

Anti-bullying policy

SECTION A

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 Section B 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 by mis-use of social websites, mobile telephones, text messages, photographs and email (see Section C which is specific to cyberbullying)
- 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, learning difficulty or special educational need
- 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 included on any actions taken by staff. Reports should be passed to the Dean of Students who will discuss them with the Vice Principal to enable any patterns to be identified.

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.

SECTION B

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."

SECTION C

Cyberbullying

This is sending or posting harmful or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication devices. It is the use of ICT, commonly a mobile 'phone or the internet, deliberately to upset someone else.

- It can be used to carry out all the different types of bullying; an extension of face-to-face bullying

- It can also go further in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people
- It can take place across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted
- It can draw bystanders into being accessories
- It includes: threats and intimidation; harassment or 'cyber-stalking'; vilification/defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised publication of private information or images ('happy-slapping'); and manipulation

Cyberbullying differs from "ordinary" bullying and can have a far greater impact because of a number of factors including:

- Invasion of personal space – the victim can never escape it
- The potential anonymity of the bully
- The ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly over a long period of time
- Other students, who may not normally become involved in bullying behaviour, may be drawn in unwittingly by, for example, forwarding or circulating an image or message. Of course, everyone is entitled to their private life and to freedom of expression but students must consider whether the material they are sending, or forwarding, may cause upset.

Categories of cyberbullying

1. Text message bullying involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
2. Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.
3. Phone call bullying via mobile phone uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
4. Email bullying uses email to send bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them.
5. Chat room bullying involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
6. Bullying through instant messaging (IM) is an Internet-based form of bullying where children and young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online (i.e. Facebook, MSN, Bebo etc.).
7. Bullying via websites includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. Students who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a student. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for cyberbullying. Students posting fake and/or offensive photographs of the victim via a social networking site, email or mobile phone. Students hacking into social networking sites and removing and circulating material which may be embarrassing or personal.

What can you do?

If you are being bullied, remember bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped and it can usually be traced.

Don't ignore the bullying - tell someone you trust, such as your Personal Tutor, Warden or a teacher.

Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.

There is plenty of online advice on how to react to cyberbullying. For example, www.kidscape.org and www.wiredsafety.org have some useful tips:

Text/Video Messaging

You can turn off incoming messages for a couple of days.

If bullying persists you can change your phone number (ask your Mobile service provider).

Do not reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages - your Mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying. Visit their website for details.

Email

Never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails.

Don't accept emails or open files from people you do not know.

Ask the school to contact the sender's ISP by writing abuse@ and then the host, eg. abuse@hotmail.com.

Web

If the bullying is on St. Clare's intranet, tell your Personal Tutor, Warden or a teacher, just as you would if the bullying was face-to-face.

Chat Room & Instant Messaging

Never give out your name, address, phone number, school name or password online.

It's a good idea to use a nickname. Do not give out photos of yourself either.

Do not accept emails or open files from people you do not know.

Remember it might not just be people your own age in a chat room. Stick to public areas in chat rooms and get out if you feel uncomfortable.

Think carefully about what you write - don't leave yourself open to bullying.

Responding to cyberbullying

Most cases of cyberbullying will be dealt with through the procedures in Section A above.

- Staff and students should preserve evidence and a record of abuse; save phone messages, record or save-and-print instant messenger conversations, print or produce a screen-grab of social network pages, print, save and forward to staff whole email messages.
- Advise the person being bullied not to retaliate or reply.
- Advise the person to consider what information they have in the public domain.
- Unless the victim sees it as a punishment, they may be advised to change e.g. mobile phone number.
- If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the web. If the person who posted it is known, ensure they understand why it is wrong and ask them to remove it. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down.
- Confiscate mobile phone, ask student to delete the offending content and say who they have sent it on to.
- In some cases, the person being bullied may be able to block the person bullying from their sites and services.
- In addition to the disciplinary measures listed above, the bully may have their access to St. Clare's network restricted and/or their laptop or other devices confiscated.

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.

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