarrassed, frightened, humiliated or uncomfortable as a result of someone's deliberate, provocative actions or words, it affects our self confidence. If it persists it can make it difficult to concentrate on work and maintain our good relationships with others. For this reason harassment is not welcome at Maitland Lutheran School.

Courtesy, consideration and cooperation all have the quality of loving and caring for others as their basis, which is also an aim of our school. Any form of harassment breaks this code and is totally unacceptable. In schools harassment can mean:

- A student harassing another student
- An adult harassing a student
- A student harassing an adult
- An adult harassing another adult

Stopping Harassment is Important

We believe that all members of the school community have equal right:

- To be treated fairly by others, (therefore we show respect for each other).
- To feel safe and secure, (therefore we treat each other with kindness and courtesy).
- To learn and grow towards their full potential, (therefore we support and encourage each other in our work).
- To feel valued, accepted and cared for as unique individuals, (therefore we listen to each other, encourage self expression and accept each other as we are).
- To have their own property, (therefore we respect and protect the property of others).

No one has the right to make others feel insecure, unsafe or uncomfortable at school or as they travel to and from school.

Kinds of Harassment

Harassment of any kind is unwanted and unwelcome. If a particular behaviour embarrasses, upsets or hurts another person, then it may be classified as harassment. This can be done by an individual or by a group gathering together to harass someone.

Physical harassment includes:

- Physical bullying, eg pushing, hitting, punching, jostling, spitting and/or fighting others by threatening these actions against them.
- Hiding, damaging or destroying the property of others.

Non Physical Harassment Includes:

Verbal bullying such as:

- Repeat put downs, name calling, threatening
- Ridiculing a person or making derogatory comments about him or her
- Using abusive language to others
- Writing derogatory graffiti about others
- Writing crude notes or drawing about others
- Bullying with gestures eg making rude or threatening signs
- Extortion bullying, eg demanding money, food or other belongings from others
- Exclusion bullying, eg hurting others by ignoring or isolating them, or spreading rumours about them
- Making deliberate or repeated racist comments, gestures or any other conduct that hurts people based on their nationality, country or origin , colour of skin, ancestry or any related beliefs or behaviours
- Sex based harassment, such as:
 - Sexist behaviour which maintains gender stereotypes in the school
 - Offensive names, suggestive comments or other forms of sexual behaviour which is perceived by the recipient to be embarrassing, offensive, demeaning or compromising
 - Sexual assault

Is It Harassment?

It is easy to think that if a person becomes angry with you it is harassment. This however may not be the case. Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between criticism of what you are doing and harassment, especially if the criticism is frequent or is done clumsily. If you are unsure, speak to the person and if you are not satisfied, take action.

About Those Who Harass

These people frequently feel inadequate themselves. They try to feel better by putting others down. They often seek to have a group around them to feel safer. Those in the group are sometimes frightened that if they don't join in the bully may turn on them.

How to Act Against Harassment

Do you:

- Bully, tease, abuse, hit others?
- Call people names?
- Insult others?
- Repeatedly act disrespectful to your teacher or your child's teacher?
- Disrupt the learning of others in your class?
- Take part with a group in helping to insult and offend others?
- Condone harassment of others by laughing or failing to intervene?

If the answer to any of these questions is **yes**, then you are guilty of harassment.

STOP NOW

If you witness harassment you can decide to do something about it and help protect others.

- Change your friendship group if it becomes involved in bullying or hurting others.
- Report harassment, so that both the bullies and victims can receive help.

If you are Being Harassed you can Take Action

The aim of the following procedure is to stop harassment by helping you to resolve the situation with the harasser. It is best if the harassment can be stopped by working it out through discussion, repentance, forgiveness and acceptance to restore positive relationships. In some cases the harasser may not be aware he/she is making you uncomfortable. It is important to let them know how their behaviour affects you.

What can you do?

Your options are:

1. Act alone

You may choose to do nothing except ignore the behaviour and show it does not upset you. The harasser is then not rewarded and the harassment may stop. However, the harassment could continue. Approach the person who is harassing you, tell him/her that his/her actions are unwanted and request that the offending behaviour stops.

2. Share the problem

Discuss the situation with a friend, teacher, another school adult, your parents, brother, sister, Principal, school council member or any one with whom you feel comfortable. They can help your decision making.

3. What next

Allow the people with whom you have spoken to take the necessary action to stop the harassment. Teachers, the Principal and school council members all have a duty to follow up your complaint and take action against the harasser if deemed necessary.

Outcomes

The school views harassment as a serious matter and offenders will be dealt with. The primary aim of any intervention will be to restore positive relationships, to heal hurt and to establish a renewed understanding of our life together in a Christian community.

The school will deal very seriously with those who retaliate against a person for reporting harassment.

Remember

It is right to tell someone if you or one of your friends are being harassed. No one has the right to make others feel unsafe at any time.