

S18 –Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

HERITAGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Introduction

Any abuse of or attack on any other person, whether it be physical or verbal is an affront to God who calls upon us to honour all men (and women) since we are all created in His image.

Harassment or abuse of others assumes that the person doing the abuse is in some way superior to others and is entitled to exert power over them. Neither of these are true. We are all created and stand before God as equals; different yes, but nevertheless, equal. Heritage Christian School seeks to have all members of its community honour God through the application of these Biblical principles.

In addition, sexual harassment is unlawful under both Federal and State legislation and we need to be seen to be upholding the law.

Policy

Heritage Christian School is committed to providing all staff, students and parents with a working and learning environment free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Heritage Christian School. All staff, students and parents are required to honour and support this commitment.

Appropriate action will be taken in any proven instance of harassment, including the dismissal or expulsion of proven offenders.

Definitions

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct, including comments, attention or contact of a sexual nature that a reasonable person would have anticipated would cause the person subjected to that conduct offence, humiliation or intimidation. It can be verbal, physical, written or visual.

Activities conducted in the context of mutual attention or consenting friendship do not constitute sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment may include:

- ◆ The distribution or display of offensive pictures or written material;
- ◆ Repeated unwelcome requests for social outings or dates;
- ◆ Offensive comments about a person's physical appearance, dress or private life; excepting constructive or correctional comments by Board or Principal with regard to appearance, dress or life style;
- ◆ Jokes, intrusive questioning, messages or telephone calls of a sexual nature;
- ◆ Direct propositioning or subtle pressure for sexual favours;
- ◆ Leering or unnecessary familiarity;
- ◆ Unwanted physical conduct, such as patting, pinching or touching; or
- ◆ Sexual assault.

In relation to sexual harassment it is against the law to victimise a person who:

- ◆ Has made a complaint;
- ◆ Intends to make a complaint;
- ◆ Acts as a witness;

- ◆ Intends to act as a witness;
- ◆ Supports a victim or;
- ◆ Intends to support a victim.

A person is victimised if threatened, harassed, harmed or subjected to any form of detrimental action.

Difficulties can arise in determining what behaviour goes beyond the boundaries for what is “welcome”. Staff should be careful not risk being misunderstood and thus becoming the subject of complaint. Some people find particular types of behaviour offensive when others would not. The behaviour must always be considered from the point of view of the person receiving it. Innocent intention is no defence to sexual harassment.

Procedures

All staff have a duty to ensure that any sexual harassment brought to the attention or witnessed by them is addressed as soon as possible in accordance with the procedures set out below.

It is the legal responsibility of the School and all employees to take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and victimisation by enforcing this policy and through pro-active education.

Staff members or students who believe that they are being or have been sexually harassed should tell the offending person that their comments, attention, contact or behaviour is unwelcome and offensive. If the sexual harassment continues, or if the staff member or student is unable or unwilling to handle the matter themselves they should contact staff as follows for information, advice or to make a formal complaint.

- ◆ For Primary students, see their class teacher or Primary Coordinator
- ◆ For Secondary students, see their Roll Call teacher or the relevant Secondary Coordinator
- ◆ For Staff members or parents, see the Principal

Investigations of complaints will be conducted by the Principal in a prompt and fair manner and as confidentially as possible. The only staff member and students who will be made aware of a complaint will be those people whose involvement is necessary to resolve the problem.

No staff member or student will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint.

The Principal, on receipt of a formal complaint, will prepare a report for the Board Chairman who will determine whether Board members should be involved in the investigation of allegations.

The School will take appropriate action if allegations are proven as a result of an investigation. Depending on the circumstances, it may necessary to involve relevant authorities – such as the Department of Community Services or the police – in the investigation.

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