

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff Responsible	Assistant Head (Pastoral)
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
Date of Last Review	September 2025
Date of Next Review	September 2026

The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

AIMS

- To demonstrate that the school takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated;
- To take measures to prevent all forms of bullying in the school and on off-site activities;
- To support everyone in actions to identify bullying and protect those who have been involved;
- To demonstrate to all that the safety and happiness of students is enhanced by dealing positively with bullying;
- To promote an environment where to tell someone about bullying is **not** an offence and students feel safe and confident to do so;
- To promote self-esteem and positive attitudes in students so that they feel better equipped to challenge bullying behaviour;

LEGAL REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- SEND Regulations 2014
- SEND Code of Practice 2015
- KCSIE 2025
- Department for Education – Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017
- Department for Education – Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence 2002

RELATED POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- PSHCEE Policy

AIMS OF THE POLICY

This policy aims to establish a culture that actively promotes and safeguards the welfare of students at the School; maintains a positive and supportive culture among all students and staff throughout the School; deters bullying behaviour, detects it when it occurs, and deals with it on a case-by-case basis by counselling and / or disciplinary sanctions; and complies with the School's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

"Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose." (stopbullying.gov.org)

A more child-friendly definition of bullying might be:

Bullying is when you keep picking on someone because you think you're cooler, smarter, stronger or better than them.

Students, staff and parents may be perpetrators or victims of bullying. Bullying can take many forms. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical (e.g. pushing, hitting, kicking, theft of or hiding belongings, invasion of personal space)
- Verbal (including prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying such as aggressive name calling, teasing, insulting remarks for example on race, sexual orientation, religion, cultural differences, disability or gender, unkind notes)
- Social or psychological (spreading nasty stories or untrue rumours, exclusion from a group, staring in an intimidating manner)
- Online, phone calls, emails, SMS, social networking, videoing, photography
- Inter-relationship bullying between classes/groups

Racist Bullying

This type of bullying is when an individual is targeted for representing a group based on colour, background, culture or religion. This type of bullying can take the following forms:

Name calling, racist jokes, graffiti, offensive mimicry, physical threats/attacks, provocative use of badges, racist literature, inciting others to be racist and refusing to co-operate in lessons or extracurricular activities with others.

We recognise that racist bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

Homophobic and Gender Based Bullying

Students do not necessarily have to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender fluid to experience bullying around sexual orientation or gender. This type of bullying can take the form of any of the aforementioned behaviour.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Bullying

This type of bullying can take the form of any of the aforementioned behaviour.

CYBER-BULLYING – DEFINITION

Mr Bill Belsey, the creator of the website: <http://www.cyberbullying.org/> defined this in the following terms:

“Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.”

Cyber-bullying can involve but is not limited to social networking sites, emails and mobile phones.

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour;

- Unwillingness to return to school;
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing or are damaged;
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self-confidence;

- Frequent visits to the Medical/Student Room with symptoms such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, or late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping, or experiencing nightmares;
- Talking of self-harm, suicide or running away.

ANTI-BULLYING CULTURE

St Mary's School values the positive relationships that are encouraged by the School and embodied in our Behaviour Code and SMS Spirit TAKE CARE Student Charter, which have been drawn up by the students themselves and the STAGS guidance in the Preparatory School.

Everyone in the School community is equally important and has the right to feel comfortable, happy and valued. Bullying can be prevented if all members of St Mary's work together and respect each other. This complies with the spirit of the European Convention on Human Rights and with the active promotion of values at the School.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up' as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children. (KCSIE, 2025). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required. See Appendix One of our Child Protection policy for further details.

Every allegation of bullying, including cyber-bullying and bullying outside the school, will be taken seriously. We acknowledge the negative psychological effects that bullying can have on individuals and the learning environment, and that bullying can cause, in extreme cases, suicide. We strive to create an inclusive environment free from fear where students can openly discuss the cause and nature of their bullying, without fear of further bullying or discrimination. Bullying is unacceptable in this school and will not be tolerated. We recognise that to condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures.

A person may be vulnerable to bullying because of their age, physical appearance, nationality, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture or disability, or because she is new in the School, appears to be uncertain or has no friends. They may also become a target because of an irrational decision by a bully.

The School also recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside the school which spills over into the school. The school will do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate any such bullying. Bullying is handled with understanding and fairness at St. Mary's. We aim to change the attitude of bullies and guide them to more acceptable behaviour.

SCHOOL ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Staff and students are expected to treat each other with tolerance and respect. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure, whatever the circumstances, that no-one becomes a victim of bullying. All cases of bullying must be reported to a member of staff as soon as possible, perhaps through a parent or Senior girl. Because bullying is unacceptable, any incidents are regarded as a serious matter. Incidents will always be investigated and each case is dealt with on an individual basis. Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and

civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation) will be taken particularly seriously.

THE GOVERNING BODY

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of students at the School, ensuring that those in leadership positions actively promote student well-being. This includes ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and implemented effectively to minimise the risk of bullying at the School so that students feel safe and secure; and deal swiftly with allegations of bullying at the School so that students feel confident that all incidents will be dealt with appropriately.

THE DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Assistant Head (Pastoral) liaises with the Head over all anti-bullying cases and sanctions. The DSL reports termly to the nominated governor for child protection.

THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that:

- All staff know to challenge racist or homophobic language, acknowledge diversity and difference and offers confidential support for students bullied on the grounds of their sexuality or who are sexually harassed
- There is provision of a range of co-curricular activities to engage students and to help them create positive relationships with peers and feel part of the community
- All new staff will be provided with induction training that includes the child protection and safeguarding policy (including the policy and procedures to deal with child-on-child abuse), the role and identity of the DSL(s) and any DDSL, the Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions policy (including measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- There is regular staff training and support for all staff to raise awareness, including protected characteristics and online safety
- Active supervision helps to prevent bullying: staff supervision begins from 8.00 am (see supervision policy with SLT on duty and includes break and lunch time. After school, students are supervised either in Supervised Prep, The Hub, or registered in co-curricular clubs
- An anti-bullying log is kept identifying any patterns or repeated behaviour, and so that if required, appropriate actions can be taken on a year group/whole school level to promote a positive culture of respect and tolerance, where all students are free from fear
- The effectiveness of this policy is reviewed, in part, via student voice for example in anonymous surveys and PHSCEE discussions
- An anti-bullying programme will form part of the PSHCEE curriculum, pastoral programme and assemblies (Nursery -Y13), Circle Time and pastoral sessions (Prep School), which raise awareness, promote self-esteem and refer to the anti-bullying policy in age-appropriate terms. Other vehicles such as Drama lessons and projects will also be used
- The Behaviour Code and SMS Spirit TAKE CARE Student Charter will be available in every form room

ALL STAFF

All staff should:

- Know the policy and procedures and deal with incidents according to the procedures;
- Adhere to the staff code of conduct

- Be observant and ask students what is happening to them
- Never let any incidences of bullying pass by unreported, whether on-site or during an off-site activity
- Respond quickly and sensitively to any disclosure of bullying by offering advice, support and reassurance to the alleged victim. The member of staff should:
 - listen carefully and keep an open mind
 - not ask leading question
 - reassure the student but not give a guarantee of confidentiality

Staff should use seating plans up to and including KS3 and they should be used where appropriate in KS4 and KS5.

THE PASTORAL TEAM

The pastoral team will ensure that:

- Discussions surrounding bullying issues will take place in form times in the Senior House;
- Students are aware of safe places to go e.g. School library, LEAPS, Student Room and Wellbeing Pod;
- Pastoral displays highlight the importance of treating others with fairness and respect;
- Students are encouraged to use the Pastoral system and confide in Form Tutors or Senior Staff in Senior House and Class Teachers, Teaching Assistants or Senior Staff in the Early Years and Prep School;
- School assemblies address the issue including Anti-Bullying Week;
- Academic and co-curricular successes are celebrated in all types of assemblies and feedback in lessons;
- Kindness and empathy are promoted as part of SMS Spirit and praise points awarded;
- Students and staff understand and use the Girls on Board approach to deal with friendship issues and to equip the students with the skills to resolve difficulties appropriately rather than escalating them;
- A 'buddy' system is used to support new students to the School in Years 8-13 and in Year 7 when in-year entrance occurs, to help them make friends and settle in to the school
- The Sixth Form prefect system in Senior House, enables the sixth form to work with students in our prep school and encourages them to become a role model in positive relationships, and SMS Spirit virtues;
- Student Voice box in both Prep and Senior House

The School recognises that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions are three times more likely to be abused by their peers, can face additional safeguarding challenges, and, may be more prone to peer-on-peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children. The School will consider extra pastoral support for those children such as LEAPS, ELSA, or mentoring from the Head of Year. The School also recognises that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident of abuse because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.

STUDENTS

A student who is being bullied, or who is worried about another student being bullied, should tell someone without delay and can do so in several ways. They can:

- Tell their parents, Form Tutor or any member of staff or volunteer at the School or responsible older student;

- contact Childline (0800 1111)

Students are encouraged to be upstanders to prevent further incidents and confide in Form Tutors and Senior Staff in Senior House and Class Teachers, Teaching Assistants or Senior Staff in the Prep Department. Students must keep a record of any bullying via text, email or messaging services. All reported incidents will be treated seriously and fully investigated; all parties will be heard and given appropriate support.

Students are encouraged to keep a record of any bullying via text, email or messaging services. They will be informed about best practice for dealing with online communication via their PSHCEE lessons and Computer Science lessons.

PARENTS

If you suspect your daughter is being bullied you should:

- Listen and try to provide an open, non-judgemental environment for your daughter to talk about her problem;
- Tell her you understand and give her support. Remind her she has the right to feel safe;
- Suggest your daughter speak to a member of staff;
- If the problem seems particularly serious, or ongoing, contact the Form Tutor, Head of Year or Head of Section immediately;
- Parents should realise that actions such as contacting the parent of the alleged bully and discussing the matter with other parents can inflame the situation;
- Contact the school straight away if the issue continues to be unresolved;
- Trust the school to carry through actions that will solve the problem;
- Youth Produced Sexual Imagery – nudes and semi nudes (also known as sexting) – do not ask to look at the image. If you are shown the image, close the device immediately; do not forward the image onto someone or via email or to another device. You can then contact School or the Police (101) and ask for further advice.

CYBER-BULLYING – PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

In addition to the preventative measures described above, St Mary's School:

- Expects all students to adhere to its Acceptable Use Policy. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and ICT support, the DSL will check student use. Teachers will monitor students' use of devices within lessons. We will impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet;
- Issues all students with their own personal school email address. Access to websites or personal email not permitted except where the use of their device depends on this up to Year 11.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber-bullying in Computer Science and PSHCEE lessons, which covers blocking and removing contacts from "buddy" lists;
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe and private;
- In Senior House, mobile phones are handed in at registration each morning in Years 7-11, stored securely in the School Office and returned at afternoon registration;
- No filming or photographing of any girl or member of staff is allowed except at the express direction of a member of staff and then with a clear educational purpose;

In addition, St Mary's School raises Parents' Awareness of online safety and cyberbullying, including how to respond through newsletters, dedicated resources on firefly and parents' seminars.

Further details are given in our Students use of ICT, Mobile Phones and other Electronic Devices Policy and in our Internet Safety Policy. All mobile phones will be kept switched off in the EYFS setting.

PROCEDURES TO DEAL WITH BULLYING

All reported incidents will be treated seriously and fully investigated; all parties will be heard and given appropriate support. If the alleged bullying behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, the matter should be reported in accordance with the School's Safeguarding Protection policy and procedures before further investigation is carried out.

Senior House

If a member of staff witnesses overt bullying, as defined above, the incident should immediately be reported to the appropriate Head of Year/Section or DSL. A member of staff who is informed of any bullying should report the incident to the appropriate Head of Year/Section or DSL who will then investigate by contacting all the parties concerned and document the incident (see procedure in Appendix A). If the incident is of a serious nature or repeated, the Head will be informed immediately. Any incidents involving members of staff should be reported directly to the Head. Written records of all proceedings should be kept in school files to enable patterns to be identified. All bullying is recorded on a central register. Incidents are kept on the student's central file/CPOMS.

Prep School

If any member of staff or School helper witnesses overt bullying as defined above, the incident should immediately be reported to the class teacher, who should then inform a senior member of staff. The senior member of staff will speak with the girls involved and take written notes of the incident. If the incident is of a serious nature, the Head of the Prep School will be informed immediately. Any incidents involving members of staff should be reported directly to the Head. A written log of all such incidents is kept by the Deputy Head and the Head of Prep and incidents are kept on the student's file/CPOMS.

BULLYING INCIDENT RESPONSE

When bullying is found to have occurred appropriate action will be taken to:

- Ensure the immediate safety and well-being of those involved;
- Provide ongoing support and counselling for those involved;
- Inform the individual who has been responsible for the bullying that this behaviour is unacceptable;
- Counsel the individual to understand the implications of bullying;
- Establish whether further support and/or counselling are required to rectify behaviour;
- Advise the individual of the consequences of further bullying;
- Apply the appropriate sanctions to the relevant parties according to the behaviour policy;
- Inform the parents;
- Follow up with the individuals to provide any necessary support.

Please see the "Anti-Bullying Procedures" appendix at the end of this document.

In cases of bullying, the School will work in partnership with parents and, if there is reasonable cause to believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm with external agencies such as children's social care and/or police.

SANCTIONS

Parents will be invited in to discuss the matter with their child present and appropriate action will be taken. Disciplinary sanctions may include a whole school or Head's detention, formal warning and contract of good behaviour, 'community service' or suspension, removal of privileges or specific supervision and there may also be a requirement that the bully has specialist counselling. In serious or repeated incidents, a disciplinary hearing will be held which could result in suspension or expulsion.

Not all bullying behaviour is deliberate or intended to hurt. Some individuals may see their hurtful conduct as "teasing" or "a game" or "for the good of" the other person. These forms of bullying are equally unacceptable but may not be malicious and can often be corrected quickly with advice and without disciplinary sanctions.

In all cases, both the victim and the perpetrator will be monitored until such a time as both parties are confident the situation is resolved to the School's satisfaction.

In all instances, both victim and perpetrator will receive support through the pastoral system; the former to ensure the restoration of self-confidence and in the case of the latter to investigate underlying causes of and ensure a fuller understanding of their behaviour.

APPENDIX A - ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES

1. Report made. This may come from staff, parents, or students.
2. In case of isolated incident, a record will be made, and any evolving patterns identified.
3. Where bullying is suspected, students, including witnesses, will provide separate written accounts of incidents.
4. An investigation will be conducted by the pastoral team.
5. Students will be interviewed with a member of the pastoral team.

At this stage the investigation by the pastoral team will consider:

- the nature of the incident(s) - physical? verbal? exclusionary? Etc
 - is it a "one-off" incident involving an individual or a group?
 - is it part of a pattern of behaviour by an individual or a group?
 - has physical injury been caused? Who should be informed? Head? Parents? The School's Designated Safeguarding Lead? Children's Social Care? The police?
 - can the alleged bully be questioned without disclosing the victim's identity?
 - what is the likely outcome if the allegation proves to be correct?
6. Parents will be informed if appropriate.
 7. Pastoral support/counselling will be offered to victim if needed.
 8. A strategy will be devised according to situation, including use of agreements e.g. agreement between the students and member of staff about they will behave going forwards, and increased monitoring or supervision of technology (e.g. School's Internet or email) if cyberbullying.
 9. The perpetrator interviewed with parents
 - i) Sanctions agreed and counselling offered
 - ii) Support strategies in school identified and implementedIn case of groups involved in bullying a mediator may be used.
 10. If a child has suffered or likely to suffer significant harm the DSL will be involved and liaise with external agencies such as children's social care and/or police.
 11. Additional monitoring will continue for as long as necessary after the bullying has been dealt with. This may include:
 - sharing information with some or all colleagues so that they may be alert to the need to monitor certain students closely;
 - ongoing counselling and support;
 - informing relevant teaching staff to support monitoring;
 - liaising with student and/or parents.