



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour, Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding Policies.

### DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying may be defined as the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory. It occurs over a period of time and is persistent. Usually the bully has power over the victim.

Types of bullying can include :

- Physical – sexual abuse, hitting, kicking, taking or hiding belongings
- Verbal - name calling, teasing, insulting, writing unkind notes, issuing threats (including use of chat room, SMS and text messages).
- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, spreading unkind rumours.
- Cyber bullying

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are **sexual** (e.g. unwanted contact or sexual gestures or comments) or **sexist** (e.g. inferring inadequacy or ineptitude owing to gender), or **racist** (e.g. ridiculing or insulting of a person's race or colour), or **homophobic** (e.g. ridiculing or insulting of a person's sexual orientation), or **cultural** (e.g. emphasising differences owing to ethnic or social background), or which focus on someone's **religious affiliation, disabilities, intellectual or other abilities, special needs, appearance or health concerns or other physical attributes** (such as hair colour or body shape).

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. We always treat it very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

People react differently. It is not always possible to tell if someone is hurt or upset by an action and sometimes pupils' feelings are hurt unintentionally. Some acts of apparent bullying are the result of thoughtlessness, particularly in young children rather than acts that are deliberately malicious. Bullying, on the other hand, is persistent over a period of time and directed specifically against an individual or group of individuals. Bullying can, however, cause serious harm and psychological damage and, in extreme cases, bullying has been a contributory factor in cases of self-harm and even suicide. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

### SIGNS OF BULLYING

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence

- Frequent visits to the school office or own GP outside school with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

#### **THE SCHOOL AIMS TO:**

- Create an environment in which everyone in our community is given the right to feel safe, happy and protected at all times especially when feeling vulnerable
- Create a community in which everyone is valued, differences are respected, weaknesses supported and achievements celebrated
- Prevent bullying and to make it clear to girls and staff that bullying is always unacceptable
- Ensure that there is a clear procedure for dealing with cases of bullying which is known to girls, staff and parents
- Create an atmosphere where everyone knows that if they feel that they have become a victim of bullying there is someone to whom they may talk in confidence, that they will be listened to and taken seriously and where they may be confident in the knowledge that the matter will be dealt with swiftly and sensitively.
- Raise awareness of staff through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely.
- Raise the awareness of pupils using educational means such as Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education, assemblies, projects, drama, stories, literature, history, current affairs, and guidance about the safe use of new technologies.

#### **HOW DOES BULLYING DIFFER FROM TEASING OR FRIENDSHIP DIFFICULTIES?**

Sometimes pupils can feel hurt or upset because they have been teased or have fallen out with a friend. This is not the same as bullying. Bullying :

- is deliberately intended to hurt or humiliate
- involves a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves
- is usually persistent
- often involves no remorse or acknowledgement of the victim's feelings

Staff are ready to help and support pupils who have fallen out with friends, but such situations will not be treated in the same way as a case of bullying. However, the strategies we use may be similar because we acknowledge that over a period of time the impact on the pupil may be the same, and the situation could become bullying if it escalates.

#### **COUNTERING BULLYING PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AND RECORDING**

The School believes the responsibility for bullying lies with perpetrator, not the victim. The School recognises that it is better to take action against bullying rather than simply remove the victim from further threat.

- Anyone who feels she is the victim of bullying can speak to her Form Tutor/Teacher in confidence
- Any incident of bullying should initially be reported to the Form Tutor/Teacher who may, if necessary, refer the matter to a higher authority
- Every effort will be made to resolve the problem through talking to both parties

- In serious cases the Headmistress will inform the parents and the matter will be dealt with appropriately
- It must be made clear to the victim that revenge is not appropriate
- It must be made clear to the bully that her behaviour is unacceptable and has caused distress
- If bullying continues then sanctions will follow (see staff handbook)
- Support may be offered to the victim (and the “bully” if necessary) through referral to the School Counsellor

### **TO GIRLS**

If you feel you are being bullied, or if you know that someone else is, please tell someone straightaway: your Form Tutor/Teacher, another member of staff whom you feel you can approach, a Sixthformer or another girl whom you feel you can talk to in confidence.

We will deal with your concern. Not telling means the victim will continue to suffer and the bully will carry on. We all have a responsibility to make sure that bullying is not allowed to take place at Westfield.

### **TO PARENTS**

If you think your daughter may be being bullied or if she tells you that she is, please let us know. Reassure her that we will deal with the matter sensitively but firmly.

### **TO TEACHERS – WHAT THE SCHOOL WILL DO**

The exact course of action will vary with each situation but the main objectives should be that bullying incidents are brought into the open and strategies agreed to help resolve the problem.

- All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately
- Everything that happens will be carefully recorded
- The most important thing is to stop the bullying and ensure the victim is safe
- We aim for a peaceful resolution: revenge is not helpful for the victim or appropriate
- The victim will be supported throughout the process
- Guidance and help will be available for the perpetrator to help change her behaviour
- Staff will monitor the situation to ensure that the bullying does not continue. If bullying recurs, further action will be taken
- In any serious case of bullying the Headmistress will be informed and the school will work with the parents of both the victim and the perpetrator. The school will remain in regular contact with parents until the situation is resolved
- A bullying incident will be regarded as a child protection concern when there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’ (Children Act 1989). Where this is the case, after the Headmistress has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Social Services and in certain cases the Police
- The school will keep a log of all reported bullying incidents which is monitored in order to identify trends and inform preventative work in the school and future development of policies and procedures.

If you think that bullying is happening, talk to the girls concerned and ask them what has been happening. Record this in the Anti-Bullying Register, which is located in the school offices. Any allegation should be referred to the Assistant Head in Junior House and Deputy Head in Senior House and thence to the Headmistress.

We need to be vigilant before school, at breaks and lunchtimes as these are the times when victims are more vulnerable. We need to be aware that bullying is more likely to occur in areas which are less formally supervised such as the toilets, cloakrooms, corridors and grounds.

We need to be aware that bullying also takes place in the classroom. We must be aware that sarcasm is never appropriate in teaching as a girl is not in a position to respond on an equal footing and this can be perceived as a form of bullying. We must be sensitive to the reaction of girls to one another in class and be quick to stamp on covert bullying in the form of the reactions of the class to an individual girl's answers or behaviour.

We can all promote attitudes which discourage bullying :

- By dealing with the topic of bullying in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving and dealing with difficulties
- By using teaching methods which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings so that girls extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends.

## **SANCTIONS**

It is important that those found responsible after investigation are held to account and accept responsibility for the harm caused. Action will be taken, therefore, which communicates unambiguous disapproval of her/their activities and this will usually include sanctions. Sanctions help reassure the victim that the bullying will stop; they help those responsible recognise the harm caused by their behaviour and deter them from repeating it; they demonstrate to the school community that bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving in a similar way.

If sanctions are warranted, the person(s) responsible will receive a sanction in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. Any sanctions imposed will be fair, proportionate and reasonable, take account of any special educational needs or disabilities that pupils may have and consider the needs of vulnerable pupils. In the most serious cases, the sanction may be fixed term or permanent exclusion.

In line with our Behaviour and Discipline Policy, our aim is also to change the attitude of those responsible and encourage a return to responsible, caring behaviour. Action taken towards this aim will be determined on a case by case basis, but may include measures such as "restorative justice". We will also provide those responsible with access to any support they might need to achieve the return to acceptable behaviour.

Staff will inform the parents of those responsible of the decisions taken with regard to sanctions.

Staff will not normally discuss the details of the punishment with the parents of the bullied pupil.

## **CYBER-BULLYING (Appendix to ANTI-BULLYING POLICY)**

**Cyber - bullying** can be defined as the use of ICT particularly mobile phones and the internet deliberately to upset someone else. It can be an extension of face to face bullying as it gives the bully another route to harass their target. However it differs in several significant ways: the opportunity to invade the victim's home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.

This can take many forms for example:

- Sending threatening, abusive or malicious text messages or e-mails, personally or anonymously
- Making insulting comments about someone on a website, social networking site (eg: MySpace) or online diary (blog)
- Making or sharing derogatory or embarrassing videos or photos of someone via mobile phone or e-mail (such as 'Happy Slapping' videos)

The use of the web, text messages, e-mail, video or audio to bully another pupil or member of staff will not be tolerated.

The School aims to:

- Protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment.
- Prevent cyber-bullying and make it clear to girls and staff that it is always unacceptable
- Make it clear that cyber-bullying whether at home or at school will be taken seriously and dealt with in the most stringent way
- Support the person being bullied making it clear that they can approach any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable and that they will be listened to sympathetically

***If a bullying incident directed at a child occurs using email or mobile phone technology either inside or outside of school time the following procedures should be followed:***

1. Advise the child not to respond to the message
2. Refer to relevant policies including e-safety, anti-bullying, PSHEE, Behaviour polices and apply appropriate sanctions
3. Secure and preserve any evidence
4. Inform the sender's e-mail service provider
5. Advise the child to change their contact details, though this should be seen as a last resort as it may cause the victim to feel that she is being punished
6. Notify parents of the children involved
7. Record the incident in the School's "Anti-Bullying" log

Staff should not overlook the role and responsibility of bystanders in cyber-bullying incidents. Bystanders or "accessories" have an active role in that they may forward on messages etc.

It should be noted that the use of ICT to bully could be a criminal offence under a range of different laws. Abusive language or images, used to bully, harass or threaten another, whether spoken or written (through electronic means) may be libelous, may contravene the *Harassment Act 1997* or the *Telecommunications Act 1984* for example.

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