

Newcastle upon Tyne Royal Grammar School

Anti-bullying policy

This policy applies to the whole school and is published to parents and students

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Anti-bullying advice for students is provided in their planners, on notices or posters and in lessons, assemblies etc. and follows the tenor of this policy, but in language appropriate to their age and situation.

Royal Grammar School Newcastle (RGS) adopts a strategic approach to preventing and tackling all forms of bullying and peer on peer abuse through open and varied communication with students, parents and staff, including frequent reminders that the School will not tolerate any form of bullying. This policy summarises the RGS approach and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- The RGS Ethos
- Safeguarding policy
- Anti-cyberbullying policy
- Behaviour and sanctions policy
- Equal opportunities and race equality policy
- Complaints policy
- PSHE scheme of work

And has regard to the following:

- Public Order Act 1986
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Children Act 1989
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Communications Act 2003
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DFE guidance 2017)
- Supporting Children and Young People who are bullied, advice for schools (DFE guidance 2014)

Bullying is deliberate unkindness or any action repeated over time that gives verbal, physical or mental hurt. Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups e.g. on grounds of race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender, family circumstances, special needs or disability. Forcing unwanted attention on someone else, particularly if in a sexual way, is also bullying. In very serious incidents, a single action can constitute bullying behaviour.

When the harmful activity is online (e.g. social media), a single action can have a repeated impact, so harmful and/or offensive behaviour online does not need to be repeated over time to constitute bullying.

Bullies usually intend harm to their victims, but an unintentionally harmful action can constitute bullying if its effects are sufficiently severe, and/or if the action is contrary to *common sense* and/or if it would have been reasonable to predict that the action would be likely to cause harm/offence.

Bullying has serious consequences that can be physical, emotional or psychological. Some people who have been bullied have attempted suicide.

Bullying of any form **will not** be tolerated between students or teachers and students. It is bullying to write notes, make phone calls, send electronic messages and pictures or create/post them on websites or social media if they might offend, hurt, annoy or worry anyone, whether it is a student, teacher or someone else. From home, from school, from anywhere, it is still bullying. Digitally sending or posting a picture or video that hurts someone else or humiliates is bullying.

The School works to promote the positive qualities of altruism and community spirit by means of consistent school-wide consideration of those values in assemblies, forms, tutor sets, PSHE, Voluntary service, fundraising activities, and through our approach in and out of the classroom. The promotion of British values also has an important part to play in developing students' sense of tolerance and respect for diversity. The informal peer mentoring within tutor sets provides an especially positive environment in which to promote the community values of the school. In addition school prefects, peer mentors and house captains all provide further opportunities to reinforce the RGS ethos.

Staff are regularly reminded through staff training and weekly briefings about the principles and specifics of this policy and appropriate external training courses are funded to improve support for students. Staff are also supported by providing specialist advice to Heads of Year, teachers and students when dealing with bullying associated with special educational needs, psychological or mental disability, or in circumstances where individuals feel *out of their depth* (e.g. if uncomfortable when called to deal with bullying associated with LGBT students). Staff are encouraged to raise concerns regarding student relationships at the earliest opportunity and where possible before bullying has begun. They should inform a Head of Year (in the senior school) or a member of the SLT (in the Junior School) of their concerns. Information regarding past friendship and relationship issues are shared sensitively with staff in order to help develop a proactive culture to prevent bullying.

The School has a commitment to the emotional wellbeing of its students and staff and therefore openly acknowledges the physical and emotional seriousness of bullying which can lead to psychological damage. Assemblies, form and tutor time as well as PSHE lessons and wellbeing days all contribute to an approach which seeks to talk openly about bullying and therefore prevent it becoming a hidden problem. When bullying is discussed students are reminded of the role of the bystander (including online) in bullying

incidents and given strategies to help stop and to report bullying when they know of it. Parents are encouraged to contact the school as soon as they are concerned, and the School provides advice to parents to help them identify and discuss bullying with their child e.g. the wellbeing blog.

The School takes all allegations of bullying seriously and will investigate each one as thoroughly as possible. The School will take the firmest action against any bullying, teasing, harassment or other form of behaviour that hurts or denigrates others for their appearance, maturity, immaturity, race, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, difference, particular needs or disability. Though in most cases of bullying, the School will seek ways of reconciling the bully and victim and help both to move forward, in severe and persistent cases it will not shrink from expulsion of the bully if necessary.

Governors discuss bullying issues as part of their termly meetings and safeguarding briefings.

Reporting bullying

It is the duty of everyone who sees an instance of bullying or potential bullying to act to stop it. This duty applies to all students, teachers and other members of staff. Staff and students are regularly reminded of the need to be vigilant for signs of bullying and of the requirement to report instances of bullying to the Form teacher, Heads of Year, Junior School Headmaster (for incidences in the Junior School) and the Pastoral Director (for the Senior School) who maintain a central record. This is true for bullying in school, cyber-bullying and bullying outside of school. The School strives to be proactive in identifying situations and occasion where bullying may occur and taking appropriate preventive action. Bullying can also be reported via a dedicated email address beatbullying@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk.

Bullying incidences are recorded centrally in the Junior and Senior Schools in a "bullying log" so that patterns of behaviour can be recognised and acted upon.

Support for the student being bullied

The School will offer emotional support and reassure students that they have done the right thing in telling. The student will be asked for as much detail as possible about the incidences of bullying and if there were any witnesses. In some cases students might be asked to keep a discreet log of events over the next few days to help pinpoint exactly what is happening to them. The student will be asked if they have told their parents and also if they want to talk to anyone else (e.g. school nurse or counsellor) about what is happening to them. The School will also give advice to parents to help them support their child and discuss the issues at home.

The School recognises that being a victim of bullying can have effects on a child long after the bullying has stopped, in particular in terms of low self-esteem and will continue to provide appropriate support when needed.

Investigation

Usually the Form teacher (Junior School) or the Head of Year (Senior School) will lead an investigation into bullying behaviour by seeking confirmation of evidence from witnesses, CCTV (in accordance with the School's [CCTV policy](#)) or other means. The evidence will then be presented to the bully who will be asked to comment on the allegations. The victim's parents will be kept informed of the progress of the investigation and the Head of the Junior or Senior School will be informed. In most cases the parents of the alleged bully will also be contacted as early as possible so that a full picture of the situation and possible issues surrounding it can be understood. DfE guidelines (2017) also reminds schools that misbehaviour which is criminal, or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, should be reported to the police.

Please note: any allegations against staff will be handled as other allegations following guidance in KCSIE September 2016 and the School's safeguarding and complaints procedures.

Working with the bully and applying sanctions

The aims of the sanctions are:

- To help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- To hold the perpetrator to account, getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour
- To 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 similarly.

In applying sanctions, consideration will be given to type and impact of bullying and the possibility that it was unintentional or was in retaliation. The specific circumstances of students with additional needs, for example ADHD or Autism, will also be considered. The outcome will include helping the bully to recognise the consequence of their actions and providing support to enable the attitude and behaviour of the bully to change. Parents will always be informed about sanctions imposed. The sanctions available are set out in [the Behaviour policy](#).

Students who have bullied are also supported to help them to genuinely recognise their bullying behaviour and to integrate more positively into the school community. This might include some specific one to one help from a peer supporter, teacher or counsellor.

Parents who are worried about bullying issues are always welcome to contact the Headmaster, the Head of the Junior School, Pastoral Director or any other member of staff about their concerns. Parents are given guidance

about reporting and acting on bullying as part of their plenary sessions at parents' conferences and other pastoral parent events.

Appendix - Bullying: definitions

Bullying may:

- Be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, spitting)
- Be verbal (e.g. teasing, spreading rumours)
- Be indirect (e.g. excluding someone by not talking to them or leaving them out of a group)
- Be manipulative (e.g. getting someone else to tease or hit someone)
- Involve complicity in someone else's action (e.g. as a bystander who looks the other way)
- Take place in cyberspace, on social network sites, or by sending text/voicemail messages.

Bullying is often hidden. It may involve actions or comments that are racist, sexist, homophobic, or which focus on disabilities. It can focus on someone's gender, religion or culture, make fun of someone because they have special educational needs, or because someone's family circumstances appear unusual, for example they are a carer. It can happen anywhere and at any time.

Physical bullying may involve:

- Hitting or kicking someone
- Jostling, bumping, pushing someone
- Spitting at someone
- Invading someone's body space
- Physically humiliating someone (e.g. by *de-bagging* them)
- Firing darts or pellets at someone
- Taking, damaging or hiding someone's property
- Invading someone's work space or locker.

If physical bullying involves assault, actual bodily harm or wounding it is a **criminal offence**.

Verbal bullying may involve:

- Spoken comments
- Written notes
- Emails or text messages
- Improper use of Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and similar social media
- Phone calls

- The defacing of notices
- Name-calling, spreading rumours, publicly blaming someone for something they haven't done
- Circulating unflattering drawings or photographic images of someone.

Indirect or manipulative bullying may involve:

- Ostracising a fellow student by refusing to sit alongside him/her in class, in the dining hall, etc. (or by moving away when he/she comes and sits down)
- The manipulation of social networks to exclude, marginalise or intimidate individuals
- Publishing photographs or images of someone that are intended to invite mockery or gossip
- Encouraging others to become the agents of physical or verbal bullying against one's intended victim.

Bullying characterised by racism, sexism, homophobia and the exploitation of disability may involve:

- Spoken comments, phone calls, electronic messages or written notes about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some group of students
- Emails, web postings or text messages about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some group of students
- The defacing of notices with snide remarks about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some group of students.

Sexual bullying may involve:

- Bullying that seeks to hurt people by drawing attention to their body shape, hair colour, manner of dress, alleged sexual attractiveness (or lack of it), close friendships (or the absence of intimate relationships in an individual's life)
- Physical action of a sexually intimidating nature (by the invasion of body space, inappropriate touching)
- Spreading rumours about an individual's lifestyle (or the lifestyle of a close friend or relative)
- Spoken comments, written notes, emails, web postings, text messages, phone calls about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some group of students.

Bullying focussed on religion, culture or family background may involve:

- Spoken comments, written notes, emails, web postings or text messages that highlight an individual's religion or culture with the purpose of mocking them for cultural or religious difference
- Pejorative religious or cultural descriptors (e.g. *Muslim terrorist, Pakki shopkeepers*)
- Gossip about an individual's family circumstances, spreading stories about (for example) his/her being adopted, a parent in a same-sex relationship, a relation in the news for negative reasons.

Electronic or cyber-bullying may involve:

- Sending abusive, insulting or malicious text messages or emails
- Posting abusive or malicious messages on websites, using blogs, online or personal polling sites, etc.
- Posting on a social network site facts or photographs/images of someone with the intention to embarrass or belittle them in the eyes of others
- Indulging in malicious or spiteful conversations in chat rooms
- Spreading abuse, malice or scurrilous gossip by other electronic means
- Hacking into social networking sites and removing personal material
- Filming fights or assaults (e.g. *happy slapping* clips) using mobile phone networks or other networks
- Making repeated silent calls to a mobile phone or leaving abusive messages on voicemail
- *Fraping* (using a pseudonym or someone else's telephone or email account) for anonymity when indulging in bullying.

Children may attempt to justify much of this type of behaviour as a practical joke rather than as bullying. This misconception of such activity is not acceptable. In circumstances where bullying actions involve hacking into the computer of another person or some other action by which the bully adopts a different identity online, that act of deception will be judged to compound the significance of the bullying activity. Similarly, online bullying activity that is done anonymously will be judged with greater severity.

Sexting is the term given to the practice of sharing sexually explicit images or text. It is commonplace. 39% of 13-18 year olds do it. 15% of 13-18 year olds think it is OK to do it. Circumstances in which students might sext one another vary. **Where school students under 18 years of age are involved this practice is always illegal.**

The School's response to incidences of sexting is explained in the [Anti-cyberbullying policy](#).

Students must also understand that:

- Sending someone your sexualised image, when you are under 18, is bullying – it is an action with threatening character because the recipient could face severe legal consequences and it causes anxiety

- Passing on a sexualised image of any person under 18 is bullying – it is an action that threatens the recipient and one that demeans the person pictured. It is a cause of anxiety
- Sending a sexualised image to try and initiate a romantic relationship is bullying – it is threatening, offensive action. It causes anxiety.

The consequences of sexting can be serious for the perpetrator. It is illegal in the UK to publish or download a sexual image of someone under 18 even when it is the child (him/herself) who created and posted the material online.

Child protection

Bullying that is so extreme that a child suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm is a Child protection concern and will reported as such.

Signs of bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Parents and teachers should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- Is unwilling to come to school
- Becomes withdrawn or anxious as a weekend or holiday draws to a close
- Expresses anxiety about his/her appearance (hair colour, body shape, clothing etc)
- Changes established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons or support of a local football team, changing their accent or vocabulary)
- Has possessions which go missing or returns home with clothes or books damaged
- Asks for significant increases in pocket money he/she is given
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Becomes excessively eager to please
- Is bullying siblings or other children
- Exhibits diminishing levels of self-confidence
- Chooses the company of adults in preference to that of peers
- Displays repressed body language and poor eye-contact
- Begins stammering or truanting
- Shows reduced interest in personal hygiene or grooming
- Complains of headaches or stomach cramps
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Has difficulty sleeping or experiences nightmares
- Runs away or talks of suicide.