



Homophobic Bullying Policy

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This policy should be interpreted in the context of other relevant College Policies and Procedures, particularly BCA Safeguarding Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (January 2022), BCA Transgender & Gender Identity Policy (January 2022), BCA Safeguarding Annual Audit (April 2021) and the Single Equality Scheme (Oct 2022).

Purpose

Providing high quality education that gives our students the knowledge, skills and experience to be successful in their chosen career.

BCA Equality and Diversity Ethos Statement

This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010. The College is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. The College aims to create an environment where all individuals have the opportunity to achieve their full potential, and gain a feeling of self-esteem and respect for and from all others. The College expresses its opposition to all forms of inequality and discrimination.

At BCA we believe all staff, parents and students should be treated with respect and feel safe within their own and their family's identities. All have a right to receive an education free from humiliation, oppression or personal abuse including that relating to their sexual identities.

What is homophobic bullying?

Homophobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bi-sexual people.

Who experiences homophobic bullying?

- Young people who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual or who are thought to be lesbian, gay or bi-sexual.
- Young people who are different in some way – who may not act like other young people
- Young people who have gay friends or family or whose parents/carers are gay.
- Teachers who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bi-sexual.

Who does the bullying and why?

- Anyone. Especially if they have not been told it's wrong.
- People who think lesbian and gay people should be bullied because they believe gay people are 'wrong.'
- People who might be gay themselves and are angry about that.
- People who think young people should conform rigidly to gender stereotypes.
- People who think gay people shouldn't have the same rights as heterosexual people and who use this to justify bullying.

- People who think gay parenting is wrong and that students should be treated differently because of it.

Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 colleges have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with but that is not the only reason to tackle it.

Homophobic bullying can have a negative impact on young people.

- Seven out of ten lesbian and gay people say homophobic bullying affects their work.
- Bullying can be linked to poor attendance and absenteeism.
- Bullying can cause low self-esteem and the increased likelihood of self harm and contemplation of suicide.
- Students who experience bullying are unlikely to fulfil the objectives of Every Child Matters.

What does homophobic bullying look like?

It can be hard to identify as it may be going on in secret. **Students may be reluctant to disclose incidents because they fear staff will assume they are gay.** Generally homophobic bullying looks like other forms of bullying but can include:

- **Verbal abuse** – spreading rumours that someone is gay, suggesting that someone or something is inferior for being 'gay.'
- **Physical abuse** – hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour.
- **Cyber bullying** – spreading rumours online or excluding them. Text messaging, video and picture messaging.

Our aims at BCA

- To promote justice, equality of opportunity and fair treatment and thereby allow all students and staff irrespective of their sexual orientations to achieve the level of success and self-respect which they deserve while retaining the integrity of their own identities.
- To make students aware of the meaning of homophobia and to establish an environment where the college becomes effective in reducing prejudice and raising self-esteem.
- To contribute towards a sense of citizenship and prepare our young people for living in diverse societies.
- To promote an understanding of the variety of community and personal cultures, valuing the contribution that each individual is capable of making to society.
- To provide a safe and welcoming place for all of the college community
- To provide an environment where homophobic assumptions, attitudes and behaviours are always challenged.

- To provide a curriculum which emphasizes the positive aspects of all cultures and to give young people the confidence to challenge homophobia and to know that all forms of bullying and prejudice can and must be eradicated.
- Creating a vision – striving to engender an ethos in which homophobia is as unacceptable as racism or sexism.
- Involving all staff and students in implementing that vision.
- Modelling the kinds of behaviours we would wish students and staff to demonstrate e.g. understanding, respect, self-awareness.
- Valuing the whole college community and being sensitive to the needs of individuals who have Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual identities.
- Ensuring that all staff are well informed about homophobic bullying.

Our actions at BCA

- Homophobic behaviour is clearly identified as such.
- Homophobic abuse and harassment is not acceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated.
- Preventative action is taken to reduce the likelihood of such incidents occurring.
- Perpetrators will be dealt with effectively through the college's Behaviour and Discipline and Anti-Bullying policy procedures.
- Individuals who are bullied or suffer from discrimination will receive support.
- If any incidents should occur the frequency and nature of them will be recorded and monitored within the college and the relevant parents/carers informed.

Curriculum Planning and Resourcing

There are many opportunities across our planned curriculum to challenge the students to think about their attitudes, to correct misinformation and to raise awareness about the implications of prejudice and discrimination. Issues such as homophobia will be discussed in the broader context of health, justice and equality recognizing the possibility of exposing young people who may have targets of homophobic bullying or who have experienced the same within their families or particular communities.

Teaching and Learning

At BCA we recognise that teaching and learning have a significant impact on how young people engage with and progress in the college and respond to the attitudes of others. Crucially the staff need to demonstrate that they personally feel secure enough to challenge homophobia, to explain why such behaviour is unacceptable and to talk about the subject openly without embarrassment. All staff must react consistently, sensitively and appropriately to homophobic incidents. As well as action at whole college and tutor group levels individuals who experience homophobic bullying will be given individual support to help them overcome the effects.

Responsibilities and Guidance for Staff

The college is committed to the promotion of good community relationships and will at all times strive to tackle all forms of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity for all. In encouraging students to meet their full potential we will work with parents/carers and the wider community to tackle homophobia and to promote good practice. All staff should be vigilant both in and out of class to ensure that homophobic behaviour does not go undetected. All staff should take action as soon as possible and ensure that all interaction and investigation is carried out privately i.e. away from the group. All incidents of homophobic and other forms of bullying should be routinely recorded and a note made of the action taken. Students may choose to share information with a particular member of staff because they trust them or because it would be difficult to ask for support from another person such as a parent/carer or someone they do not know. All staff should understand that this can be a huge step for young people and be prepared for such an event and react appropriately supportively guided by the Safeguarding Team for systems of support. The Principal will ensure that this policy and the procedures for challenging any homophobic bullying are followed and that all members of the college community are aware of this Homophobic Bullying Policy.