

D'OVERBROECK'S COLLEGE

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Rationale

A fundamental tenet of the College's ethos is a commitment to creating a strong sense of community and an environment in which all students can feel happy, safe, valued and motivated to realize their full potential, personally as well as academically. Bullying in any form is fundamentally at odds with this ethos.

We are proud of the fact that incidents of bullying have traditionally been very few and far between here, something which was confirmed in the findings of our most recent Boarding Standards Inspection carried out by Ofsted in February 2009. We will continue to do all in our power to ensure that this remains the case. This policy affirms our commitment to:

- Preventing bullying – by continuing to maintain a culture which does not present fertile ground for bullying in any form to flourish; and
- Countering bullying when it does occur – by ensuring that, when they do occur, all instances of bullying are dealt with promptly, robustly and consistently.

Definitions

The DCSF document 'Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools' gives one definition of bullying as being 'behaviour by an individual or a group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'.

Our own definition goes a little further in seeing bullying as any repetitive action or behaviour that hurts, threatens or frightens anyone else.

Most definitions of bullying consider it to be:

- deliberately hurtful (including aggression)
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult for victims to resist

Bullying can manifest itself in a variety of forms, including:

- Physical (e.g. pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching, taking or damaging belongings.)
- Verbal (name-calling, graffiti, taunts, constant teasing, making disparaging or offensive remarks, sarcasm)
- Emotional (tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, spreading rumours, ignoring, isolating)
- Cyber-bullying - which, strictly speaking, is not so much a form of bullying as a vehicle through which emotional, psychological or verbal bullying can be conducted through media such as social networking and instant messaging websites, mobile phones, text messages, email – all of which may be used to transmit offensive or embarrassing messages and photographs.

Bullying may centre on a range of issues, the commonest being:

- Race, religion or culture
- Disability
- Special educational needs
- Appearance and health conditions
- Sexual, sexist or homophobic issues (unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, teasing, etc.)

Signs And Indicators

Early signs of bullying may include:

- erratic attendance
- deterioration of work / diminishing achievement
- frequent reporting of illness
- isolation and / or withdrawal
- appearing ill at ease in the school environment or in the company of peers
- physical problems such as recurring headaches and stomach aches
- signs of depression
- desire to remain with adults

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Preventing and Countering Bullying

Principles

- Bullying in any form will not be tolerated within the College.
- We are committed to the prevention of bullying through the promotion of the College's ethos of mutual respect and collective responsibility.
- Where bullying does occur, our response will be informed by an awareness of the importance of reacting to incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent manner; the need to safeguard and support the pupil who has experienced bullying; the importance of applying appropriate disciplinary sanctions to those responsible for bullying and of ensuring that they learn from the experience.
- Sanctions applied to those who are responsible for bullying should have a number of purposes:
to make clear to the perpetrator that his or her actions are unacceptable; to deter him or her from repeating that behaviour; to ensure that they learn from the experience; and to signal to other pupils that bullying is unacceptable, and to deter them from resorting to it.
- Sanctions must be fair, proportionate and consistent. They must also take into account any special educational needs. Acts of bullying are no more acceptable from pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) than they are from anyone else, and this principle must be clear at all times. However, the decision on what sanctions to apply in the case of a pupil with LDD must take into account the nature of the pupil's learning difficulty or disability and the extent to which s/he is able to understand and is in control of what s/he is doing.

- Bullying is not always easy to detect. It is important that students feel able to recognise it and to report it. We promote a culture of open and frank communication, and we encourage our students to report any incidence of bullying immediately to a member of staff.
- We are a small community and any harm to an individual harms the whole. Consequently, it is everybody's responsibility to put a stop to any form of bullying by intervening or reporting suspected incidents.
- Any incident or allegation of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately and thoroughly (unless there is a suspected child protection issue, in which different guidance applies).
- Action will be taken as appropriate. We do not lay down hard and fast rules since all incidents and all individuals are different. We will, however, involve parents as necessary and ensure that any ongoing situation is carefully monitored.
- No school can be effective without parental help. We encourage parents to support our anti-bullying stance and to become involved in the resolution of problems if and when they arise.
- We are aware that bullying usually has a cause and that bullies can themselves be victims. We will endeavour to achieve outcomes which benefit both parties. However, failing a positive response from the 'bully', we will put the needs of the 'victim' first.

Procedures and guidance

This section sets out actions to be taken by the College, staff and pupils. It also offers some guidance for parents.

A. The College

We recognise that, although very rare in this school, bullying can happen and needs to be addressed by the whole community. Consequently, we will:

- Take bullying seriously and ascertain the full facts of any incident.
- Do all we can to support any pupil who is being bullied.
- Help bullies to change their behaviour.
- Act firmly and promptly where bullying is identified, matching action to need since all cases are different. This may involve some or all of the following:
 - a. meeting those concerned individually
 - b. using peer group pressure actively to discourage bullying
 - c. involving parents at an early stage
 - d. helping children to develop positive strategies and assertion
 - e. applying sanctions as appropriate
- Be equally concerned about any bullying that may occur on the way to and from school.
- Record incidents of bullying in a consistent way that allows for monitoring of behaviour.
- Follow up bullying incidents by appropriate monitoring.
- Promote an atmosphere in which pupils will feel free to report any instances of bullying and provide opportunities for children to discuss bullying issues and policy in age-appropriate contexts such as PSHE, school council and other contexts such as drama and poetry.

- Raise awareness about bullying and the anti-bullying policy through the curriculum where younger pupils are concerned.
- Help to avoid bullying through teaching pupils how to manage their relationships with others.
- Evaluate the school environment to ensure that it does not facilitate bullying.

B. The Staff

Procedures to be followed:

- Staff must be alert to signs of bullying and act promptly where there is a concern.
- All reports must be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly (unless there is a suspicion of anything that might constitute child abuse. In such cases, allegations must be reported immediately to one of the staff with designated responsibility for child protection. No investigation to be carried out by members of staff.)
- If a bullying incident is witnessed, the victim should be removed from the situation immediately.
- In some instances, the first-contact teacher may feel confident to deal with the situation there and then. This is acceptable, so long as it is remembered that in any case of bullying senior staff must be kept informed from the outset. If in doubt, please seek assistance.
- Any investigating member of staff should be able to invest sufficient time to listen to both sides of the argument and to avoid rushed responses. At the same time, do not leave pupils at risk or with the impression that nothing is being done. Remember that bullying usually has a cause and that bullies can themselves be victims.
- Provide support and understanding for the victim. Avoid the 'natural victim' syndrome and the idea that the victim is somehow to blame. When you need to pursue your investigations, involve other pupils and staff to ensure that he or she does not feel isolated or alone. Make sure the victim is aware of any course of action you decide to take.
- Be sensitive to issues of confidentiality and to the needs of all the children involved.
- Ensure that you have all the facts of the case and speak to relevant witnesses. Ensure also that the bully understands that he or she must take responsibility for his or her actions, that he or she knows the seriousness of the offence, and that any repetition will invite further action.
- Do not deal with bullying by taking a bullying approach.
- Full records should be kept of incidents, investigations and final outcomes by staff involved in dealing with situations and by form teachers and copies placed in student files. Parents will be involved as necessary by senior staff with pastoral responsibilities.
- The College will endeavour to deal with any issue of bullying in a positive manner that will achieve outcomes that are constructive for both parties. Although peer mediation, for instance, is not applicable to all situations, it is non-aggressive and positive and has worked in particular circumstances. Alternatively a range of sanctions can be employed from verbal warnings and letters of apology to informing and interviewing of parents, reduction in privileges, detention, suspension or expulsion.
- When following any course of action, it is imperative that staff watch out for 'comeback' on the victim. Bullies must be shown that this cannot happen, even to the extent of being warned

that if it should happen, their school career itself could be in jeopardy. Staff may need to maintain a 'watching brief' for a considerable time.

C. The Pupils

Bullying is any behaviour which causes someone else to feel frightened or hurt or humiliated; it should have no place in our school.

- Everyone has the right to be safe and happy whilst at school and on the way to and from school.
- Everyone has the right to enjoy the best possible conditions to make the best of their talents whilst at school.
- No-one should have to suffer name calling, teasing, taunts or physical violence. No-one should feel isolated or excluded. No-one should have their property interfered with.

In short, you should not have to suffer in any way as a result of the words or actions of someone else. It is the responsibility of the whole school community, staff and students, to make sure that it does not happen and, if it does, to put a stop to it.

Prevention is better than cure. We can help to maintain a bully-free school by:

- showing respect for each other whatever our differences may be
- dealing fairly with each other
- avoiding actions such as name calling or 'borrowing' pens or equipment without permission
- avoiding 'teasing'. One person's 'joke' is another person's misery
- going out of our way to involve new or shy students in our activities
- noticing when bullying is happening and speaking out against it.

If you feel you are being bullied...

- Do not put up with bullying. You have a right to be happy and to be treated with respect as an individual.
- Get away from the bullying situation as quickly and calmly as you can.
- Tell a trusted adult about what is happening. Tell your parents, your form teacher or any other member of staff you feel particularly comfortable talking to. You will be listened to and something will be done.
- When talking to an adult about bullying, try to be clear about the detail: what happened? When and where did it happen? Who was involved? Who saw it happening? If something similar had happened before, how often and when did it happen?
- The school will make sure that the situation is sorted out - and that you will not suffer any comeback.
- You can also be sure that anything personal you may tell us will remain confidential provided no one's personal safety is likely to be at risk as a result.

If you witness bullying...

If you witness an incident of bullying and feel confident enough, intervene and tell the bully that what is happening is wrong.

At the very least you must tell someone about what is happening- duty staff; form teacher; counsellor – anyone who you feel will be able to help. If you do not tell someone, then you are encouraging the bullying to go on. It is very important to stamp out bullying- so tell someone about it!

- Don't stand by and watch – get help.
- Show that you and your friends disapprove.
- If you know that bullying is happening, tell a trusted adult. This is not telling tales – the victims may be too scared or lonely to tell. You will be listened to seriously and in confidence.
- Avoid teasing or personal remarks yourself: imagine how *you* might feel.

D. The Parents

We would offer the following advice for parents:

- It is always a good idea to take an active interest in your child's social life and chat about friends and activities inside and out of school. As well as keeping up to date with your child's friendships you may well learn of disagreements or difficulties.
- Watch for signs of unhappiness in your children such as an unwillingness to go to school in the morning, recurrent headaches, stomach aches for which there is no apparent physical explanation, etc.
- There are many reasons why a pupil might be unsettled at school, but bullying is a possibility. If you think the child is being bullied, please let us know immediately and ask for a meeting with a senior member of staff. You can be sure that we will treat the issue very seriously and investigate it thoroughly.
- Do allow us some time to do so. You will be kept apprised of developments. Equally, we would ask you to keep us informed of your child's demeanour and behaviour outside of school to help us judge the success of our response. It is also important that the pupil is aware that the same policy towards the situation is being implemented both at school and at home.
- It is our aim to resolve the situation so that the bullying stops. Should you have continuing concerns, please do not hesitate to contact, as appropriate, the Head of Leckford Place, the Director of the ISC, the Academic Head of Sixth Form or the Principal.

Parentline Plus

Parentline Plus is a national charity that offers help for parents on a very wide range of issues. Bullying is one of them.

Parentline Plus operates a 24-hour helpline which is there to offer advice and to help children and parents deal with bullying. The helpline is operated by trained volunteers and calls are free and confidential.

The Parentline Plus helpline may be reached on 0808 800 2222.

Further information on issues relating to bullying can also be found on the **Parentline Plus website** www.parentlineplus.org.uk.

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