



Merchant Taylors' School

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Anti-bullying Policy (MTGS)

Anti-Bullying Policy

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ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Context

All schools have a duty to draw up procedures to prevent bullying and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. The school's policy and procedures also take into account the guidance given in the DFE's Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017 and Behaviour and Discipline in Schools 2016 and the guidance given in the ISSR handbook September 2017.

2. The School's Position

The school will not tolerate bullying. We believe that all students have the right to be educated in an environment where there is mutual respect and co-operation. Bullying is contrary to this approach and we do everything possible to discourage it. We aim to create an environment in which bullying is minimised. If bullying does occur, we aim to ensure that the person being bullied is safe, we work to stop the bullying happening again and we provide support to the person being bullied. Parents, pupils teaching and support staff must be alert to signs of bullying and all members of the school community must report any bullying they experience or witness to the victim's Form Tutor or Head of Section. Senior members of staff will always take reports of bullying seriously and will always ensure they are thoroughly investigated. Serious instances of bullying may be regarded as safeguarding issues and as such may be reported to the designated staff safeguarding leads and dealt with under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In some instances, and where a criminal offence may have been committed it will be appropriate to liaise with the Police.

3. Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is aggressive or insulting behaviour by an individual or group, often repeated over time, which intentionally hurts or harms another pupil or group physically or emotionally. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability or because the child is adopted, is looked after by the Local Authority or is a carer. It may occur directly or through cyber-technology (social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email). Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously. Research confirms that bullying can have a lasting destructive effect on people's lives. Bullying can produce long lasting feelings of powerlessness, loss of self-esteem and isolation. Victims can sometimes become convinced that they are somehow at fault and can suffer serious long-term distress as a result. Their school work and social and emotional development can be seriously adversely affected. Bullying has the potential to cause serious psychological and physical damage and, in the most extreme cases, suicide.

4. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the school Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment. The school's objectives are:

- 4.1. To prevent bullying from happening by proactively teaching pupils about the harm it can do
- 4.2. Recognition within the School Community that no one deserves to be a victim of bullying
- 4.3. To promote appreciation of diversity
- 4.4. To nurture students who are empathetic, respectful and considerate of others
- 4.5. To respond appropriately and effectively to instances of bullying
- 4.6. To ensure that parents, pupils and members of staff understand what bullying is and understand the school's policy on bullying and follow it, including by reporting any instances of bullying they come across
- 4.7. To work with those students who engage in bullying activities to ensure that they recognise and learn different ways of behaving
- 4.8. To keep governors updated about serious instances of bullying and for governors to review the policy annually and to check on its effective implementation

5. Examples of Bullying

Please note this is not an exhaustive list but a summary of some common types of bullying behaviour:

- Calling someone names
- Threatening them
- Mocking their contributions in class
- Sending unpleasant texts or making threats or mocking someone on line (see section on cyberbullying at the end of this document)
- Saying or doing hurtful things to or about someone on the basis of their or their family member's actual or perceived sexual orientation (see section on homophobic bullying at the end of this document)
- Saying or doing hurtful things to or about someone on the basis of their, ethnic, social, cultural or religious background, a disability or special educational need, because they are in the care of the Local Authority or are acting as a carer, or because of an issue in their family
- Hitting, kicking, otherwise inflicting physical pain

6. Relational Aggression

Relational aggression is described as behaviours that harm others through damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship or group inclusion (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). It refers to deliberate actions that intend to negatively affect an individual's friendships or reputation. Such actions, if ignored, can lead to social exclusion. The school takes relational aggression seriously and addresses the issues associated with it through our PSHE and assembly programmes. Examples include:

- Deliberately excluding someone

- Spreading rumours and gossip
- Breaking secrets
- Imitating or mocking a pupil
- Teasing or embarrassing a pupil

7. Forms of bullying

The nature of bullying can be:

- Emotional – excluding, tormenting, threatening, hiding possessions
- Physical – pushing, punching, hair pulling, other violence
- Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, banter
- Cyber – misuse of the internet, social media, mobile phone and associated equipment

Bullying can be based on any of the following things:

- Race (racist bullying)
- Religion or beliefs
- Culture or class
- Gender (sexist bullying)
- Sexual orientation (homophobic or biphobic bullying)
- Gender identity (transphobic bullying)
- Special Education needs or disability
- Appearance or health conditions

8. Signs that someone might be a victim of bullying

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list but a summary of some common indications that someone is being bullied. They could also be signs of other difficulties, but should give rise to investigating the possibility of bullying. Parents and teachers should look out for a pupil:

- Seeming afraid of the journey to or from school, asking to be taken to school when they have previously been happy to walk or take public transport unaccompanied
- Making unexplained changes to their routine
- Trying to get out of going to school e.g. by claiming to be ill when nothing really seems wrong with them, playing truant
- Becoming anxious and withdrawn, appearing to have lost confidence
- Changes to behaviour such as stammering, easily becoming tearful, having a disturbed sleep pattern
- Possessions or clothes being frequently lost or damaged, asking for money without explaining why they need it
- Doing badly in school work
- Becoming aggressive towards siblings
- Unwilling to use mobile phone or computer or using them obsessively
- Unexplained cuts or bruises, self-harming, preoccupied by suicide

9. Preventing bullying

The school takes proactive measures to foster positive relationships and mutual respect through assemblies, PSHE, peer support systems such as listening lunch, mentoring and form prefects, the school council and the system for recognising and awarding achievement. The school's programme of extracurricular activities enables pupils to achieve and to develop self-esteem and good relationships beyond the classroom. Opportunities to discuss and challenge bullying are provided in many subjects such as English and RS, whilst assemblies, including special assemblies during National Anti-Bullying Week are also used to highlight the issues involved.

The school has a clearly defined pastoral system based around Form Tutors, Assistant Heads of Section and Heads of Section. Pupils may seek support from the School Nurse and the School Counsellors.

The House System fosters vertical integration allowing younger pupils to be supported by older students.

Teachers receive training in dealing with bullying as part of the recurring cycle of CPD, parents are able to discuss bullying at Parents' Forum Events and at Parents' Evenings, whilst Governors annually review the school's anti bullying policy and scrutinise the school's records of serious bullying incidents.

Resources relating to anti bullying are available from the Head of Wellbeing and PSHE. There is regular staff training to ensure that everyone is aware of the principles of the school policy, of action needed to resolve and prevent problems, of their legal responsibilities and of the support available to staff. Specialist training will be provided as needed to provide understanding of pupils with particular issues such as special educational needs or disabilities and LGBTQIA+ pupils.

10. Dealing with bullying

All members of the school community are encouraged to report any instances of bullying. "Third Party" reporting of bullying is positively encouraged so that those who are aware of bullying but are not victims of it come forward. Pupils will regularly be reminded about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders. Success of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy can only arise as a result of the co-operation, understanding and determination of all involved parties; students, parents/carers, teachers and governors working together.

Allegations of bullying must always be reported to the Head of Section or the Assistant Head of Section of the alleged victims and perpetrators, who will investigate the allegations, involving the Deputy Heads if necessary. Confidential notes of all allegations of bullying will be kept by class teachers and all cases of bullying will be investigated and recorded to assist in spotting patterns and ensuring the single incident does not become the first of a series. Notes about serious cases of bullying will be kept on the files of victims and perpetrators and a central record of serious incidents is kept by the Headmistress and reported to Governors. Incidents of bullying which are based on protected characteristics will be clearly

distinguished in the bullying logs and records. If the investigation confirms that bullying has taken place, it will be made clear to the perpetrator that bullying will not be tolerated. The victim and perpetrator's parents will be informed and a suitable disciplinary sanction may be given:

In serious cases, the Headmistress may temporarily or permanently exclude the perpetrator from school. In less serious cases, mediation may take place which may include giving the victim the opportunity to tell the perpetrator about the effects of their bullying and which will give the perpetrator the opportunity to apologise for their behaviour, in accordance with the principles of restorative justice.

When bullying is suspected, adults are required to comply with the following:

- Listen carefully to what you are being told. Alleged victims must feel listened to.
- Clarify what you are told – where, when, who how etc.
- Take immediate action to safeguard the victim in line with the School's Safeguarding Policy
- Do not offer confidentiality. Make it clear that you may have to report it elsewhere. Ensure that the student knows who else will be told.
- Reassure the alleged victim that they will be taken seriously.
- As soon as possible write down what you have been told – using the pupil's own words. It may be appropriate for the child to write down their own version of events.
- Report this matter as soon as possible to the student's Head of Section/ Assistant Head of Section. If they are not available, to a member of SMT. All middle and senior leaders have a responsibility to support colleagues to eradicate bullying.

All Heads of Section must:

- Use the specific form for recording bullying incidents
- Keep the senior leadership team informed of progress
- Ensure appropriate support has been given to victims of bullying and their parents/carers
- Ensure that each case is monitored after it has been investigated and managed to ensure that repeated bullying does not take place.
- Involve the parents/carers in disciplinary measures against those responsible for/involved in bullying, in order to emphasise that bullying is contrary to the school's code of conduct and therefore unacceptable.

All Parents/Carers should:

- Parents/carers should regularly remind their daughter of the School's Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy, especially in terms of expected behaviour as found in the school's behaviour policy. This will reinforce the aims of the school and minimise the chance of their child's involvement in bullying.
- Parents/carers should be alert to signs that their child may be a victim of bullying. Such signs may include: problems with attendance, illness, any unusual money requests, missing or damaged equipment and physical injuries.

- If any parent / carer suspects that their child is being bullied they are recommended to encourage their child to inform a member of staff. Alternatively, parents/carers can contact the school directly if they feel that their child is subject to bullying. In the first instance they should contact the appropriate Head of Section / Assistant Head of Section.
- If parents/carers feel that their concerns have not been fully dealt with they should report the matter, in writing, to the Headmistress.
- If this does not prove to be conclusive, parents/carers have the right to contact the Chair of Governors.

11. Referral to External Agencies

When a child has experienced bullying which gives rise to reasonable concern that she is suffering, or it likely to suffer, significant harm this will be treated as child protection issue. Advice will be sought from the DO within the local authority and if deemed appropriate a referral will be made to Children's Social Care with the consent of the child or her parents.

12. Bullying experienced by members of staff

The school recognises that adults can be the victims of bullying. Staff who experience bullying have recourse to the MTS employee procedures.

13. LGBTQIA+ bullying

The school recognises that pupils who identify as being LGBTQIA+ or who are perceived as such may be subject to bullying. The school seeks to foster a culture of tolerance and acceptance of diversity and addresses issues of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in PSHE, in other subjects where appropriate and through assemblies.

All members of the school community are reminded to use language that is respectful of and kind towards others, and to avoid language that perpetuates stereotypes or offends others. The school does not tolerate the use of derogatory language and its use will be challenged and recorded by staff.

14. Cyberbullying

The school is committed to teaching pupils and parents about e-safety and the dangers of cyberbullying and online exploitation. These topics are covered for pupils in PSHE and ICT lessons and for parents in pastoral newsletters and parents' forums. Children are given age appropriate advice about the pitfalls of the internet, including the risk of online grooming. The school has clear rules about the use of mobile phones and cameras as highlighted in the Code of Conduct and school policies. There is clarity about the school's use of photographs of pupils in promotional materials in the parental terms and conditions. Staff personal use of IT is covered in the staff code of conduct and is part of the regular cycle of safeguarding training. The school's computer system is filtered to prevent access to unsuitable sites, including social media sites. The school will act swiftly to block inappropriate sites if these are drawn to our attention. In a fast changing world continued vigilance by staff, parents and pupils is encouraged. The school's policies and code of conduct is explicit about the

unacceptability of teasing, mocking or threatening others online. As with other forms of bullying, all members of the school community are encouraged to report any instances of cyberbullying.

15. Bullying which takes place off site and outside school time

Any reports of bullying of one member of the school community by another member will be treated in accordance with this policy, regardless of when and where the incident takes place.

16. Review and Evaluation

The pastoral team keep the effectiveness of this policy and the prevalence of bullying in the school under ongoing review as part of their cycle of regular meetings. This process of review includes discussion of whether any patterns of bullying behaviour have emerged. The policy and its effectiveness are reviewed annually by Governors. The School Council regularly discusses anti bullying.

17. Strategies to support our approach to Anti-Bullying

These are offered in support of our approach towards Anti-bullying. They are not exhaustive and are not guaranteed to eliminate bullying. However, using some or all of these will minimise the incidence of bullying in our community.

- Ensure that normal procedures of reporting incidents and passing on relevant information are followed.
- Follow up on each case to ensure that the victim is given as much support as possible and in order to prevent a recurrence of the behaviour. The person who is bullying may well need support and guidance to prevent a recurrence.
- Make clear to victims and bullies the actions we are taking.
- Do not bully the bully. Do not give credibility to the behaviour.
- Ensure that all students know that adults can be spoken to in confidence. Students need to know that something will be done and the matter handled discreetly and sensitively.
- Watch for signs of distress in children – deterioration of work, spurious illness, isolation, the desire to stay with adults, erratic attendance. Whilst this may be symptomatic of other problems, it may be early signs of bullying.
- Gain support and advice from external agencies.
- Use of mediation and restorative justice practices if appropriate.
- Make the unacceptable nature of the behaviour and the consequences of repetition clear to the bully and her parents/carers.
- Teachers are to use every opportunity to reinforce the stated aim of the school relating to appropriate behaviour, both through the standards set in their relationships with students and in those they expect between students, whether inside or outside the classroom.
- We encourage tolerance (including racial and religious) patience, trust, respect, empathy, co-operation, understanding and a genuine concern for others.

- The wider issue of the abuse of power which includes bullying is covered in various areas of the curriculum e.g. RS, PSHE, Drama. The issue is considered at appropriate times throughout the years of compulsory education and in the Sixth Form.
- During the course of the year students will be given advice and guidance as to how to behave so that all members of the school community feel safe. This may be done through assemblies, PSHE, workshops as well as day-to-day reinforcement of the school's aims and ethos.

18. References

- MTGS School Parents Handbook
- MTPS Parents Handbook
- Pupil Code of Conduct
- ICT and Social Media Acceptable Use Policy
- School Policy on Pastoral Care, Discipline and Exclusions
- PSHE Policy
- Sex and Relationships Policy
- DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) and Cyberbullying Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014)