

Anti-bullying policy

Statement of intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly, supportive and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying is anti-social behaviour that affects everyone. It is unacceptable at St Clare's, Oxford and will not be tolerated. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to report incidents and know that they will be dealt with sensitively and effectively.

What is bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. It is often repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. (see appendix A for more detailed definitions)

Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures, anonymous hate mail e.g. by mobile phone text messaging or e-mail)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber through mis-use of social websites, mobile telephones, text messages, photographs and email

- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually suggestive and/or abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Disability because of, or focussing on a person's disability or learning difficulty
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures which focus on a person's race, religion or culture.

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

No one deserves to be a victim of bullying; everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Bullying can be very serious, on occasion causing psychological damage and even suicide. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. St. Clare's, Oxford has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this policy

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All governors and teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the College policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All students and parents should know what the College policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a College we take bullying seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to College (school phobic)
- begins truanting
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, nervous or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- feels ill in the morning / feigns illness
- begins to do poorly in school work / inability to concentrate in class
- has possessions go "missing"
- starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has money continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- has started to bully other students
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

The St. Clare's response to bullying

It can be argued that an overly punitive reaction to bullying will not reduce the number of bullying incidents in the long term and may in fact reinforce bullying as an approach to life. An immediate sanction may relieve the victim for a short period of time, though it may increase anger and resentment towards the victim. If bullying is based on power and intimidation then by imposing sanctions on a bully, they may see this as being overpowered and intimidated (albeit by those in authority and for the right motive).

Our first response to an incident of bullying at St. Clare's takes into account our ethos of non-confrontation and attempts to reconcile the victim and the bully through a process of mediation.

The curriculum builds on this ethos directly through the PSHE programme. During PSHE the issue of bullying is discussed and awareness is raised.

We try to build tolerance and understanding into everything that we do.

Where attempts at conciliation do not work and bullies refuse to co-operate with this process and/or continue with bullying then it may be necessary to adopt a punitive approach to ensure that victims of bullying are protected.

Procedures

1. When incidents of bullying are observed by or reported to staff, they will take immediate action to stop any incident in progress.
2. In cases of serious bullying the incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students or Vice Principal.
3. A clear written account of the incident(s) will be made by staff involved, bullied student, bully and passed to the Dean of Students or Vice Principal (for Wardens, this may be via the Wardens report).
4. Personal Tutors will be informed and if the problem persists, will advise appropriate subject teachers.
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly. The victim must be given time to discuss what happened and their response.

6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change his/her behaviour. The member of staff involved will speak with the bully. This will probably be more effective if some time has elapsed since the incident. While the facts must be established it is more important to focus on the impact the bullying behaviour has had on the student who was bullied. The reasons behind the need of the bully to intimidate others must also be investigated. Agreement must be reached on how the bully will behave in relation to the victim and to others generally.
7. If the bullying involves a group, they may be spoken to as a whole, concentrating on the impact of the bullying on the victim. The meeting should not include the victim unless it is clear that the bullies genuinely feel remorse and that the anger and fear of the victim has subsided. The meeting should conclude with agreement being reached on how the bullies will behave in relation to the victim and to others generally.
8. The bully (bullies) may be asked to make a sincere apology, verbally or in writing.
9. In serious cases parents of those bullied and bullying will be informed and may be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
10. In serious instances e.g. violence and theft and/or when criminal acts have been committed, police may be consulted.

Outcomes

If the mediation process fails and/or the incidents of bullying are repeated or severe, the following disciplinary steps can be taken:

1. Other disciplinary measures e.g. banning students from areas of College (residence of the student bullied) and/or gating may be imposed.
2. In serious and/or persistent cases, suspension, exclusion and/or police involvement will be considered.

Students who have been bullied will be supported by:

1. Offering the immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their Personal Tutor, College Nurse, Warden, independent counsellor or member of staff of their choice.
2. Reassuring the student of continuous College support.

Students who have bullied will be helped by:

1. Discussing what has happened with their Personal Tutor, College Nurse, Warden, independent counsellor or member of staff of their choice.
2. Discovering why the student became involved.
3. Establishing the wrong doing and need to change.
4. Informing the parents to help change the attitude of the student (in cases of serious bullying).

If possible, the students involved in bullying incidents will be reconciled.

It is essential that the victim and the bully(ies) are seen later to ascertain if the situation has improved. Each case must be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

All incidents must be documented and comments must be made on any actions taken by staff.

Prevention

Methods to help students prevent bullying may include:

- careful explanation and signing of College Regulations (*focus on the section about Responsible behaviour and Personal Relationships: you must recognise the rights of others to hold*)

opinions different to your own, to have different cultures and/or religious beliefs, to have different sexualities, and to have the right to privacy. Personal relationships within St. Clare's houses are built around mutual acceptance. Care must be taken not to presume on other people's acceptance of the cultural norms governing your behaviour.)

- discussion of the College 'anti-bullying policy' during PSHE sessions.
- within the curriculum the College will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in PSHE and subject areas.
- if bullying occurs, St. Clare's will take action to prevent it continuing by an active focus on the times and places it is most likely to occur.
- staff will receive training in how to prevent and deal with bullying in staff development sessions.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

College will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Different definitions of bullying

1. Bullying, as opposed to conflict, involves repeated orchestrated power over someone weaker either by an individual or more typically by a group through physical intimidation, verbal insults and threats, extortion and exclusion. Typically, this manifests itself in schools where an individual orchestrates a group to intimidate and exclude an individual in order to build their own status, self-esteem and sense of power over an extended period of time.
2. Bullying is the inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with intent to injure either physically or emotionally. It is usually deliberate and repetitive. The bullying may be physical or psychological (verbal and non-verbal). Physically, bullying includes pushing, hitting, punching, kicking or any other action causing hurt or injury.
3. Verbal bullying includes insults, taunts, threats and ridicules.
4. Psychological bullying includes physical intimidation and ostracism.
5. Interference with, or damage to personal property, may be included as bullying.
6. Bullying is the mis-use of power, position and privilege. It is done to intimidate, coerce, engender fear, to control.

"There are three main parameters to bullying: it is repetitive (prolonged over time): it involves an imbalance of power; and it may be verbal, physical, social or psychological."

"A person is bullied or victimised when he or she is exposed repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more persons."

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