



Anti-Bullying Strategy

1. Introduction

We believe that the community's three core values – trust, encouragement and mutual respect – help us to create an environment where every one of our pupils feels safe to learn and able to develop her full potential.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination are the antitheses of the school's core values and will not be tolerated. We take great pains to treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration; we expect them to reciprocate this towards each other, the staff and the School.

Everyone in our community – including Members of Council, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, guardians and all the girls – is expected to support this policy, to understand what bullying is and what they should do if bullying arises.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils and all members of the School community, irrespective of their age and whether or not a pupil is in the care of the School when / if bullying behaviour occurs. While this policy focuses mainly on the bullying of pupils by other pupils, it is recognised that other forms of bullying may occur and this is addressed in 6.

3. Publication

This policy is available on the school website. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required. A summary version of this policy is also provided to pupils.

4. Definitions

4.1 Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can be so serious that it causes psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide and, whilst bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

There are many ways of bullying but it may be:

- **Verbal:** name-calling, unfriendly teasing, sarcastic praise, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, demanding money, spreading hurtful rumours or manipulating others to do so
- **Exclusionary Behaviour:** excluding from groups, intimidating, isolating, tormenting (hiding books, threatening gestures)
- **General unkindness:** sending nasty notes/emails/text messages, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet
- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing
- **Cyber-bullying:** using electronic media, text message, mobile phone photos/video clips, mobile phone calls, email, Chat Rooms, instant messaging and websites (blogs), personal websites, social networking sites (e.g. Bebo, Little Gossip, Formspring, YouTube, Rate my Teacher, Facebook, MSN Messenger, MySpace etc) to deliberately upset someone.

Bullying may also be:

- **racist** or relating to someone's religion, belief or culture
- **sexist:** related to a person's gender or gender reassignment
- **sexual:** talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way
- **homophobic:** relating to a person's sexual orientation
- focusing in a hurtful way on someone's disability, special educational needs, physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape), health conditions or home circumstances.

Bullying can involve complicity (silently accepting) which falls short of direct participation. Not all bullying is deliberate or intended to hurt. Some individuals may see their hurtful conduct as "teasing" or "a game" or "for the good of" the other person. Bullying is often hidden and subtle; it can also be overt and obvious. All these forms of bullying are equally unacceptable.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone – pupils, other young people, staff and parents.

4.2 Cyber Bullying

The subject of cyber bullying is also specifically referred to in the Responsible Use of ICT for Pupils Policy. Cyber bullying is the use of information and communications technology, particularly mobile telephones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.

Cyber-bullying could involve communications by various electronic media.

Examples of cyber-bullying are:

- pupils who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a pupil;
 - pupils who film fights or assaults (also known as 'happy slapping') and circulate them via mobile phones;
 - pupils sending insulting and vicious messages via texting, instant messaging;
 - pupils posting fake and obscene photographs of the target on a social networking site;
 - pupils hacking into social networking sites and removing and circulating material which may be embarrassing or personal;
 - Pupils hacking or cloning email accounts
- Cyber bullying is very threatening as there is no safe haven for the person being bullied.
 - Cyber bullying can follow people into their private space and at all hours.
 - Cyber bullies can communicate their messages to a wide audience with remarkable speed and can often remain unidentifiable and unseen.
 - Once a message is on the Internet, it is very difficult to erase it totally; cyber bullying therefore threatens for life the target's reputation.

The School reserves the right to confiscate a mobile device if we suspect it has been used in a cyber bullying or other harmful incident. If the school believes an offence to have been committed, we will contact the police.

5. Procedures

We always treat bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously.

Bullying which occurs outside of school's premises will not be tolerated any more than bullying whilst in school. Staff will, where appropriate, discipline pupils for misbehaviour outside of school hours.

6. Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school;
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags, money and other belongings suddenly go "missing", or are damaged;
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Medical Centre with symptoms which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance or late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares; or

- Talking of suicide or running away from home or school.

Although there may be other causes of some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and staff and reported/recorded as appropriate.

7. Reporting Bullying Complaints

7.1.1 Pupils

The best way to stop bullying is to get help so we actively encourage pupils who feel they are being bullied, or who are worried another pupil is being bullied, to complain without delay. She can do in a number of ways:

- tell her parents
- speak to her Housemistress, Pastoral Assistant, Tutor, the School Chaplain, or any member of staff with whom she feels comfortable
- speak with the School Counsellor
- speak with or email an older girl, possibly the Head Girl, a Deputy Head Girl or a Prefect.
- Contact Childline (0800 1111)
- Contact Kidscape (0845 1 205204)

7.1.2 Parents

Parents who are concerned that their child, or another child, is being bullied should inform their daughter's Housemistress or any senior member of staff without delay.

We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures and all other aspects and results of the anti-bullying policy.

7.1.3 Staff

It is recognised that a staff member could be a target and on occasion may be perceived to be guilty of bullying. Staff members who are concerned about being bullied or harassed should refer to the School's Staff Handbook.

7.2 Responding to a report of bullying

It is important that a pupil who raises a bullying concern is reassured and feels safe to ask for help. The member of staff to whom bullying is reported or who first discovers the situation, must inform an appropriate senior member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. If there is a child protection concern, the member of staff must always inform the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead, in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7.3 The action the School will take in response to a report of bullying

7.3.1 Assessment

A member of the pastoral team will normally see the target and any witnesses without delay and form an initial view of the allegation. It is possible at this stage there has been a misunderstanding which can be explained sympathetically to the alleged target with advice to the alleged bully. If the complaint is justified, in whole or in part, further action will be taken from the range below.

If there has been serious bullying behaviour, the Headmistress and the School's Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed, who will co-ordinate the action to be taken. Parents will be kept informed.

We reserve the right to investigate incidents which take place outside school hours, involving our pupils.

7.3.2 Possible range of Actions

Seven steps: The School will operate an approach which does not assign blame, understanding that there will usually be a bully group, probably with one person leading it. The Housemistress, or other appropriate member of staff who has been appointed to co-ordinate the response to the bullying issue or incident (Convener), will usually follow the 'Seven Steps' programme, the first of which is the target seeking help and agreeing the method, which also includes:

- The target's feelings being at the heart of the process; the details of incidents are not always needed. The target writes down her feelings and hands them to the convener.

- A group of girls, not including the target but including the bully/bully group and some 'rescuers', meeting and hearing through the target's own written words about how hurt the target has been and how the convener would value their help.
- Each of the group undertaking a positive step to help.
- Having made the bully/bully group aware of the target's hurt, the focus is on the solution and moving forward rather than dwelling on the past.
- There being individual follow ups with the target, the bully/bully group and the 'rescuers'.
- The experience should be a positive one for all concerned.

Support for the target: We shall make every effort to ensure that the target will receive sensitive support and understanding so that we may deal with the problem appropriately.

This support may include:

- advice on self-protection measures such as blocking messages from a particular source or clearing up 'buddy lists'.
- advice on preserving evidence in the form of text or email messages, images and other material.
- If it is necessary to inform someone else, the target's agreement will usually be sought and she will be helped to understand who needs to be told and why.
- positive efforts towards enabling full re-integration of both bully and target.
- keeping the target informed of, and strive to ensure she is in agreement with, any steps undertaken to deal with the situation.
- follow up meetings with the target to check on progress and adjust the procedures if not working successfully.

Action taken with the bully/bully group: It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves. If a girl, or group of girls, bullies and responds positively to guidance through the seven step programme, she/they will receive follow up support, encouragement and guidance on modifying her/their behaviour, almost certainly from the Housemistress in the first instance.

- If she bullies/they bully a second time, or the initial bullying is sufficiently severe then the girl(s) may receive a disciplinary sanction in accordance with the School's Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline Policy. Bullying is usually treated as a serious breach of discipline. Possible sanctions for bullying, depending on the nature of the bullying, include being asked to sign a behaviour contract, withdrawal of privileges, removal of electronic devices, meeting with the Housemistress and/or a senior member of staff, suspension and expulsion.
- In a very serious case or a case of persistent bullying, a pupil may, after a fair hearing, be required to leave the School permanently in accordance with the School's Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy.

Meeting with target and bully: It may also be suitable, with the target's consent, to bring the target and bully together, each with a friend (optional), in a safe environment, e.g. with the Housemistress, for understanding and reconciliation.

- A suitable neutral person might be the LVI girl with responsibility for younger girls.
- It is important that neither bully nor target feel intimidated in such a meeting by the presence of older girls.

Others involved: Those involved, directly or indirectly as observers, including others in the year group, dormitory or class (as appropriate) may be interviewed individually as independent witnesses. Each person involved will be asked to consider how she could improve the situation.

7.3.3 Recording and Monitoring

- The Deputy Head (Pupils) monitors concerns or incidents in order to enable patterns to be identified, both in relation to individual pupils and across the School as a whole.
- Records of instances of bullying and allegations of bullying will be kept by the Deputy Head (Pupils) and also on the pupils files and files relating to safeguarding, where appropriate.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.
- We ask girls, both informally and formally, on the effectiveness of our policy.

8. Preventative Measures

8.1 New to the School

- We ban initiation ceremonies designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.
- All new pupils are briefed clearly on the School's expected standards of behaviour and are provided with the School's Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline Policy as well as this Anti-Bullying Strategy. There is a summary of our Anti-Bullying Strategy in each boarding house.
- A new girls' questionnaire seeks to establish whether they are settling in happily.
- Our Health Centre and all our boarding Houses display advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential helplines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline, Kidscape, Get Connected, Samaritans.

8.2 Staff Guidance

- All new members of staff are given guidance on the School's Anti-Bullying Strategy and how to respond to allegations of bullying. They are required to read the School's policy as part of their induction.
- Housemistresses are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying.
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both targets and bullies. These staff include Tutors who meet their small group of Tutees regularly.
- Our trained School Counsellor is an important part of our pastoral support service, providing specialist skills of assessment and counselling. She is available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns. A member of our pastoral team may refer a pupil.
- The School Chaplain will give support and guidance to pupils of all faiths who are able to refer themselves to her, perhaps at a time of family break-up, sickness or bereavement. The Chaplain will provide confidential advice and seek to encourage the development of tolerance, understanding and respect for others in a multi-faith community.

8.3 Guidance in the Curriculum

- Our Wellbeing programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the School. The programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other.
- Other lessons, particularly RS, English and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.

8.4 Cyber Bullying

It is worth bearing in mind that under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

Preventative measures In addition to the preventative measures described above, the School:

- Expects all pupils to sign the Responsible ICT Use for Pupils Policy. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our pupils' use is monitored.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Issues all pupils with their own personal school email address. Access to sites such as "hotmail" is allowed inside school but not for use in School communications.
- Adheres to the BECTA guidelines regarding E-teaching and the internet.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber bullying in ICT lessons, which covers blocking, removing contacts from 'buddy' lists and sharing personal data.
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Mobile phones are not permitted in classrooms, public areas of the school, or where they may cause annoyance to others.
- The use of cameras on mobile phones is not allowed in washing and changing areas, or in the bedrooms of boarding houses.

8.5 Help near at hand

- Our House and Tutor systems give girls frequent access to teachers in a pastoral role, enabling each girl to be well known to her Tutor and her Housemistress.
- We have put in place many methods by which girls can seek support if they have a bullying concern, for example confidential email addresses for staff members, Head Girls, Deputy Head (Pupils), Girls and Prefects and the School ICT Officer. Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class.
- Staff are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour and how to respond to bullying.
- The leadership training offered to our Head Girl Team and the School Prefects specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils.
- In all the Senior Houses every girl has a Housemother and a LVI girl with responsibility for younger girls; there is also the Head of Dorm, the Head of House and other members of the LVI: all these girls mentor others and act as listening ears and support. They have training at appropriate levels about what to do if someone has a problem.

9. Complaints

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that any concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly. Parents should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to ISI, if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled. The Complaints Procedure explains how to complain to ISI.

10. Review

This Policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Executive Leadership Team to assess its effectiveness, and will be updated as necessary.

Member of staff	Deputy Head (Pupils)
ELT Updated	July 2017
Date of next review	July 2018
Council Committee	Staff Development & Safeguarding

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