

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Aims

This policy is formulated in accordance with the School's main aims and its commitment to safeguarding and promoting the dignity of the individual and fostering a growing sense of personal responsibility and responsibility for others. The policy is based on the belief that all individuals are of equal dignity and should be respected accordingly. The policy seeks to promote justice and peace within the School community so that pupils learn to manage their relationships and become good citizens. We are committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment, which is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment, so that all pupils can develop their full potential. We expect pupils to treat fellow pupils and members of staff with courtesy and co-operation, so that the School setting gives a supportive and orderly atmosphere. All members of the School community are expected to care for and support one another and to understand the wrongfulness of bullying or in other ways harming others. *See Behaviour Management Policy.*

Respect and mutual tolerance are expected from and for all. Parents and guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that School and home have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of the School's standard terms and conditions. This policy is available to current and prospective pupils (boarding and day) and their parents, and it is published in the *Parent and Pupil Handbook*, and on the website. It is available and made known to all pupils and staff (including junior and recently appointed staff).

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination are not tolerated. We treat all pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration, and we expect them to reciprocate. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable. This policy applies to all day and boarding pupils in the School, including pupils in the Early Years. If bullying does occur, pupils should be able to seek help whenever it is needed, whether for themselves or for others, and they are reminded that help can be sought from many different people. Pupils should know that incidents will be dealt with seriously and promptly.

Definition of Bullying

Kidscape, an organisation which seeks to protect children and which trains adults in child protection, defines bullying as the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person and causing pain and distress. Bullying is understood to be the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical means (including sexual), verbal means (including e-mail, chatrooms and SMS messages), and emotional means (by excluding, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours). It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory. Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racial, sexual or sexist, homophobic, or which focus on religion, cultural background, special educational needs, disabilities or other physical features (for example, hair colour or body shape). Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone, whether pupil, other young person, member of staff or parent.

Definition of Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies by electronic or digital means to support deliberate, repeated, and/or hostile behaviour, by an individual or group, that is intended to harm others. Cyberbullying can involve social networking sites (for example, Facebook and Twitter) e-mails, mobile telephones and Skype, including when used for MMS, SMS (text) messages and as cameras.

The School's Response to Bullying

No one deserves to be bullied, and we always treat bullying and allegations of bullying very seriously. We recognise our responsibility to respond promptly and effectively. Bullying conflicts sharply with the School's policy on *Equal Opportunities*, as well as with its social and moral principles. (See *Aims of the School* and *Behaviour Management Policy*.) Bullying can cause psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide, and, while bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. Any pupil unwilling or unable to comply with the *Anti-Bullying Policy* will be asked to leave the School.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

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

- unwillingness to attend School
- displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- books, bags and other belongings suddenly going missing, or being found damaged
- change to established habits (for example, giving up music lessons, adoption of different accent or vocabulary)
- diminished levels of self confidence
- frequent visits to the School Nurses with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- unexplained cuts and bruises
- frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- choosing the company of adults
- displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- difficulty in sleeping, experiencing nightmares
- talking of suicide or running away
- bullying of other children
- fear of using the internet or mobile telephone
- not eating

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying, should be investigated by parents and teachers without delay.

Preventative Measures

We take the following preventative measures in order to ensure that bullying does not become a problem:

- All new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. It is everyone's duty to report any concern, in the knowledge that, by acting in good faith, the person raising a concern will not be penalised and will be supported.
- All new members of staff, including temporary and support staff, in their first week in post, are given guidance on the School's *Anti-Bullying Policy* and in how to react to allegations of bullying. They are required to read the School's policy as part of their induction. We use appropriate assemblies to explain the School's policy on bullying. Our Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Citizenship 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 one another.
- Other lessons, particularly Religious Education, English, History and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by developing social skills and teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable.

- All our pupils are encouraged to report to a member of staff at once if they know or suspect that bullying is taking place.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Records of any incidents are kept securely by the Deputy Head (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and Headmistress in order that patterns of behaviour can be identified and monitored.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Tutors, Housemistresses and the School Nurses who support the Heads of Section, Deputy Head and Headmistress and are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority. These members of staff are especially 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 the pupils concerned. Inset sessions are held, using outside experts.
- The Chaplaincy team will give support and guidance to pupils of all faiths who wish to refer themselves to them, perhaps at a time of family break-up, sickness or bereavement. The Chaplaincy team will provide confidential advice and seek to encourage the development of tolerance, understanding and respect for others in a multi-faith community.
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class, and they are there to support pupils, particularly at vulnerable times and in vulnerable areas, and they are trained to be alert to inappropriate language and behaviour.
- In boarding houses, pupils have the support of their Housemistresses who act in loco parentis. The informal house environment is important in reinforcing each pupil's standards and values, and in providing the opportunity for friendly, informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil outside the formal classroom.
- We encourage close contact between Housemistresses and pupils' parents and guardians, and we always make contact if we are worried about any pupil's wellbeing. All boarders and their parents are made aware of the contents of the School's *Anti-Bullying Policy* and are aware that they can refer to the *Parent and Pupil Handbook* and the Policies section of the School's website. All boarders are told how to report anxieties to their Housemistresses or to other members of the pastoral team.
- Advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential helplines and websites connecting to external specialists (for example, Childline, Kidscape, Beatbullying and Samaritans) is displayed in all areas of the School including the boarding houses, main teaching areas and changing rooms.
- All pupils have access to a telephone helpline, enabling them to call for support in private.
- Our Housemother scheme provides a peer counselling scheme, whereby trained older pupils are encouraged to offer advice and support to younger pupils.
- Members of our Sixth Form are trained cyber-mentors and there is a team of Anti-Bullying Ambassadors in School.
- We provide leadership training for our Head Girls and their team of prefects which specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and vulnerable pupils.
- As should go without saying, we have banned, and indeed never allowed, initiation ceremonies designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, whether on school visits and trips or in the immediate vicinity of the School. We reserve the right also to investigate issues which arise through the use of electronic communication by or about our pupils.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

Cyber-Bullying: Preventative Measures

In addition to the preventative measures described above, we address issues through guidelines drawn up by the e-safety and ICT Working Party:

- All pupils are required to adhere to the Computer Acceptable Use Policy (CAUP). Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our Network Manager monitors pupils' use.
- Sanctions may be imposed for the misuse or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Pupils are issued with a personal School email address. In the case of a bullying concern, esafety staff will be given temporary access to the user's account for investigative purposes.
- The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) agency's guidelines regarding e-teaching and the internet are followed.
- In PSHEE and ICT and Computing lessons, guidance is offered on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber-bullying. This guidance covering blocking, removing contacts from buddy lists and sharing personal data.
- Guidance is offered on the safe-keeping of names, addresses, passwords, mobile telephone numbers and other personal details.
- Mobile telephones are to be used with discretion and not in lessons unless expressly for teaching purposes, as directed by the teacher.
- The use of cameras on mobile telephones is not allowed in lessons (unless with express permission) nor in washing and changing areas.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Bullying

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The member of staff to whom the incident was reported or who first discovers the situation, will take direction of the situation and reassure the pupils involved.
- The member of staff will inform appropriate members of the pastoral team as soon as possible, for example, the relevant Form Tutor(s), Head of Section, the Deputy Head and/or the Headmistress.
- The incident will be recorded on MyConcern. The Deputy Head will inform staff who need to be informed (for example, Heads of Section, Form Tutors, Housemistresses and the Headmistress).
- The pupils concerned will be interviewed, those who have been hurt separately from those who have been accused, and each pupil will be asked to write an account of events.
- Pupils should remember that, although many matters may be discussed in confidence with an appropriate member of staff, information sometimes needs to be forwarded and further help sought.
- The staff concerned will meet with the Heads of Section, Deputy Head and/or Headmistress to consider the matter and then meet with pupils, as before, to help pupils understand the situation and the way in which difficulties can be resolved. The School will support all pupils concerned, giving direction for the modification of behaviour, timescales for adjustments to be made and reminders of the sanctions for failure to correct (for example, withdrawal of privileges, suspension). In cases of severe or persistent bullying, the sanction will be exclusion. Staff and pupils will need to bear in mind that any pupil unwilling or unable to comply with the *Anti-Bullying Policy* would be asked to leave the School, by either temporary or permanent exclusion.
- The School adheres to the Department for Education's advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies *Preventing and Tackling Bullying*. The advice outlines the Government's approach to bullying, legal obligations and the powers schools have to tackle bullying and the principles which underpin the most effective anti-bullying strategies in schools. The School recognises that the best response to bullying is to work at prevention and to ensure that the School builds on its culture of mutual respect and tolerance.

- The School supports the guidance in the Government's *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* document where it considers appropriate action to be taken with regard to a perpetrator. The School is committed to helping anyone who bullies to understand why his/her behaviour is unacceptable, and, where appropriate, this help is given through the national Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme. The pupil will be helped to explore the motives behind his/her actions, and their actual and potential consequences. The pupil will be required to adapt his/her behaviour and to develop strategies to avoid further problems. Behaviour will be monitored, and the pupil will be required to discuss his/her progress in knowledge of the consequences of failure to improve. The value of restorative justice is recognised, and account will be taken of it in relation to the achieving of satisfactory resolution for all parties concerned.
- The parents of pupils about whom concerns have arisen will be informed and where possible invited into School to discuss matters, so that home and School work closely together to resolve any difficulties.
- It is the policy of the School to attempt to resolve issues internally under the School's own procedures, unless a matter were of such gravity that the Police and/or Social Services needed to be informed, in which case a report would be made to the Police and/or Social Services. The Headmistress (or, on her behalf, the Deputy Head) would make a written record of the incident and the actions taken (usually in the form of a letter to the parent(s) concerned), a copy of which will be retained on the Deputy Head's central register and a copy of which will be kept in the relevant pupil file(s).

Pre Prep Pupils

The youngest children, as all others, are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration. They have to learn to look after their own possessions and to respect others' possessions. We expect pupils to be honest, helpful and polite, and to work hard and listen to others. Pupils should respect everyone and learn to value differences and diversity. The Head of Nursery is in day-to-day charge of the management of Nursery, and she works closely with the Head of Pre Prep. We explain to pupils why some forms of behaviour are unacceptable and hurtful to others. We rarely need to impose sanctions, but sometimes we may remove a treat for hurtful behaviour. Occasionally, a pupil may be sent to see the Head of Pre Prep who will explain the inappropriateness of a particular action, but such instances are rare. Parents are always informed if a concern is raised regarding their child's behaviour. In cases of repeated instances of hurtful or inappropriate behaviour, the parents will be invited to discuss the situation with the relevant member(s) of staff and the Head of Nursery and/or the Head of Prep and/or the Headmistress, in order to agree a way of handling the difficulty.

Complaints Procedure

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our *Complaints Procedures* (published in the *Parent and Pupil Handbook* if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly. Parents of all pupils, including parents of boarders and Early Years children, should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint to the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and, if they have further need, then to Ofsted, if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled. (The Complaints Procedures explain how to complain to ISI and Ofsted).