

ST MARGARET WARD CATHOLIC ACADEMY

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

JUNE 2021



Let us remember we are in the presence of God "

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Agreed by	David Bailey – Chair	
Policy Adopted	January 2020	
Reviewed	June 2021	
Reviewed		
Next Review	June 2024	

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Introduction

St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy is a community of learners which aims to promote a secure, pleasant and purposeful environment. A central aim of the Academy is to establish an ethos based on mutual respect and consideration, where the needs of each individual are recognised and where all members of the community feel a strong sense of belonging. The school recognises that bullying may exist in all school communities and seeks to provide an open climate where pupils are free to talk with staff about bullying without fear of rebuff or retribution. Underlying the development of this policy is the belief that prevention is better than cure.

The principle is that every member of the school community has the right to attend this school and be safe from bullying whilst they are here. One of the schools core principles is that of respect for all persons.

The aim of this policy is to help all members of the school community to reach a shared understanding of what constitutes bullying and to formulate strategies to help deal with issues. The strategies being developed in this policy are aimed at teaching students' important lessons about empathy, assertiveness, rights and responsibilities, honesty, self-esteem and respect for others. The aim of the school is **'to develop inclusive values and maintain relationships which recognize the dignity and worth of each individual'**. This policy has been written in conjunction with and agreed by the Student Voice Committee.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as any behaviour over which the victim feels powerless to stop, by an individual or group which persists and is deemed to be **intentional** (recorded incidents will reflect this) in order to hurt, threaten or frighten either emotionally or physically. This unacceptable behaviour includes but is not restricted to:

- **Emotional** – being unfriendly, isolating others, unkind looks, spreading rumours, pressuring anti-social behaviour, name calling, making unkind gestures, writing unkind notes, pressuring children to join in inappropriate behaviour, racist remarks, teasing, homophobic remarks, remarks about disability or SEN status, other behaviour that makes someone feel unhappy
- **Physical** – hitting, kicking, pulling hair (any form of physical assault), taking or hiding belongings including money and homework, damaging property.
- **Sexual Harassment and Extortion** – touching, inappropriate sexual remarks, threats to get sexual gain, threats of spreading rumours or information regarding sexual acts etc.
- **Indirect/Electronic** – cyber bullying occurs when the perpetrator uses Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, deliberately to upset someone else. Cyber bullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that might previously have been regarded as safe or personal.

Recognising Bullying

- A pupil who is being bullied may show a noticeable change from their normal behaviour, such as a tendency to be on their own, or withdrawing from others.
- They may be tearful, feign illness and have frequent visits to the medical room. They may show changes in their work pattern, may lack concentration or may even truant from school.
- Other possible signs of bullying may be: an unwillingness to come to school; requests for money from staff, family or friends; bruising; a reluctance to leave the classroom at the end of the day; a tendency to stay close to staff during breaks and damage to a child's property.
- Victims need help and support, they need protection in the first place but they also need to be empowered. Victims often lack self-esteem and have a negative self-image, so it is important to build up their confidence as well as giving them good sound practicable strategies to use in the face of ongoing bullying.

- Bullying is learned behaviour, children are not born bullies, so given the right attention and learning environment they can change their behaviour. Attempting to frighten, scare or intimidate bullies into stopping their behaviour by shouting at them, will only compound the problem.
- Treating a bully with respect and dignity, as well as trying to get them to understand that their behaviour has been hurtful, is very important and the best way forward.

In line with the school aims, the approach to bullying at St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy is proactive. The ethos of mutual respect for all persons and encouraging responsible behaviour is enhanced by both pastoral and curriculum strategies. This is achieved by:

Pastoral Strategies

- Staff consistently model positive behaviour
- Pupils being made to feel involved in deciding the rights, responsibilities, rules for their class and decisions on school policy
- Mentoring within and across the year groups
- Prefect support
- Student Voice activities
- An anti-bullying Charter for Action. This is where all pupils and staff in the school community are asked and encouraged to sign an Anti-bullying Charter to say that they agree and accept that bullying will not be tolerated in our school. This is displayed in the school foyer.
- Support within the school for Anti-bullying Week, where projects by pupils, staff and Student Voice will be carried out to highlight the issue. Whole school questionnaire issued.
- Restorative justice between parties
- Staff understand the importance of using inclusive and non-derogatory language.
- Staff consistently and firmly challenge prejudice-based and aggressive language without humiliation and the use of sarcasm.
- Messages are consistently reiterated and reinforced.
- All classrooms and toilets have Posters to support children in making a disclosure.
- Giving a positive experience to pupils during the transition process from primary to secondary education, ensuring Year 7's feel safe and secure in their new environment

Curriculum Strategies

The Touching Hearts curriculum where the social skills of negotiation, arbitration and intervention are practiced, promoting pupil's social and moral development

- Raising the awareness of the issue of bullying during discussion and debates in subjects such as English, History, Religious Education, Drama, Global, Creative, Citizenship and Health and Social.
- The wider learning/cross curricular curriculum focuses on anti-discrimination through discussion and project based activity e.g. community awareness.
- Charity work in the community is used as a focus for reinforcing learning, helping pupils to develop understanding and empathy.
- Systematically teaching pupils about all aspects of individual difference and diversity, included those related to appearance, religion, race, gender, sexuality, disability and ability.
- Includes a clear progression that takes into account age and maturity of pupils.
- Is tailored to the particular needs of the current and anticipated intake of the school.

Encouragement to tell (Disclosure by pupils being bullied)

- It is important that we create an atmosphere in school where anyone who is being bullied or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to, and that action taken will be swift and sensitive to their needs.
- Disclosure (telling an adult) can be direct and open or indirect and anonymous. Mentors, members of the Student Voice Committee and prefects are also available to speak to.

- Also available are teachers specified to deal with bullying issues and these would include a pupils Form Tutor, Assistant Head of Year or Head of Year, Safeguarding Manager Assistant Principals and the Vice Principal.
- The Inclusion Team - based in the Pastoral Support Office are also available and can be spoken to during the day.
- Other staff within school know if there is an issue they cannot deal with themselves to refer the issues to one of the members of staff above.

Strategies for dealing with Cyber bullying (Indirect)

- The internet and other technology-based tools are very powerful resources that can enhance and potentially transform teaching and learning when used effectively and appropriately. Such tools should be accessible and free from restrictions that constrain their worthwhile educational value. Safeguards are in place to ensure that the educational use of such tools is safe and secure. All users are taught how to use these tools safely and sensibly to ensure a responsible approach to the use of technology in school.
- Deliberate abuse in school is subject to school rules and sanctions while deliberate abuse outside school impinges upon or affects pupils or staff should be dealt with in a multi-disciplinary fashion through appropriate channels. The victim's parents should be given the responsibility in dealing with the issue when cyber bullying is occurring outside of school however if the matter effects the everyday working of this school then we will intervene. The schools Senior Leadership Team, Inclusion Manager or Year Team will decide when the school will intervene.
- Some cyber bullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive such as publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal or private images or information. Other instances of cyber bullying are known to be unintentional and the result of not thinking or of a lack of awareness of the consequences.
- Unlike other forms of bullying, many cyber bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence.

Proactive strategies include:

- As part of our phone free site policy - mobile phones use being banned during the school day.
- Pupils are encouraged to keep evidence of text messages or messages posted on the web.
- Should the message record a crime, this is passed to either Mrs Farrer or Mr Johnson.
- Should the material in question involve child abuse this is reported to the designated persons – Mr Johnson, Mrs Farrer or Mrs Holdcroft (see [Child Protection Policy](#)).
- Sexual exploitation is reported to Mr Johnson, Mrs Farrer or Mrs Holdcroft.
- Any computer suspected of containing such material must not be used and the incident reported to Mr Johnson, Mrs Farrer or Mrs Holdcroft.
- Routes for reporting incidents are publicised and easily accessed by all.
- All pupils and parents are made aware of the issue and given advice of how to deal with cyber bullying.
- There may be involvement of the Local PCSO to support victims and impose sanctions.
- We will also consider using Restorative Justice methodologies.

Detailed records are kept in relation to cyber bullying incidents. Any identifiable witnesses are interviewed regarding the event.

Sanctions are applied to:

- Help the target feel safe again
- Hold the perpetrator to account for their actions
- Demonstrate to the whole school community that any form of bullying is not acceptable.

Procedures for Reporting and Dealing with Incidents of Bullying Behaviour

The approach at St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy is to support the victim and to focus on changing the behaviour of the bully and those who collude with them either tactically or openly. This approach seeks to recognise the importance and the power of peer group and attempts to use this to build constructive relationships. Gaining support from both sets of parents and getting them to work with the school for the good of their children is also a powerful tool in dealing with issues of bullying.

It is generally recognised that 'naming and shaming' bullies are not recommended since it generally has the effect of:

- Driving bullying behaviour underground only to re-emerge in more insidious forms. Leading to a cycle of punishment and control

The three steps for dealing with incidents of bullying are:

- Step 1 – Interview the victim, bully and any witnesses separately
- Step 2 – Provide support for the victim and bully
- Step 3 – Monitor and review the situation

When a bullying incident is reported, remember:

- Each case will be different and the solution must be tailored to suit the problem
- To remain impartial – do not look to attribute blame
- Aim to help both parties to gain insight into their behaviour
- Both behaviours have been 'learned' from their life experience, so with appropriate support they can be challenged and replaced by acceptable behaviours

Step 1 – Interviewing the victim and bully

Designated staff members only should interview the victim and bully separately, and complete an Interview Form for each person involved

The Victim

1. Listen to the victim's story in a calm non-judgmental way.
2. Indicate from the start that the incident is being taken seriously.
3. Allow the victim to explore their feelings about the incident.
4. Do not attempt to find out all the facts, this may only increase the stress.
5. Discuss and agree with the pupil how they will be supported. Involve them in helping them to arrive at a constructive method for resolving the situation. Restorative Justice should be offered to the victim, to give them the opportunity to be able to take control of the situation in a controlled manner.
6. Agree acceptable targets for making the situation acceptable.
7. Agree a review date.
8. Inform parents of concerns and actions
9. Monitor the situation in an unobtrusive way.

The Bully, Bystanders and Witnesses

1. Interview separately, at the same time, the members of the group identified by the victim.
2. Do not disclose the source by respecting the confidentiality of the victim and witnesses unless otherwise told.
3. State that all incidents of inappropriate behaviour are taken seriously.
4. Make it clear to the group that they have a problem and they together need to find ways of seeking a constructive solution. Assess whether Restorative Justice should be offered.
5. Facilitate them in working through this process and begin to set agreed behaviour targets for the group.
6. Make the group aware that the progress of the plan will be monitored and appropriate action taken.
7. Implement the plan.
8. Inform parents of concerns and actions
9. Review the plan (3/6 weeks), at an agreed and acceptable interval.

Step 2 – Provide support for the victim and bully.

For the Victim

1. Identify a member of staff who will act as a point of referral for the pupil.
2. Find a reliable friend or 'circle of friends' who will accompany them and report any incidents.
3. Identify times and place of bullying and minimise opportunities by ensuring supervision.
4. Provide specific advice on strategies to prevent incidents of bullying to staff, e.g. seating arrangements in class.
5. Include the victim in a programme to develop self-esteem or social skills, in relevant and extreme cases.
6. Offer 'the buddy system', or peer mentor support.

For the Bully

1. Communicate clear expectations of acceptable behaviour.
2. Communicate and carry out sanctions in relation to breach of the Discipline Policy.
3. Include the bully in a programme of social skills – where relevant.

Step 3 – Conducting the review meeting

(Arranged after a suitable period of time i.e. 3/6 weeks)

1. Interview victim and each member of the identified group, individually.
2. If the matter has been resolved, file copies of the incident in each of their files and the bullying file.
3. If the matter is not resolved set new targets.
4. Monitor and review until the situation is resolved.

Sanctions

In support of the school ethos and aims, incidents of bullying will try to be resolved amicably as this is clearly the most effective long-term solution after all of the above have been tried. However, there will be occasions when sanctions will have to be imposed on the perpetrator in order to protect the victim. These sanctions are depending on the severity of the incident:

- Mediation
- Restorative Justice (bringing the parties together and discussing the issues behind the bullying in a setting comfortable to both parties. Writing contracts for both parties to sign).

- Buddy systems / Peer Mentors
- Use of detentions.
- Isolation in the reflection/reconciliation room as appropriate
- Contact with parents/parental interviews
- Police involvement
- Fixed term exclusions
- Change of form/certain lesson subjects
- Permanent exclusion

All bullying and racist incidents are recorded in a central file based in the Vice Principal's office holding information including: pupils involved, year group, brief description of events (type of bullying), how it was dealt with, was it resolved and reviewed, whether parents were informed, copies of statements written by parties involved and witnesses. This is held to ensure we can monitor bullying and racist incidents, collect data of whether incidents are increasing or decreasing and to look for concerning patterns, trends or issues regarding bullying emerging.

This policy was written and agreed to by members of the anti-bullying student voice council and Safeguarding Manager and agreed to by the Senior Leadership Team and Academy Committee of the school.

It is due to be reviewed in January 2021.