

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

AIMS

Merchant Taylors' School for Girls aims to provide a safe and caring environment in which each of its pupils feels secure; an environment where pupils can express themselves freely, form relationships and learn at their own pace.

We see it as the responsibility of the Governors, all staff, whether teaching or non-teaching, as well as parents to ensure that our school has an ethos which encourages pupils to achieve their maximum potential both academically and socially.

In addition, all staff will be aware of and take into consideration the different needs of pupils challenged by issues such as visual or auditory impairment, mobility, mental health, dyslexia.

DEFINITIONS

Any behaviour which is threatening or makes an individual feel unhappy, uncomfortable or intimidated in school is clearly not acceptable.

Such behaviour may be regarded as bullying. There are many definitions of bullying, but most have 3 things in common:

- It is deliberately hurtful behaviour

- It is repeated often over a long period of time

- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

Bullying can take many forms including:

- physical - hitting, kicking, taking belongings

- verbal - name-calling, teasing, insulting remarks

- indirect - spreading nasty stories, excluding someone from a social group, text messages

We are aware that bullying is prevalent in all aspects of life not only in schools and that no school can claim with absolute confidence that 'there is no bullying here'.

Every school has some degree of bullying, however slight or infrequent. We believe that there is not a great problem at MTGS, but we aim through policy and action to respond positively and effectively to any incidents, however trivial they may seem.

GUIDELINES TO STAFF WHEN DEALING WITH BULLYING

1. Listen to the pupils

- Encourage them to speak freely

- Assure them that their allegations will be dealt with in confidence initially but that you may need to consult the appropriate member of staff, e.g. Head, Deputy, Heads of Upper and Lower School, Pastoral Counsellor.

- Assure them that we will consult with them at all stages of the investigation

- Assure them that appropriate action will be taken

- Encourage them to involve their parents.

2. The appropriate member of staff should undertake a full investigation of the allegations to verify what has been going on.

3. The school will embark upon the following action, where appropriate.
 - i. Interview the pupils involved and get written reports.
 - ii. In many cases a conciliatory approach may be useful, in which the person dealing with the incident attempts to improve the situation by encouraging those involved in bullying to empathise with the victim, (see Mrs Large for advice on this 'no-blame' approach).
 - iii. The pupils should be seen a week later (informally?) to discuss how things are going, so that they can realise that the situation is still being monitored.
 - iv. If the problem is more serious, it may be necessary to involve the parents and keep accurate records of how the school has responded if the family should decide to take legal action.
 - v. It may be appropriate to break up the group dynamics of a gang of pupils known to be bullying e.g. by keeping them in at lunchtime and break times if that is when they are a threat to others. This may also apply to a single pupil.
 - vi. Exclusion as a response to bullying should be used sparingly and as a last resort.
 - vii. Once a plan of action has been worked out and the matter dealt with it is essential to monitor progress over the following weeks and months. This may also involve supporting the victim and counselling the bully.

PREVENTION

PSHE lessons have an important part to play in preventing bullying.

Bullying is one of the topics listed in the PSHE programme for both Year 7, and Year 8 and each form has one period PSHE per week with their form tutor / PSHE tutor.

There are also opportunities for Year 9 and above to address bullying in their PSHE periods, by arrangement with their PSHE tutors.

The PSHE year files, PSHE library contain numerous exercises and programmes on the following: friendship, self-esteem, decision-making and assertiveness.