

Charitable Objects of St. Catherine's School

The Objects for which the Company is established are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by providing, conducting, governing, carrying on and maintaining in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a boarding or day school or schools for girls in which the teaching shall be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.



SENIOR SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy was revised and updated in November 2018 in line with the School's Policy Review Schedule which ensures that all policies are kept up to date, and replaces that which was written in 1999 and updated in 2001, 2006, 2010, 2012 and 2014. It also underwent revision in 2008 and further changes were made in 2009 in response to updated ISI regulations at that time. It was also reviewed by School Council in Spring 2016 and feedback taken into account in the previous version, which was revised in September 2016.

This review has also taken into account once again the DfE guidance "Bullying – Don't Suffer in Silence" (2000); DSCF Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools (2007-11) and Every Child Matters (2005-11) which, while no longer directly relevant, remains a very strong set of guidelines; DfE Guidance Preventing and Tackling Bullying: (Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governors (2011, updated in October 2014, and July 2017) and Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the ICT Policy "Guidelines for Use of Digital Technology" and its Appendix 1: Student & Parent Agreement.

Important note: Bullying incidents are treated as a Child Protection/Safeguarding concern where the School has good reason to believe that the child is or may be at risk of significant harm.

A Note of Reassurance

Bullying is a rare occurrence at school but any incident runs counter to the *Traditions of St. Catherine's* as published in the Parents' and Students' Handbooks and the Student Planner. Consequently, reported incidents will be explored very carefully.

Experience has shown that any episode dealt with quickly and in line with this policy has led to a positive outcome. Sensitive handling by staff is necessary, of course, and the support of parents in a 'No blame' approach is very important, too.

The guiding principles of all the adults involved must be to resolve conflict or misunderstanding, amend behaviour patterns appropriately, and help the girls involved to move on. It is an important tenet of the policy that a girl who behaves badly at any particular time is not a bad person. The behaviour can be regretted, corrected, and apologies given that will ensure that she has learned and can grow/develop as a person.

Aims of the Policy

We believe that all members of the school staff and students are entitled to a safe and happy environment in which bullying is not tolerated. Our aim is to prevent bullying by being proactive in encouraging tolerance and understanding amongst staff and pupils alike. Should an incident of bullying occur or a concern be raised, every effort is made to deal with such concerns or incidents immediately.

The topic is addressed in the PSHE (Life Matters) curriculum through discussion and the viewing of videos, through School Assemblies and the Drama curriculum.

Definitions of Bullying

We define bullying as any form of behaviour which threatens or hurts another. It can be **physical**, which includes such actions as hitting, pushing or damaging possessions, **verbal** which involves using any insulting form of behaviour, such as comments relating to discrimination (eg racial, religious, cultural, gender, homophobic, sexual/sexist, colour, size, intelligence, special educational needs, any disability, or because a child is adopted or fostered) or incessant teasing or hostile gestures which include such actions as ignoring, isolating or rejecting another person.

Bullying of individuals is an example of peer on peer abuse and will be investigated thoroughly by the school.

Being a bystander and doing nothing is an example of passive bullying.

Indirect verbal bullying includes spreading rumours, malicious notes or cyber bullying such as: mobile phone text messages, iMessages, photographs and emails or messages via social networking sites or other social media. For specific guidance on responsible use of new technologies, please see the Guidance for the Use of Digital Technologies and the Student & Parent agreement. We recognise that such behaviour could in extreme circumstances lead to psychological damage and even suicide.

Bullying Experienced Outside School

Schools cannot be directly responsible for bullying outside their premises perpetrated by others on our pupils and from which they might suffer. However, our school's anti-bullying policy encourages pupils not to suffer in silence.

We encourage our pupils to report any antisocial behaviour perpetrated by our own pupils outside the school premises, including public transport and on coaches provided by parents to and from school. Pupils are made aware that evidence should be presented fearlessly in order to help stop the bullying. Every effort will be made to safeguard those who report unkind behaviour.

As part of our Life Matters (PSHE) Curriculum we ensure that girls are given advice on how to deal with **any** experiences they have of bullying outside School perpetrated by others who are not members of the St. Catherine's Community. This includes talking to the local community police officer about problems in the locality or offering guidance on how to handle situations they may encounter outside School premises or on public transport.

The School is also happy to advise parents and pupils where they can in such situations.

Countering Bullying in School – Our Strategies

In school, we try to follow the '**No Blame**' approach in the first instance in all cases. The philosophy behind this is that the 'victim' would rather the bullying stopped than someone be punished, and we have found that more girls are willing to come forward when troubled by unkindness because, through the "no blame" approach, they are less likely to fear repercussions.

By following this procedure, we also move away from the notions of "bully" and "victim" to focus on each individual, building greater understanding and empathy between the girls and seeking to find a sustainable way to proceed which upholds our tradition of "*courtesy to everyone, always*", rather than merely punishment.

The "No Blame" approach is such an effective form of mediation that it is often used to resolve minor friendship issues too.

At St. Catherine's, our interpretation of the "No Blame" approach leads us to understand that:

1. It may ultimately be counterproductive to try to get to the bottom of an individual incident though it is rare that we would give up an investigation.
2. Pupils often only disclose what they think teachers want to hear and investigations often place blame on a party.
3. Punishment is often not considered an appropriate method of dealing with the problem as the 'victim' often feels revenge attacks will occur if punishment is to be given.
4. Bullying is not uncommon as a pattern of behaviour between children/children, adults/children and adults/adults, particularly as young people learn how to negotiate difficult or challenging situations.
5. We should try to keep away from the term 'bully' and 'victim' so an image is not built up.

Cyber Bullying

Occasionally, we may find that the unkindness has involved the use of ICT or other means which are worthy of punishment, and the School ensures that it deals with cases of cyberbullying appropriately and with regard to the Rewards and Sanctions Policy. Girls have been advised that first offences will result in a full school detention and any further offences, or a particularly unpleasant first offence, may lead to internal or external suspension.

We also recognise that on rare occasions the no blame approach may not be the most appropriate method for dealing with severe persistent bullying. Consequently, in the event of an unsuccessful outcome with regard to the severity and / or the level of persistence the School would consider imposing strong sanctions such as internal suspension, external suspension and ultimately exclusion in the most extreme of cases.

Staff Awareness

It is essential that teaching and non-teaching staff should be aware of what signs of bullying to look out for, and staff and girls should be familiar with the procedure to follow when incidents of bullying occur.

The school endeavours to reduce the instances of bullying in likely places by:

- using seating plans in lessons, which are changed regularly, and ensuring proper interaction of each girl with a wide variety of classmates;
- ensuring there are staff patrols during lunchbreaks;
- providing a wide range of supervised extra curricular activities;
- providing supervised study both at lunchtime and after school;
- Offering ongoing INSET training for staff together with mentoring for pastoral staff and regular sessions to refresh their awareness of the policy.

Pupil Awareness

The topic is explored in PSHE (Life Matters) in U3 and the 'no-blame' approach is explained.

Bullying indicators

Signs that a girl is being bullied may include:

- reluctance to attend school
- a pattern of minor illnesses
- missing property
- withdrawn behaviour
- signs of distress
- excuses for work not done
- excuses for poor/strange behaviour
- exclusion from groups

Common characteristics of bullies: (but beware of stereotyping)

They may:

- feel inadequate and lack self-esteem
- lack social skills and make demands in a non-aggressive way
- lack ability to empathise with the victim
- feel insecure
- be themselves bullied
- be victims of abuse
- be 'spoilt'
- have more home problems than others

It is also important to be aware that Bullying incidents are minimised when:

- everyone is aware that bullying is a potential problem
- there is a climate of mutual respect for all
- there is a positive climate through all areas of school life including relations with parents
- there are opportunities at school to practise social skills
- pupils are encouraged to 'tell' and that it is acceptable and responsible to do so
- staff are encouraged to treat bullying as a priority
- there is adequate supervision of the children

- there is a culture where kindness is regularly promoted and celebrated by the whole community

Procedure for Staff following a complaint of bullying

The Senior School Housemistress, Head of Boarding, School Housemistresses, Form Tutors or Boarding Housemistresses would normally be involved with the investigation of bullying incidents, though reporting of bullying is a whole school responsibility. For Sixth Form students, the Head of Sixth Form, Sixth Form Boarding Housemistress or Sixth Form Tutors may be involved.

Investigations should be carried out in line with the following procedure which follows the 'No Blame Approach':

- Interview the 'victim' first to find out how she feels. Find out who is involved and anything the 'victim' would want repeated to the alleged bully/group. The 'victim' will invariably be asked to write down her perception of how she is being treated and how she is feeling and encouraged to take her time to do this carefully and fully, externalising the difficult feelings she is experiencing.
- This written statement could be read to the alleged bully/group and could be presented anonymously in the first instance, allowing the alleged bully/group to indicate if they are aware who may be feeling like this and to concede that they know they have been unkind.
- Seek original evidence of notes/texts/e-mails or postings on social networking sites if applicable. Speed is of the essence when trying to acquire screenshots of social media, messaging apps and iMessages. Girls are encouraged through Life Matters lessons, form times and ICT safety lessons to take screen shots of any online bullying or unkindness.
- Interview the alleged 'bully/bullies' and read out the 'victim's' statement and take careful note of their response. If there appears to be more than one girl involved in the bullying of another it is important to separate these girls out so that entirely independent accounts can be gained. It is also advisable to remove all technology from the girl before the interview begins in order to avoid losing any evidence or giving opportunity for the girls to send messages to warn others. The 'bully'/group would know that there will be no punishments but that it is their responsibility to put things right. Their responses should be heard carefully just as were those of the 'victim'.
- Convene a meeting with all involved under the supervision of the member of staff who is overseeing the problem. The 'victim' has the option of attending and it may be helpful to have a friend of hers present (However, the group should not be more than 6-8 people, including staff.) The aim of the meeting is to allow the girls to air their points of view fully in a 'safe' environment. In most cases it would be unwise to expect the 'victim' to meet more than one protagonist at a time.
- Explain the problem and use the statement from the 'victim' about how she feels.
- Suggestions are needed from the 'bully'/group as to what they are going to do next. Ways forward are sought from the 'bully'/group and the 'victim' and a plan of action agreed.

- It is important that in this process, pupils take responsibility for their actions and apologise. Staff should ensure that the 'bully'/group knows that what they did was wrong and that any repetition or retaliation would result in a sanction.
- After an agreed time, meet up with both parties separately or together to find out how things are going and monitor progress. Arrange further meetings if necessary.
- Reassurance and continuing support must be given to the 'victim' and the 'bully' without, for the latter, condoning the action.
- Our Code of Practice is to provide ongoing support and monitoring for staff new to their pastoral posts. When the Anti-Bullying policy is invoked a senior pastoral leader will always mentor a less experienced colleague.
- Written records of these interviews, usually a student/parent discussion form, should be kept and circulated to the relevant staff, e.g. Tutor/Housemistress/Boarding Housemistress/Head of Boarding and the Senior Management Team. They should be filed with any evidence which was acquired in the initial stages of the investigation. If necessary, a wider group of staff should be informed.
- A register of incidents of bullying is kept by the Senior Housemistress.
- Each case will be addressed according to the individual circumstances.
- Parents of all parties should be informed of the progress of this procedure if not already involved and contact sheets be written.

Procedure for girls either observing bullying or being bullied

A girl who feels that she is being bullied should report it to her Form Tutor, Housemistress or any member of staff she feels she can approach. Girls must also remember that being a bystander and doing nothing is passive bullying. Any pupil observing an incident should report the matter to her own Tutor/Housemistress/Boarding Housemistress or any other member of staff who will then take the appropriate action. Remember that those bullying may also need help with whatever is causing them to behave in this way – as listed above – and to stop the behaviour.

Procedure for Parents who feel that their daughter is being bullied

Parents receive a copy of the School's Anti-Bullying Policy in the Parents' Handbook and it is also published in the Students' Handbook and on our website. It is also fully discussed with the girls in PSHE (Life Matters). They, or their daughters, are asked to notify school immediately if they are concerned that she is being bullied. They should report the incident to their daughter's School Housemistress or, if it is a boarding matter, to the relevant Boarding Housemistress, or to the Senior School Housemistress or the Head of Boarding. The appropriate measures will then be taken as set out in this policy.

Parents are asked to provide any material evidence of bullying that has come into their possession and to trust the School to use it discreetly to address the issues in line with the policy for the good of all.

THIS POLICY WILL BE REVIEWED IN 2019/20

Signature of Senior School Headmistress:

Mrs Alice Phillips

Date: