



## Anti-Bullying Policy

***This policy also applies to the Early Years' Foundation Stage and Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014***

### **Aim of the policy**

St Margaret's School is a small community which places respect for and kindness to others at the heart of its commitment to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for learning. Bullying of any kind is anathema to us and will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention, in the knowledge that these reports will always be taken seriously.

We aim to:

- Have a clear and agreed understanding of what constitutes bullying.
- Provide guidelines to help victims of bullying and bullies to be identified.
- Establish a set of procedures to be followed if bullying is suspected.
- Ensure that pupils, staff (both teaching and support staff) and parents are aware of these guidelines and procedures, and to raise staff awareness through training.
- Provide suitable material for use in lessons and assemblies; provide disciplinary guidelines to be used in response to an incident.

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as a persistent, deliberate attempt to hurt, humiliate or intimidate.

Bullying can take the following forms:

- Hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual) means.
- Verbal bullying (including electronic media like chat room and SMS messages).
- Emotional bullying (by excluding someone, tormenting them or spreading malicious rumours about them).
- Manipulating other people to tease or torment someone.
- Complicity by endorsement or support of bullying behaviour.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racist, homophobic, religious or cultural and which focus on special educational needs, disabilities or physical attributes (such as their appearance, hair colour or body shape), or a person's sexuality.

Using ICT in these ways is known as 'cyber-bullying'. It can involve using mobile phones, social networking sites, like Facebook and Twitter, emails, text and SMS messages, voicemails and the posting of photographs, video clips and other electronic media on the internet.

### **Who is a bully?**

We must beware of stereotypes - people bully for different reasons. We stress that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable not the person - if the behaviour changes, then the person will find it easier to establish more lasting relationships, based on mutual respect. Some people bully because they feel unhappy about themselves or lack the skills to make good friends. A girl may temporarily become a bully as a result of some traumatic event such as a family break up.

Bullies are often bullied themselves and need our support. We deplore bullying, but we do not demonise bullies.



## Who is a victim?

We should also avoid preconceptions about who may be bullied. Bullies pick on the vulnerable, but vulnerability can take many forms. Signs that a girl is being bullied may include:

- Academic under-achievement
- Absenteeism
- Crying easily
- Sitting alone in lessons or at lunchtime
- Opting out
- Clinginess
- Losing books, pens, money etc
- Becoming aggressive or disruptive
- Becoming withdrawn or depressed
- Suffering from headaches, stomach ache, anxiety, irritability
- Fear of using the internet or mobile phone
- Giving improbable excuses for any of the above

Bullying can cause serious psychological damage and even suicide. Victims may see themselves as inadequate and friendless, and may begin to feel they deserve the treatment they are getting.

## What to do

The way to stamp out bullying is for everyone to be aware of what it is, and for no one to keep silent if they know or believe it to be happening. An incident that makes you feel unhappy or frightened may not be due to bullying, but it needs to be reported and dealt with as soon as possible. Early intervention can prevent future bullying.

### If you think you are being bullied,

#### Do:

- Try to stay calm and look as confident as you can and get away from the situation as quickly as possible.
- Tell a member of staff what has happened straight away.
- If you feel uncomfortable telling a member of staff on your own, ask a friend to go with you.
- Be clear about what has happened and where, how often it has happened and who was involved.
- If you experience any kind of cyber bullying, you should keep records of messages. If you don't know who the bully is or they do not go to St Margaret's, encourage your parents to contact the police then notify the school. If you believe the bully is a pupil at St Margaret's, let your Form Tutor, or the Deputy Head, or the Principal, or any teacher know.

#### Don't:

- Believe it if the bully says that bad things will happen if you speak out, or that no one will believe you.
- Think that it is your fault that you are being bullied.



## **If you are a pupil who witnesses someone being bullied,**

### **Do:**

- Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that what is happening to them is wrong.
- Encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself.
- Accompany the victim to a trusted adult, or suggest that you talk to their form teacher on their behalf.
- If you are a member of staff who witnesses an incident of bullying or it is reported to you, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- Inform the pupil's form teacher as soon as possible.
- If the incident is not quickly resolved, mention of the incident should also be made to the Principal and Deputy Head in case of telephone calls from the parents. Other members of staff should be informed, where appropriate.

### **Don't:**

- Ignore it, because it is "none of your business".
- Think that reporting what you have seen or heard is "telling tales".

## **What happens next?**

The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be carefully investigated and the bullying stopped quickly. In serious cases parents will be informed and invited to a meeting to discuss the problem.

Once the full facts are known, the precise response to any particular incident will depend on a variety of factors, including its severity and character, the age of the pupils concerned, and the previous behaviour of the perpetrator. In most cases, there will be four main elements to our response:

- The bully will learn that her actions have consequences. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed, depending on the individual circumstances of the case, in accordance with our Discipline and Behaviour Policy. In the most serious cases, suspension or even exclusion may be considered.
- The girls concerned will, if possible, be reconciled. The bully will be expected to apologise and, in cases of theft or damage to property, where possible make restitution.
- All girls concerned will be offered support. The victim will be helped to regain her confidence and be reassured that what has happened was not her fault. The perpetrator will be helped to understand the distress she has caused and guided towards learning better ways to handle interpersonal relationships.
- The behaviour of the bully will be monitored, so that any repetition of bullying can be swiftly dealt with and improvements reinforced.
- If there is evidence that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the bullying incident should be treated as a Child Protection Issue and reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- If there is evidence that the incident is of such gravity that a criminal offence may have been committed, such as a threat to harm or public defamation, it may be necessary to contact Children's Services or the Police.



## **Record keeping**

In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded in the bullying book. The book will be kept in the Principal's room so that confidentiality can be maintained and a full picture of related incidents can be seen. The following information should be recorded:

- The names of the pupils involved or alleged to have been involved in the incident.
- Where and when the incident happened or was alleged to have happened.
- What happened or was alleged to have happened.
- What action was taken.
- How it was followed up.

## **Publication**

This policy is available to all parents and prospective parents of pupils at the school on request and is also available from our website.