

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Every student has the right to feel safe and happy at school. At St Bernard's we aim to create a secure and caring environment, which enhances social and academic development and where a student's individuality is celebrated. Every student has the right to be protected when s/he is feeling vulnerable. Bullying is unacceptable. The anti-bullying policy is an integral part of the Code of Conduct and students have been involved in the compilation of this policy through consultation and questionnaire.

Definitions

- Bullying can be experienced by both pupils and adults.
- Bullying is defined by the DFE in its advice to schools 'Preventing and tackling bullying' July 2017, as 'behaviour by an individual or group that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'.
- Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by difference, real or perceived.
- Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. This can be physical or verbal and includes hitting, name calling, teasing, ostracising, as well as racial and sexual harassment. It can also include threatening gestures and looks. Name-calling is the most direct form, because of individual characteristics, but students may be called nasty names because of their ethnic origin, nationality or colour; sexual orientation; or some form of disability.
- Bullying is deliberately hurtful. It may be an isolated incident or repeated over a period of time and makes it difficult for victims to defend themselves.

The main sorts of bullying are:

1. Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting or pinching, any form of violence, threats, taking or hiding another's possessions.
2. Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, insulting.
3. Emotional: tormenting, threatening ridicule, being made the subject of malicious rumours, humiliation, exclusion from groups or activities, writing unkind notes.
4. Relational: damaging someone's relationships or social status.
5. Cyber: the use of the computers, phones, the internet and related technologies to harm other people, in a deliberate and hostile manner; for example via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and videos.
6. Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gesture. Nationally, there is particular concern about an increase in racially motivated bullying.
7. Extortion: money, gifts, forcing someone else to do homework on your behalf.
8. Sexual: unwanted physical contact, abusive comments. Nationally, there is particular concern about an increase in homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic bullying.

Actions

- The Children Act 1989 regards a bullying incident as a 'child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm'. In this kind of situation, the school will report their concerns to the local authority's children's service.
- We aim to create an atmosphere where students feel that they will be listened to, sensitivity will be shown and swift action taken. Everyone is here to listen.
- We set down whole school strategies to combat bullying, for it must be accepted that bullying does exist in all schools, including our own.
- In addition, in line with our responsibility under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, we ensure that our students with special educational needs are not disadvantaged and engage in the activities of the school together with other children who do not have special educational needs.
- If students do not wish to speak to an adult, then there are allocated peer mentors for every KS3 class who are there specifically to offer support and reassurance.
- We encourage all school staff to be aware of the problem of bullying and to pass on any worries they may have about individual students. Indicators of a student being the victim of bullying might include an unwillingness to come to school, withdrawn or isolated behaviour, repeated complaints about missing possessions, refusal to talk about any problem, the student becoming easily distressed or regularly damaged or incomplete work.
- We provide a pastoral programme that contains specific sections on bullying in its various forms, including the use of technology, and use the curriculum as a positive means to combat bullying. Sexual harassment, including sexist, homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic views, and racial harassment are discussed and challenged.
- We ensure that all associated with the school know that bullying is completely unacceptable and if they help to stop it they will be supported.
- We ensure as far as is possible that all areas of our school are supervised at break, lunchtime and the beginning and end of the day to prevent episodes of bullying.
- We give clear advice to parents regarding whom they should contact if they suspect their child is being bullied.
- We never ignore suspected bullying. We do not make premature assumptions, we listen carefully to all accounts and adopt a problem solving approach which moves students on from justifying themselves. Every effort is made to resolve the problem through counselling of both parties.
- We view the immediate physical safety of a student as a first priority.
- All bullying incidents will be recorded by the HOY and reported to the Deputy Headteacher; the incident records will be kept in a central file.
- Parents will be informed as appropriate. Where necessary it will be made clear to both the bully and his/her parents that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable in this school.

- Appropriate sanctions, including fixed term exclusion where appropriate, and support will be used in order to prevent bullying in the future.
- Although bullying is not defined in the UK as a crime, nevertheless certain types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communication can constitute a criminal offence. This could come under:
 - The Public Order Act 1986
 - The Malicious Communications Act 1988
 - The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - The Communications Act 2003.

If the school feels that an offence may have been committed, they may seek advice from the police as soon as is reasonably practicable. This is most likely to occur because of a malicious electronic communication, for example via a social networking site. The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 gives the school stronger powers to tackle cyber bullying in particular, because teachers can search for and if necessary delete inappropriate images or files on electronic devices. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a student's mobile phone.

- We will follow up repeatedly to check bullying has not resumed and to ensure that the victim is given as much support as is required in order to prevent a recurrence of such an incident.

Teachers should:

- Watch for early signs of distress in students – such as a deterioration in the standard of work produced by a student, poor attendance, sudden illnesses, isolation or the need to stay close to adults. These concerns should be passed on to the relevant Form Tutor or Head of Year.
- Listen carefully and record all incidents. Written statements of account should be taken from the alleged victim(s), the bully(ies) and the teacher(s) involved in discussions with either party. These should then be passed on to the Head of Year.
- Respond to the victim, offer help and put school's procedures into operation.
- Make it clear to the bully that this kind of behaviour has no place in this school. This message will also be given to the parents of the bully.
- Inform the Head(s) of Year of both the victim and the bully. This information will be relayed to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher.
- Use all students as a positive resource in the prevention of bullying. Peer groups will often be willing to help and support victims once recognised by a teacher. They can also help shy students or newcomers feel welcome and accepted.

Students should be encouraged:

- To report to an adult when someone is being bullied or in distress.

- Inform an adult immediately if they do not wish to become involved himself or herself.
- To reject bullies in their social group, as it is believed that children will stop bullying if they are socially excluded in this manner.

Parents/carers should:

- Raise any change in behaviour of their children with the school.
- Treat seriously any suggestion by their children that they may be being bullied and raise the concern with the school.

Encourage their son or daughter to talk to a supportive adult they know if they cannot talk to their parents/carers.

Procedure

When an incidence of bullying is reported the following steps should be completed:

- The victim(s) should record the events in writing and sign and date their submission.
- The bully(ies) should record the events in writing and sign and date their submission.
- Any witness should record the events in writing and sign and date their submission.
- The teacher(s) responding to the events or to whom the disclosure is made should record in writing their actions and discussions with all parties and sign and date their submission.
- The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher (DSL), Head of Year and, where relevant, the Deputy Designated Lead for Safeguarding will decide on the sanction to be imposed. This may include internal isolation in the school's inclusion room or fixed-term exclusion.
- Parents of the perpetrator(s) will be informed of the school's decision concerning sanction and will be provided with redacted copies of any written evidence should they request it.
- An incident record of the event will be stored centrally by the Deputy Headteacher.

Related policies:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy, Drugs & substance Abuse Policy, Education for Personal Relationships Policy, Equalities Policy, Exclusions Policy, E-safety Policy, ICT Acceptable Usage Policy, Managing Allegations Against Other Pupils Policy, Pastoral Care Policy, PHSE Policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Approved by the Governors' Catholic Life of the School Committee on 9th October 2019

Next Review: Autumn 2021