



Hands Off Policy

Introduction

Plenty River College (the College) is an independent, specialist senior secondary school, delivering the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) and VCE Vocational Major (VM). It provides a safe and inclusive learning environment for young people aged 14-20 years who may have been disengaged or are at risk of disengaging from education.

Plenty River College is a school of opportunities in which all students are empowered to achieve their personal best. Our mission is to assist students to develop life and work skills and achieve in their learning by:

- re-engaging them in education;
- fostering their social and emotional development; and
- providing a supportive and safe and environment for them.

Rationale

Plenty River College is committed to child safety and will comply with **Ministerial Order (MO) 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises**.

Plenty River College has a responsibility to promote harmony and safety within our school community. Students are expected to behave in a mature, responsible, and respectful manner towards one another.

While it is acknowledged that relationships will develop between students, it is not appropriate to display physical affection while at school.

This policy is aimed at promoting an atmosphere and general conduct which discourages and limits the opportunities for bullying, harassment, assault and promotes students and staff safety.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our College's commitment to providing students and staff a safe environment where the risk of harm is minimised and where everyone feels physically and emotionally secure. Plenty River College is committed to child safety and will comply with Ministerial Order (MO) 1359: Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools and School Boarding Premises.

This 'Hands Off' Policy means that no one is to inappropriately, put hands on another person.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with our Child Safe Policy, Child Safe Code of Conduct, the Mandatory Reporting Policy, Bullying and Harassment Prevention Policy and the Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Inclusion Policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled at the College, staff, volunteers and contractors. This policy applies to all College related activities, including camps and excursions.

Definitions

Inappropriate touching	<p>Any type of touching that is unwanted, violent or makes one feel uncomfortable and it's likely to be overtly violent or sexual:</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handholding• Putting a hand on your thigh• Giving massages• Stroking your face• Touching of private parts• Groping• Kissing• Hugging• Invading of one's personal space• Physically assaulting you• Any type of unwanted sexual contact
Bullying	<p>An ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. Bullying can happen in person or online, via various digital platforms and devices and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time (for example, through sharing of digital records). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have immediate, medium and long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. (National definition for Australian schools).</p> <p>Bullying has three main features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• it involves a misuse of power in a relationship• it is ongoing and repeated, and• it involves behaviours that can cause harm. <p>Bullying can include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <i>direct</i> physical bullying, such as hitting, tripping, pushing, or damaging property.2. <i>direct</i> verbal bullying such as name calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, and verbal abuse.

	3. <i>indirect</i> bullying such as spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate, mimicking, encouraging others to socially exclude a person and/or damaging a person's social reputation or social acceptance.
Cyberbullying	Bullying or harassment using digital technology, including email, mobile phones and social media tools. It involves sending intimidating, threatening or embarrassing messages, including the posting of personal information, pictures or videos.
Expulsion	Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from College due to serious misconduct while at, or travelling to and from, College or a College activity. Expulsions is an action of last resort and may only be applied by the Executive Principal.
Harassment	A form of bullying that seeks to vilify, victimise and discriminate against a person based on their personal characteristics such as race, gender or ethnicity. It can take many forms, including sexual harassment and disability harassment.
Procedural fairness	Acting with fairness, giving the individual concerned the opportunity to be heard, and ensuring that decisions are made without bias.
Student Support Team	The Student Support Team comprises youth welfare workers and education support workers. Other specialists such as the College psychologist or external case managers may also be included or consulted.
Suspension	Suspension is the temporary removal of a student from College classes or activities for serious misconduct at, or travelling to, College or a College activity. Suspensions may only be applied by the Executive Principal.

Responsibility

1. The College Board is responsible for authorising this and other policies.
2. The Executive Principal is responsible for:
 - Implementing policies and procedures and processed that ensure safety for all
 - Approving student suspensions and expulsions from the College
 - Making direct decisions in relation to breaches of this policy
 - Making final decisions in relation to all student management matters
3. The Deputy Principal/Curriculum Leader is responsible for:
 - investigating inappropriate physical contacts and aggressive behavior
 - developing and implementing behavior management plans in conjunction with the Wellbeing Team Leader.
 - maintaining appropriate records that relate to this policy.

4. Teachers, including casual relief teachers, have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to protect students from harm from themselves and others. They must report any incidents of inappropriate physical contacts or aggressive behavior to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader.
5. The Wellbeing Team must:
 - report any incidents of inappropriate physical contacts or aggressive behavior to the Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader
 - providing support to a child at risk of abuse, and
 - responding to suspicions, incidents, disclosures, or allegations of child abuse.
6. All staff are responsible for protecting all children from child abuse and must respond to suspicions, incidents, disclosures or allegations of child abuse.
7. The whole College community must at all times enforce a culture of positive behavior, including respect and identify and report inappropriate actions.

Implementation

1. No student is to touch another student in a manner judged inappropriate by staff.
2. No student is to use any form of physical violence against other students, even in “fun” or as a “practical joke”.
3. Play fighting is not acceptable behaviour in the school environment.
4. Self-defence is defined as the minimum required force to put oneself in a position of safety. Retaliation or revenge will not be tolerated.
4. Bullying or any other kind of stand-over tactics will not be tolerated.

The following forms of behaviour are examples of breaches of the ‘Hands off’ rule:

- Interfering with the property of others (including school bags, electronic devices and books) without the consent of the owner
- Throwing or flicking objects in the yard or class
- Rumbling (either aggressively or in play)
- Deliberately tripping, pushing, shouldering, shoving or grabbing other students by their clothing or bag
- Fighting, punching, slapping, kicking and wrestling
- Intimate physical contact such as holding hands, hugging and kissing
- Any other physical contact that compromises the dignity or safety of others

Guidelines Physical Contacts

- Students who display physical affection at school or during school events will be advised that such contact is both inappropriate and unacceptable and is to cease immediately.
- Students playing physical games with each other such as wrestling, pushing etc at school or during school events will be advised that such behaviour is dangerous and unacceptable and is to cease immediately.
- If a student repeatedly breaches the 'Hands Off' Policy, the student will be required to attend individual interviews and counselling with their Assistant Principal/Curriculum Leader.
- Should the inappropriate behaviour continue, parents will be informed and disciplinary measures taken on the students including suspension or expulsion (refer to Suspension and Expulsion Policy)

Guidelines for Consequences for Aggressive Behaviour

- Students who intentionally cause serious harm will immediately be suspended and may at the discretion of the Principal, have their enrolment withdrawn.
- A student who is the instigator of the aggression/fight may be suspended. The student's parents will be informed, and a re-entry meeting will take place before the student returns to school. The student will be offered the opportunity to have counselling.
- A student who acts in any way to exacerbate, incite, or actively encourage a negative situation or poor behaviour will be treated as an instigator. They may then come under the initial consequences listed above.
- Students standing by or cheering the fight along will also be deemed to be a contributor. These students may also receive consequences as is appropriate to the situation.
- A person who films/records a fight will be deemed to be a contributor and will incur the initial consequences listed above.

Allegations, concerns, and complaints of sexual abuse

All staff have a responsibility to report allegations, concerns, and complaints of sexual abuse. Refer to the Child Safe Policy.

Basis of Discretion

The Principal reserves the right, when necessary, to make direct decisions in relation to breaches of the 'Hands off' rule and has the final decision in relation to all student management matters.