

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Rationale

Every student in Sandwich Technology School is a valued member of the school community and all students have the right to enjoy their studies and leisure in a friendly environment, free from intimidation, both in the school and in the surrounding community.

Bullying is defined as: "Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally."

As a school we recognise that bullying in all its forms is among the top concerns of young people, parents and carers. We strive, therefore, to deal with all reported cases of bullying as thoroughly as possible and regard each case as a serious matter.

By its nature bullying is not always obvious and all staff must be alert to the possibilities of bullying disguised as an accident, general "rough and tumble" or "joking", etc. We must be alert especially to the bullying which is carried out by an individual or a group against different victims on a regular basis in the playground or on school buses which may not come to our attention but which produces a climate of fear, apprehension and insecurity. However, bullying is an emotive word and can sometimes be misapplied, in which case the school should discuss this carefully with all parties concerned.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- 1 physical (e.g. outright violence, sly kicks or thumps, barging in the corridor);
- 2 intimidation (e.g. by a group against an individual, using threats);
- 3 ridicule (e.g. constant derogatory comments, name-calling, mocking another's efforts);
- 4 being unpleasant (e.g. theft or damage to property);
- 5 comments of a racist or homophobic nature;
- 6 sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact, abusive comments);
- 7 cyber-bullying.

Schools pay particular attention to cases of sexual and homophobic bullying as these cases appear to be on the increase nationally.

The harmful effects of any form of bullying should not be under-estimated. Bullying can:

- 1 poison the atmosphere within the teaching group, a section of the school or the entire school;
- 2 damage an individual's confidence and personality;
- 3 ruin the reputation of the school.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the school's approach to dealing with bullying is clear and transparent. Although all instances are approached in a personalised way, taking the needs of the individuals concerned into account, it is also recognised via this policy that there is a standard approach to ensure that all concerned are treated fairly and consistently.

In essence: It is school policy to work against all forms of bullying and our school community will not tolerate any form of bullying.

Implementing the policy

Symptoms of bullying

Children who are being bullied at school will not always be prepared to tell those in authority. However, when a disclosure is made, it should always be treated seriously. Whilst others may not feel that certain actions or words are of a bullying nature, if the student feels they are being bullied that is sufficient evidence to treat the case as bullying unless disproved.

For those students who are unable to inform staff about their problem, observations regarding specific behaviour patterns can be routinely established within the school. Signs of bullying might include:

- unwillingness to come to school;
- withdrawn, isolated behaviour;
- complaining about missing possessions;
- refusal to talk about any problem;
- easily distressed;
- damaged or incomplete work.

In the case of staff and other adults, bullies are often in positions of power or authority over their victims. Tell-tale signs in victims are indicated in the following list, which is neither inclusive nor exclusive:

- general low morale;
- increased level of staff turnover;
- high rates of absenteeism;
- frequent disputes, complaints and grievances;
- members of staff who seem isolated;
- inefficient team working.

Whilst bullying may always be present in school we do not accept that it should continue and we do not subscribe to the view that it teaches children to live in the “real world”. By definition bullying goes beyond what is reasonable behaviour in a civilised community.

The school encourages close liaison with parents and other outside agencies to combat bullying.

Everyone – students, parents, staff and other members of the community – should support each other by reporting all instances of bullying. The school will listen to everyone who reports bullying and act upon the information immediately. Bullying is too important not to report.

All students, parents and staff will be made fully aware of the procedures to be followed if an incidence of bullying should occur.

Everyone in the school is expected to work to promote relationships, which are based upon consideration, tolerance, trust and reasonable behaviour.

Students will be encouraged to use assertiveness techniques and increase their self-esteem through work done in Year 7 induction programmes, SEAL activities and Health lessons.

The school will regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its policy on bullying through consultation with students at Student Council meetings. Students and parents complete a questionnaire regularly, which includes a section on bullying.

Instances of staff bullying

If a member of staff believes that he/she is being bullied, where appropriate he/she should report the matter to their line manager in the first instance. If the line manager is the perpetrator, the staff member may report the matter to another senior member of staff. The matter will be considered in accordance with the school’s published Complaints Procedure. Where the complaint concerns the Headteacher, the complainant will be referred to the Chair of Governors.

Guidelines for dealing with suspected student bullying

- 1 Take all reports or indications of bullying seriously. Report them to the appropriate pastoral team.
- 2 The pastoral team will deal with each incident as a matter of priority.
- 3 Protect the student(s) being bullied and any student reporting or assisting with enquiries. In other words, do not mention their names as the prime source of information, do not put the suspected bully in the same room as the victim or other witnesses when writing statements. Do not allow time for students to collude whilst writing their statements.
- 4 Keep a written note of statements and evidence. Any written notes should eventually be copied to the files of all concerned.
- 5 Encourage appropriate students and friends of those being bullied to assist.
- 6 Contact the parents, through the pastoral team, of the child being bullied and keep them informed of enquiries and action taken.
- 7 Stress to all parties that whatever the outcome there should be no recriminations or settling of scores in school or out of school.
- 8 Be certain to get corroborating evidence and be prepared for those at fault, and the parents of those at fault, to minimise and even trivialise the offence. Some individual parents will try to deflect the fact that their child has bullied by raising other unconnected issues/complaints – in which case, the counter complaints should be taken seriously, but not be allowed to detract from the issue in hand.
- 9 Be very careful always to act and be seen to act fairly and correctly without jumping to conclusions. Gather as much information as possible before reaching a conclusion. Never make unsubstantiated comments/observations about a suspected bully.
- 10 In serious cases inform a Deputy Headteacher or the Headteacher.
- 11 Where there are grounds for doing so follow up on the incident with the child who has been bullied to ensure that the bullying does not recommence.
- 12 Give advice to the student(s) being bullied and parents on what action to take if any further bullying should occur and how to avoid bullying.
- 13 Work to improve the self-esteem of the victims and the bullies.

Procedures for dealing with an incident of bullying

- 1 Listen to a verbal account as victim may be nervous, anxious or excitable in their behaviour.
- 2 Get a written statement from the victim as soon as possible in as much detail as possible. Make sure that the statement is legible, ask questions and ensure all details are included on the statement sheet.
- 3 Make sure details of form group, date and witness names are written clearly.
- 4 Get witness statements separately and as soon as possible making sure that students do not write statements together.
- 5 Get a statement from the student(s) being accused of bullying following the above guidelines.
- 6 The statements will then be looked at by the appropriate pastoral team with relevant information being shared with staff and other Year offices.
- 7 If appropriate parties involved will be brought together to discuss the situation and a way forward. This positive mediation is in line with Restorative Justice practices used in the school. Parents of all involved parties will be informed of the incident and the resolution with meetings made if needed.
- 8 If positive mediation is not appropriate and the case is proven, the guilty student is withdrawn for the rest of the day pending a final decision on consequences. Try to avoid “knee-jerk” reactions to a situation. Take time to look at past records to establish if this is an on-going problem.
- 9 Parents will always be informed if their child has been bullied or is bullying. They will also be informed of the consequences in each case. If appropriate parents will be invited in to school to discuss their child’s behaviour.
- 10 In the first instance the bully should be given the chance to rectify the situation but should be made aware that if there are further incidents reported the consequences will be increased.
- 11 Always remind parents that it is their right to inform the police of any bullying issues. The school may also invite our Police Liaison Officer into school to speak with persistent bullies. Parents are informed and may be present.
- 12 In recurring cases of bullying by a particular student changes to timetables and teaching groups can be used to help keep students apart. Parents are called into school, the student can be withdrawn from the playground, the student may be recommended for an alternative school day (3.00 pm to 6.00 pm) or a fixed term exclusion from school by the Headteacher.
- 13 Work with the Community Police Officer may be set up in certain cases.
- 14 SEAL and Health lessons cover issues surrounding bullying; assertiveness can be discussed with the victim if appropriate.
- 15 All paper work connected with an individual case is copied and filed in all files as appropriate and noted on the school’s Management Information System (SIMS).

Dealing with incidents of racist abuse

Incidences of racist abuse should be dealt with in line with the procedures outlined for bullying. The School Business Manager maintains the register of racist incidents and should be informed of all racist incidents. The School Business Manager liaises on a regular basis with the Heads of Year or Head of Sixth Form to ensure all incidents are recorded.

Preventative strategies

- Opportunities are provided during the school year to discuss the issues around bullying with the aim of drawing out anti-bullying messages.
- Regular whole-school involvement in initiatives which raise the awareness of the negative consequences of bullying, for example the national anti-bullying week each November.
- Looking at the key times and places where bullying is likely to occur, looking at the school environment and staff supervision patterns to minimise these.
- Working with outside agencies where appropriate (such as bus companies, British Transport Police, Rail Safety Officers and the Police) through assemblies to illustrate the wider effects of bullying and other anti-social behaviour.
- Positive mediation techniques used to put the burden of redress firmly onto the bully.
- Copies of relevant anti-bullying literature are made available to the students and parents of those being bullied.
- A “buddy” system can be put in place to ensure that further incidences of bullying are prevented.

Dealing with instances of cyber-bullying

“The nature of bullying changes when online, making it anonymous and potentially more damaging.”
(Byron Review)

What’s different about cyber-bullying?

Some features of cyber bullying are different from other forms of bullying.

- Cyber-bullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe or personal.
- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for targets to move on.
- People who cyber-bully may attempt to remain anonymous and this can be extremely distressing for those being bullied. The person cyber-bullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.
- Cyber-bullying can take place both between peers and across generations; teachers have also been targets. Age or size is not important. Bystanders can also become accessories to the bullying; for example, by passing on a humiliating image.
- It can be the result of not thinking (something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to the recipient) or a lack of awareness of the consequences; for example, saying something negative online about another student or friend that they do not expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.
- Many cyber-bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence and this is one of the reasons why it is important to know how to respond.

Responding to cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is a form of bullying and the school will deal with the majority of cases through its existing anti-bullying policies and procedures. There are some key steps to take when responding to cyber-bullying:

- Reassurance will be given that the person has done the right thing by telling someone. Existing pastoral support procedures will be followed and parents informed.
- Advice on next steps will be given:
 - the person will be reminded not to retaliate or return the message;
 - the person will be asked to think about what information they have in the public domain;
 - the person will be helped to keep relevant evidence for any investigation (e.g. by not deleting messages they have received, by taking screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online cyber-bullying instances);

- the person will be helped to understand simple ways to prevent it from happening again (e.g. by changing contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chat room).
- Take action to contain the incident when content has been circulated:
 - if the person responsible is known, they will be asked to remove the content;
 - the host (e.g. the social networking site) will be contacted to make a report to get the content taken down;
 - disciplinary powers will be used to confiscate phones that are being used to cyber-bully, the student will be asked to say who they have sent messages on to; phones will be returned to parents;
 - in cases of illegal content, the police will be contacted.

Key safety advice

The whole school community has a part to play in ensuring cyber safety. Understanding children and young people's online lives and activities can help adults respond to situations appropriately and effectively. Asking children and young people to show adults how technologies and services work is a useful strategy that can provide an important learning opportunity and context for discussing online safety.

For children and young people –

- 1 Always respect others; be careful what you say online and what images you send.
- 2 Think before you send; whatever you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever.
- 3 Treat your password like your toothbrush – keep it to yourself! Only give your mobile number or personal website address to trusted friends.
- 4 Block the bully – learn how to block or report someone who is behaving badly.
- 5 Do not retaliate or reply.
- 6 Save the evidence – learn how to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversations.
- 7 Make sure you tell:
 - an adult you trust, or call a helpline like Child Line on 0800 1111 in confidence;
 - the provider of the service – check the service provider's website to see where to report incidents;
 - your school – your tutor or your Year office are all there to help.

Finally, don't just stand there – if you see cyber-bullying going on, support the victim and report the bullying. How would you feel if no one stood up for you?

For parents and carers –

- 1 Be aware, your child may as likely cyber-bully as be a target of cyber-bullying. Be alert to your child seeming upset after using the internet or their mobile phone. This might involve subtle comments or changes in relationships with friends. They might be unwilling to talk or be secretive about their online activities and mobile phone use.
- 2 Talk with your children and understand the ways in which they are using the internet and their mobile phone. See the seven key messages for children (above) to get you started.
- 3 Use the tools on the service and turn on in-built internet safety features.
- 4 Remind your child not to retaliate.
- 5 Keep the evidence of offending emails, text messages or online conversations.
- 6 Report cyber-bullying:
 - contact your child's school if it involves another student, so that they can take appropriate action;
 - contact the service provider;
 - if the cyber-bullying is serious and a potential criminal offence has been committed, you should consider contacting the police.
- 7 However tempting, we urge parents to refrain from posting online comments themselves as this can inflame the situation.

Sanctions against bullies

Sanctions need to impress upon perpetrators that bullying is unacceptable, they also need to act as a deterrent to prevent offenders from repeating the behaviour. Bullies also need to be held to account for the harm they have done; they should be forced to face up to it and then learn from it. This should be done through restorative justice approaches such as positive mediation meetings.

Remember to deal with each case on its own merit and to have all required paper work before deciding on the sanctions.

Sanctions can include:

- parental contact by phone or face to face;
- loss of free-time privileges;
- after school detention;
- internal exclusion;
- alternative school day (3.00 pm to 6.00 pm);
- exclusion from school;
- meeting with Police Liaison Officer;
- work with Inclusions Office to help foster positive behaviour experiences;
- referral to outside agencies.

Further successful strategies that may be employed at STS for dealing with bullying amongst students include:

- increasing the friendship circle for victims;
- mediation by students and adults;
- active listening including telephone help lines such as ChildLine and the Samaritans;
- assertiveness training groups;
- school counsellor;
- Project Salus – self-esteem and nurture groups;
- developing a non-violent school ethos;
- youth tutor;
- use of sanctuary rooms during free time;
- use of the 'quiet room' (F15) and staff support within this space.

The charities listed below are linked to some highly successful strategies:

- Kidscape - <http://www.kidscape.org.uk>
- Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) - <http://www.ace-ed.org.uk>
- Get Connected - <http://www.getconnected.org.uk>
- The Samaritans - <http://www.samaritans.org>
- London Action Trust - <http://www.lat.org.uk>
- National Children's Bureau - <http://www.ncb.org.uk>
- ChildLine - <http://www.childline.org.uk>

Curriculum contributions

SEAL activities completed in Tutor Time cover issues around bullying, with videos and discussions centred on the different forms of bullying already mentioned in this document. By openly discussing bullying and its attendant issues we as a school are continuing to develop our culture of reporting incidents, whether that is a report from a student being bullied or a report from a third party.

Links to other policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Governors' Delegation of Functions (Function 42)
Home-school Agreement
Online Safety and ICT Acceptable Use Policy
Staff Code of Conduct
Staff Well Being Policy
Whistle Blowing Policy