C5 - POLICY ON ANTI- BULLYING

Rationale

Pupil intimidation or bullying covers a full spectrum of behaviour. This spectrum ranges from making an individual in a group feel awkward and out of place, through repeated taunting, isolating an individual, verbal or physical intimidation to full physical aggression. Aspects of behaviour from this spectrum occur in all schools and communities. However, it is imperative that schools pursue an active policy to confront such anti-social behaviour. This policy should be known and agreed by all staff, pupils and parents within the school community and be adopted by the whole school community. Such behaviour is contrary to the gospel values and Christian ethos of the school.

Safe to Learn defines bullying as: Behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Bullying can involve verbal taunts, name calling, physical injury, damage to property, rumour spreading, shunning or ridicule. It can be manipulative, making the pupil do something they should not, or deliberately engineering their discomfort or isolation. It can be done through mobile phones, websites and email (cyberbullying). Some children with SEN and disabilities may not recognise that they are being bullied or that their own behaviour may be seen by someone else as bullying.

The DfE identifies three points which most definitions share:
• The behaviour is intended to cause distress
• The behaviour is repeated
• There is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator/s of bullying and the target

Bullying may take the forms of verbal bullying (attacks of a highly personal or sexual nature, which may be directed at a Pupil's family, culture, race or religion, or the spreading of malicious rumours), physical bullying, gesture bullying (non-verbal threatening gestures which convey intimidatory or frightening messages), isolation, exclusion, extortion (demands for money, possessions or equipment, or forcing a Pupil to steal), intentional diminishment, or cyber-bullying (the use of web-pages, e-mails and especially text messages to abuse, intimidate or attack a Pupil).

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

However, in the context of this policy, placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

It is not bullying when:
A) Pupils of about the same age and strength have the occasional quarrel or conflict.
B) A member of staff offers constructive or fair criticism of a Pupil's behaviour or work performance.

For the purposes of this policy, the term bullying encompasses harassment and sexual harassment, defined as follows:

• _Harassment_: any form of unwanted conduct in relation to any of the nine grounds named in the equality legislation that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

• _Sexual harassment_: any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading or offensive environment for the victim.

All reported incidents or allegations of bullying are taken seriously. A record is kept of all alleged incidents. If bullying includes racist or homophobic abuse, it is logged and reported to the Assistant Headteacher responsible for Pastoral care within the school.   The following illustrates the formal process that will happen when there is an alleged incidence of bullying. The principal aim of the process is to keep the victim safe whilst being supportive via building resilience and coping strategies. The process may end up being punitive to the perpetrator with parents been informed if the bullying does not stop.

SECTION ONE: Aims of Policy

- ❖ To create a school ethos which encourages all to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in confidence building on respect, tolerance and forbearance of each other.
- ❖ To affirm the right of all within the school to live a life free from bullying.
- ❖ To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school leaders, teachers, Pupils, parents/guardians.
- ❖ To create a school ethos that acknowledges, accommodates and respects a diversity of persons in the school community across the grounds covered by the equality legislation.
- ❖ To ensure that the school's Social, Personal, Health and Economic Education raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour as well as developing appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- ❖ To take practical actions to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- ❖ To put into effect procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- ❖ To provide clear guidelines for staff, parents and pupils.
- ❖ To put into effect procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour
- ❖ To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour including working with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.

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SECTION TWO: Types of Bullying
The following are some examples of unacceptable behaviour.
This list is not an exhaustive list. Similar unacceptable behaviours may be considered as bullying.

General
• Harassment based on any of the nine grounds in the equality legislation e.g.Sexual harassment, homophobic bullying, racist bullying etc...
• Physical aggression, damage to property.
• Name calling, jealousy and slagging.
• The production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other materials aimed at intimidation, name belittling and gestures.
• Graffiti, sniggering, sarcastic remarks and extortion.
• Intimidation, name belittling, gestures.
• The "look", staring, degrading remarks re body shape.
• Putting down a Pupil for working well and achieving.
• Talking loud enough so that the victim can hear.
• Invasion of personal space.
• A combination of any of the types listed.
• Abusing social network sites other media sites.

Homophobic
• Name calling /using graffiti e.g. "Gay", "queer", "lesbian", etc...
• Spreading rumours about a person's sexual orientation.
• Taunting a person of a different sexual orientation.

Racial Discrimination
Prejudice, comments or insults about colour, nationality, culture, social class, religious beliefs, ethnic or traveller background.

Relational
This involves manipulating relationships as a means of bullying. Behaviours include:
• Whispering in company so as to exclude another.
• Malicious gossip.
• Isolation & exclusion.
• Ignoring, turning others against a Pupil.
• Excluding from the group.
• Taking someone's friends away.

Cyber
• Silent telephone/mobile phone calls.
• Use of mobile phones during school hours to access social network sites.
• Abusive telephone/mobile phone calls.
• Abusive text messages or social media messages.
• Abusive email.

• Abusive website comments/blogs/pictures e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat and others.
• Any misuse of Information and Communication Technology.
• Video recording without the person's permission.
• Taking/sending photographs by electronic device.
• Creating sites, memes, Tik Tok, snapchat or equivalent about a particular person.
• Spreading rumours.
• Breaking confidence.

Sexual
• Unwelcome sexual comments or touching.
• Harassment.
• Unwelcome sexual texts or emails.

**SECTION THREE: Reporting procedures for s
tudents and parents:**

Who to tell?
• Parents
• Any staff member with whom the Pupil feels comfortable
• Friends who will speak on your behalf
• Headteacher.
• Deputy or Assistant Headteacher
• Tutor or Year Head.
• Learning Mentor/ Learning Support Assistant.
• Email or report a concern on the school website

How to tell?
• Direct approach to teacher at an appropriate time, e.g. after class, hand note in with homework.
• Make a phone call to the school or to a trusted teacher in the school.
• Email the school
• Get a parent or friend to tell on your behalf.
• Parents can inform the school via email to info@stmarys.net or by reporting a concern section on
school website.
• Witnesses can inform appropriate person.
• Administer a confidential questionnaire to all Pupils during the year.
It is important to note that records of all incidents of bullying and action taken to resolve them will be
kept.

Noting and Recording
• All incidents of alleged bullying will be recorded on an incident form and given to relevant Learning
Coordinator
• The relevant Tutor/Learning Coordinator will then decide on what action is to be taken.
• The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher are responsible for maintaining files for security and
confidentiality for at least seven years after they leave school.

• These files may be accessed by Pupils/parents in the future.
• Comments made should be factual, non-judgmental and objective.

SECTION FOUR: Guidelines

1. St. Mary's School is unequivocal in its opposition to intimidating behaviour of any kind and will adopt a positive, whole school approach to confront such behaviour when it occurs. The school values of Love, Respect, Flourish permeate in how we treat each other.

2. The School believes that intimidation is best dealt with openly, by discussion with all parties being fully involved. The school has an Anti-Bullying philosophy with Anti-Bullying ambassadors in every form class and each form class signs up to and agrees to support each other with an Anti-Bullying signed pledge.

3. The School urges all pupils who feel they are the victims of bullying, peer-on-peer abuse, assault or intimidation to report their worries or concerns to an appropriate person, so that the problem can be identified and brought out into the open and dealt with appropriately.

In investigating and dealing with bullying, the teacher will exercise his/her professional judgement to determine whether bullying has occurred and how best the situation might be resolved in keeping with reference to school policy. All reports, including anonymous reports of bullying must be investigated and dealt with by the relevant teacher. In that way Pupils will gain confidence in reporting. This confidence factor is of vital importance. It should be made clear to all Pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not considered to be telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

Teachers should take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of alleged bullying behaviour reported by Pupils, staff or parents. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the relevant teacher should seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.

4. An allegation of bullying is made and the details are passed to the Learning Coordinator. This may involve statements initially from the alleged victim and any witnesses, including staff.   An initial assessment meeting is held involving the Learning Coordinator and the assistant Headteacher to discuss the allegation. A decision is made as to whether the school considers this to be a case of bullying or not. If at this meeting the school considers that there is a case to be answered about bullying a formal bullying case will be opened.

5. The matter will then be discussed with both the victim and the alleged perpetrator, the strategy being discussed with the victim before implementation.

6. In the first instance the aim is to support both parties so that the intimidation or harassment can stop, and the self-esteem of all is maintained.

7. If a report of peer-on-peer sexual harassment is made an investigation will take place led by the DSL, both sets of parents will be informed and if deemed necessary to do so a report to the police will be made.

8. Building the resilience and coping skills of the victim whilst gathering sufficient evidence to prove that bullying is happening to confidently refute any denial by the bully: Daily /Weekly meetings (frequency as needed) will be arranged between the victim and Pupil support, initially as a supportive and information gathering process.

The victim will be issued with a bullying diary to log any continued incidences of bullying and to log thoughts and feelings. This diary will form the basis of the discussions between the victim and Pupil support and will be used as a prompt for stimulating discussions. The timescale will be set about how long this first phase of the process will last. This could be from two weeks up to four weeks.   The diary will be reviewed by the Learning Coordinator daily to identify trends and patterns

The alleged perpetrator will not normally be involved at the first stage of the process. This decision however will depend upon the perceived level of risk and harm that the victim has, or could suffer.

If intimidation persists a Learning Coordinator may set up a self-help group with cross year support from older pupils or peer mentors.

9. Sanctions against the perpetrator, in accordance with school policy, will be enforced only if the policy implementation is obstructed and the intimidation continues and not for the initial intimidation.

10. In more serious cases or if a problem persists the parents of both parties will be fully informed and involved in the process.

11. If required, the school mentor, Chaplain or external counselling can be arranged if required through the Learning Coordinator. Parents will always be informed in such cases.

12. External agencies will be contacted to provide appropriate support and training for staff and pupils through Assemblies and, RSHE and PSHEE.

13. By their example, staff will set a lead in this area.

14. The policy will be disseminated through assemblies, year assemblies and class discussion. The policy will be reinforced by the active use of tutorial time and incorporated in the School's programme for PSHEE.

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SECTION FIVE: Procedures for Dealing with Reported Incidents:

Procedures for Teachers
If a Pupil informs you of an incident of bullying affecting either themselves or a friend, follow these steps:
  I.   Listen; encourage the Pupil to tell their story as this is a very important first step.
  II.   Take notes; record all the details such as date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses etc. Pupil's own words must be recorded.
  III. Reassure; tell the Pupil that help is available, action will be taken to investigate, it is not their fault and that they will not have to face this on their own.
  IV.   Satisfy yourself that no Pupil is in immediate danger.
  V.   Ensure if the child is recognised as having SEND that the SENCO is notified immediately so the child can be supported and ensure the child can articulate their feelings comprehensively.
  VI.   Confidentiality is respected and the Pupil's privacy is protected, but a teacher must not give guarantees not to tell anyone.
  VII. Inform the learning coordinator without delay.

 All serious incidents of bullying (e.g. an assault or long term exclusion) must be reported to the Headteacher straight away.

Procedures for Staff Member Investigating the Reported Incident
Actions may include the following and may incorporate elements of 1 or more of the six main responses to addressing bullying behaviour

  • Traditional Disciplinary Approach,
  • Strengthening the Victim,
  • Mediation,
  • Restorative Practice,
  • The Support Group Method,
  • The Method of Shared Concern

1. Have the Pupil reporting bullying write down the behaviours and how it is affecting them as early as possible.
2. Talk with alleged bully about their behaviour and their experiences of incidents mentioned.
3. Have the alleged bully write down an account of their behaviours and their effects as early as possible.
4. Challenge bullying behaviour as being unacceptable.
5. Discuss possible solutions with both parties separately/together if appropriate.
6. The learning mentor/school counsellor may be involved if appropriate.
7. Write down a record of all conversations.
8. Make further appointment to discuss situation with complainant and/or other relevant individuals.
9 The evidence will be evaluated by management and fair appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the code of behaviour.

10. It is vital that the person reporting the incident is protected from victimisation. Whoever is dealing with the incident must be discreet and careful. Staff will support Pupils who report bullying by conducting follow-up meetings with them.

11. The Pupils involved will be monitored on a regular basis by informal discussions and by review of the daily bullying diary to identify patterns/trends and to enable proactive response and actions.

12. Serious talk with Pupil(s) re effects of their behaviour and a verbal warning issued and recorded on SIMS.

13. Pupil/s involved warned to stop and verbal agreement re future behaviour

14. Outline a fair outcome if appropriate e.g. an apology, return of property etc

15. Counselling may be offered to all concerned.

16. If necessary the parents will be invited to a meeting with the Assistant Headteacher and Learning Coordinator.

17. Detention / Internal Exclusion/Suspension / other agreed sanction from school's Code of Behaviour imposed. Parents are met and conditions set regarding Pupil's future behaviour and recommendations are made.

18. If bullying persists the Headteacher will be informed and further sanctions imposed. The future of the Pupil in the school may be considered.

Supervision and Monitoring

• Bullying "black spots" within the school will be identified and monitored during break times.

• Staff will be vigilant and follow the procedures as outlined in this policy as incidents arise.

• A questionnaire will be given to Pupils during the school year. This will give Pupils an opportunity to voice concerns. Each Pupil is encouraged to write something down.

• Social networking sites will continue to be banned from Pupil use during school time.

The Anti-Bullying Policy operates in conjunction with the school's Acceptable Use Policy.

SECTION FIVE: Conclusion

The implementation of this policy should serve to raise the self-esteem and enhance self-awareness for all pupils. It should foster good working relationships within a Christian community based on the gospel spirit of Christian charity. The policy should create an open environment where pupils feel secure but not over-protective so that they are able to develop the range of interpersonal skills.

School Education Committee
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