

ST MARY'S COLLEGE

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy is written in accordance with the following guidance:

‘Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies (July 2017)’ and the accompanying –

‘Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff’ (November 2014)

These documents can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf

The Equality Act 2010. Under this act St. Mary's College has due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
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At St. Mary's College our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop his/her full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other.

St. Mary's College prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the college in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions.

All teachers are ‘in loco parentis’ whilst children are in the college, and must therefore be concerned for their personal and pastoral welfare as well as their academic progress. Vigilance and action in this matter are duties of all staff, not only those with a specific pastoral responsibility.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.

Key members of the pastoral team are trained in Restorative Practices which are seen as an integral part of the Christian ethos of St. Mary's College and very much in keeping with our Mission Statement. Restorative Practices will be used wherever and whenever it is felt appropriate in cases of bullying.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racist, homophobic, which focus on disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. We always treat it very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's ethos, with our Roman Catholic Christian mission, as well as with our policy on equal opportunities and our social and moral principles.

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 bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags 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 Room with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults / preferring to spend time with teachers
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiencing nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

These changes are indicative and not exclusive illustrations of some signs which may indicate bullying.

We take the following preventative measures:

- We use appropriate Assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHE 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.
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents so as to identify patterns of behaviour and people involved to aid the identification and elimination of the problem.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Teachers, Heads of Year, Head of Lower School, Head of Middle School and Head of Sixth Form, who support the Head of Pastoral Care and 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 victims and bullies.
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- All pupils have access to a telephone helpline, enabling them to call for support in private.
- We operate a guardian scheme, whereby older pupils are encouraged to offer advice and support to younger pupils.
- We provide leadership training to our Head Boy, Head Girl, their Deputies and their team of prefects, which specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils or pupils who are neither but are being victimised..
- We do not tolerate any ceremonies designed to cause, or which might reasonably be anticipated to cause, pain, anxiety or humiliation. End-of-year “mischief” amongst students in Year 11 or Upper Sixth is, likewise, not tolerated.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, as well as on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our pupils.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

PREVENTION

St Mary’s College’s response to bullying does not start at the point at which a child has been bullied. Staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. This might involve talking to pupils about issues of difference, perhaps in lessons, through dedicated events or projects, or through assemblies.

St. Mary’s College has an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. That culture extends beyond the classroom to the corridors, the dining hall, the playground, and beyond the school gates including travel to and from school. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest.

St. Mary’s College involves parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. Parents feel confident that the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the child, and they reinforce the value of good behaviour at home

involves pupils. All pupils understand the school’s approach and are clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders

- regularly evaluate and update their approach to take account of developments in technology, for instance updating ‘acceptable use’ policies for computers
- implement disciplinary sanctions. The consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident so that others see that bullying is unacceptable
- openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference. Also children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities. Schools can also teach children that using any prejudice based language is unacceptable
- provide effective staff training. Anti-bullying policies are most effective when all school staff understand the principles and purpose of the school’s policy, its legal responsibilities regarding bullying, how to resolve problems, and where to seek support. Schools can invest in specialised skills to help their staff understand the needs of their pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) pupils
- work with the wider community such as the police and children’s services to agree a clearly understood approach to cases where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed.
- make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they are assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted on. Pupils should feel that they can report bullying which may have occurred outside school including cyber-bullying
- create an inclusive environment where pupils can openly discuss the cause of their bullying, without fear of further bullying or discrimination celebrate success. Celebrating success is an important way of creating a positive school ethos around the issue.

CYBERBULLYING

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for ‘virtual’ bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

CYBERBULLYING – PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

In addition to the preventative measures described above, St Mary’s College:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its charter for the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils’ use.
- Will impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Issues all pupils with their own personal school email address.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying within PSHEe, which covers blocking and removing contacts from “buddy” lists.
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Permits the use of mobile phones in school but they must not be switched on or used in classrooms, public areas of the school, or where they may cause annoyance to others. Teachers may allow their use in specific circumstances when in the presence of the teacher.
- Does not permit the use of cameras on mobile phones unless specifically required for educational purposes with the permission of the teacher.⁷

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING

If an incident of bullying (including cyber bullying) is reported, the following procedures are adopted:

- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- He/she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.
- The member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- The victim will be interviewed on his/her own and asked to write an account of events.
- The alleged bully/bullies, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events.
- The incident will be recorded.
- Form Teachers/Tutors and the appropriate Year Head should be informed. The Head of Pastoral Care should also be made aware of the situation. In more serious incidents, the Principal should be informed.
- The victim(s) will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him/her.
- At no point must it be declared or suggested that bullying is the fault of the victim(s). Bullying is an abuse of power which cannot be excused or explained away as the victim's own fault.
- The alleged bully/bullies will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim(s), and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He/she will be offered guidance on modifying his or her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions.
- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions, restorative practices and counselling, should be agreed.

This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures.

- A meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, could be helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode.
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.

In very serious cases, and only after the Principal has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Sefton Council's Children's Services Department. However it is the policy of St. Mary's College to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the school's own disciplinary procedures, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely or Child Protection issues dictate a referral to Children's Services. 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'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to Sefton Council's Children's Services Department.

Intervention - Support for pupils who are bullied

In all cases schools have a responsibility to support children who are bullied and make appropriate provision for a child's needs. The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need. These can include a quiet word from a teacher that knows the pupil well, asking the pastoral team to provide support, providing formal counselling, engaging with parents, referring to local authority children's services, completing a Common Assessment Framework or referring to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Review of this policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Pastoral Care and/or in the light of any incident that may occur related to bullying. Part of the review will involve consideration of instances of bullying during the year, any trends and action that the school can take to prevent bullying in the future.

Reviewed: August 2020

To be reviewed: August 2021

Reviewed by: Head of Pastoral Care