



S22 POLICY ON BULLYING Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

Schools have a legal duty under the Education and Inspections Act (2006) to draw up procedures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils. The following policy has regard to this legislation, and to the recent government guidance: *'Safe to Learn – embedding anti-bullying work in schools'* and *'Preventing and Tackling Bullying – advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies 2014'* and *'Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff 2014'*

Bullying is unacceptable anti-social behaviour which affects everyone in the community. At Westminster Abbey Choir School, we try to promote respect and care for one another but, as in any institution, there is always a risk that bullying will occur. The aim of the School's anti-bullying policy is therefore to foster a supportive, caring and safe environment in which pupils and staff can live and learn/work without fear of being bullied, and thus be able fully to benefit from the opportunities available at the School. To this end, it will be made quite clear to the whole community of pupils, staff and parents that bullying is unacceptable and that any instance of it will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter, investigated and dealt with appropriately. We will work with bullies so that they are held to account for their actions and accept responsibility for the harm they have caused. We will also give them support in seeking to amend their behaviour. This anti-bullying policy will dovetail with the School's policy on general behaviour.

What is bullying?

Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem; and destroys their sense of security. Once a victim is sensitised, a threatening look alone may reinforce their fearfulness. Bullying – which is often fuelled by ignorance or prejudice - may take the form of verbal, physical or emotional abuse or harassment. A victim may be picked on for a whole variety of reasons – or for no obvious reason at all. Bullying has the effect of hurting, threatening or frightening another person; it is oppressive, coercive and an abuse of power. It is often planned and secret, and increasingly may take place via the internet (cyber bullying) or with other forms of electronic communication. Above all, bullying tends to be systematic rather than a one-off act: thus a person is repeatedly the target of taunts or physical attacks; or, in the case of so-called indirect bullying, rumours and social exclusion.

Examples of bullying may include:

- i) Punching, hitting, pushing, spitting, throwing things. This can be considered as "assault" and obviously more serious physical attacks could be seen as a criminal offence.
- ii) Damaging property, throwing property around, writing offensive graffiti or invading personal space or belongings.
- iii) Whispering, name-calling, teasing, writing unkind or obscene letters or messages, spreading malicious rumours.



- iv) Making inappropriate personal comments.
- v) Isolating someone, intimidating someone; using threatening language or gestures.
- vi) Making racist, sexual, sexist or homophobic comments to other pupils claiming that the victim regards them as ‘a joke’.
- vii) Using email or the internet to cause distress/insult to another person, whether on personal, racial, religious, cultural, sexual/sexist or other grounds.
- viii) Making fun of someone with a disability or with special educational needs.
- ix) Making other pupils partake in any initiation rights or rituals resulting in violence in any form.

Bullying impacts on its victims’ attendance and attainment at school, marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies and can have a life-long negative impact on some young people’s lives. In this light, although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to assault, harassment and threatening behaviour – including over the internet or by SMS.

How is it made clear that bullying is unacceptable?

The intention is that a culture is fostered amongst pupils which deters silence or by-standing in the face of bullying. On the contrary, we seek to promote a culture in which both the victim and anyone else who hears of an incident are prepared to “tell”. We will embed that culture by constantly reiterating that helping one’s peers and friends is a positive action.

The School makes clear the unacceptability of bullying in a number of ways. Every pupil is given a copy of the policy written by the pupils themselves which outlines the raft of procedures for dealing with bullying should it occur, and this is discussed within tutor groups at the start of every year. PSHE is used regularly to reinforce the message. In addition, the Headmaster outlines the Policy on Bullying to any new pupils or staff; and regularly briefs senior pupils and all staff (e.g. via regular staff meetings or in Child Protection INSET) to remain vigilant inside and outside the classroom. Anti-bullying is also a regular message in Morning Prayers.

Staff must always be prepared to check bad behaviour, as bad behaviour in itself can lead to bullying, and report patterns of behaviour, as this may indicate bullying. Teachers are expected to arrive in good time for class; to be a vigilant presence around School; and to report anything they feel concerned about to the Headmaster or Designated Safeguarding Lead. They in turn will record instances of bullying in order to monitor patterns. Duty staff, resident staff and matrons are particularly also expected to be around the school both in the daytime and when the pupils are going to bed.

How does a victim (or parent) find help?

Pupils who feel worried are encouraged to talk to someone, whether it be a friend, a senior boy, a matron, the secretary, a teacher, a form tutor, a parent, the Chaplain, the



independent listener, the Senior Tutor or the Headmaster. This message is reiterated in the document, 'What to do if you are worried about something' which is posted on notice boards and given to each member of the school community annually. Senior pupils are given guidance on what to do if they receive a disclosure of bullying from another member of the school community. The independent listener visits the school regularly in order to introduce herself and remind pupils that they are free to contact her at any time.

Parents who have concerns about their children should always contact the Headmaster or, in his absence, the Senior Tutor or duty member of staff at the earliest opportunity so the matter can be promptly investigated.

How should the receiver of the information react?

They should offer an immediate opportunity to the pupil to discuss things in a calm, supportive atmosphere in which their concerns will be taken seriously.

They should listen carefully to the pupil's account, and if possible take a contemporary written note of the conversation.

They should encourage the victim to talk (or consent to them talking to on his behalf) to a relevant member of staff, the Chaplain, the Senior Tutor (DSL), Headmaster (DDSL) or one of the independent listeners. (Initially, the victim might wish to keep the matter confidential, but it is important at some stage for him to realise that nothing can be done if the matter is kept secret, and staff in any case should never promise absolute confidentiality. The Senior Tutor, as Designated Safeguarding Lead, must be informed immediately in cases of suspected abuse.)

What is the procedure for tackling bullying where it is discovered?

The following policy was debated and written by after consultation senior pupils. It has been subsequently discussed, agreed and adopted annually by the whole school community.

We acknowledge that bullying could arise anywhere and it is important that everyone knows how we would deal with it should it occur.

*Bullying can arise from a lack of respect for others and it can occur in a variety of ways. Whether it is physical, emotional, or lack of respect for other people's property, we are determined that **bullying will not be permitted within this school community.***

The line between "having a joke" and bullying can be very thin and we have tried to identify the distinction between the two. Although any deliberate act of unkindness is always unacceptable, for the purposes of this policy we are defining bullying as: "repeatedly and deliberately causing somebody pain or unhappiness by not respecting them or their property". The process for dealing with bullying must first allow both sides to be aware that bullying is occurring; it must offer the victim and the bully appropriate support and, if bullying continues, the consequences should be severe.

There are therefore five guideline steps which may be taken if you think that you are being bullied.



1. *The first two stages offer a “no blame” approach to both parties. Anyone who thinks that he is being bullied should talk to a member of staff or a senior boy who will then speak separately to the alleged bully. **No one who feels that they are a victim should feel frightened to speak up in this way.***
2. *If the situation continues, the next step is for the person feeling bullied and the alleged bully(ies) to have a discussion with a teacher. If either is reluctant still to discuss the matter with a teacher, they should go initially to a senior boy who will, depending on the circumstances, inform a member of staff. Boys in Form V are made aware annually of their responsibility in this matter. This discussion allows both parties to give their points of view and to try to work out a solution which is mutually agreeable. The aim is to allow potential bullies to realise that they are causing significant unhappiness, that their behaviour will not be tolerated and if it continues they will be punished.*
3. *If, after this discussion, the behaviour continues, it will be assumed that it is deliberate – and therefore, by definition, bullying - and a more severe approach will be taken. The victim **must** tell a member of staff or a senior boy who will inform the Headmaster. The Headmaster will speak to both the victim(s) and the bully(ies) explaining the situation and, depending on the circumstances, the bully(ies) are likely to receive a punishment from the Headmaster. The Headmaster may also seek to provide appropriate support for the bully, especially if there are extenuating circumstances.*
4. *If, after these three steps the bullying continues, it will be assumed that the bully has no respect for those around him and this will not be tolerated within the school community. The Headmaster will speak to the bully’s parents and he will impose a suitable punishment. In severe cases he may ask that the bully leave the school for a defined time, or the Headmaster may recommend to the Governors that the bully be officially suspended.*
5. *If, after the bully has been suspended, the bullying continues, the Headmaster is likely to ask that he permanently leaves the school.*

These steps are only guidelines, but pupils must be aware that the punishments for genuine bullying are severe.

Record-keeping and reporting

The Headmaster will usually coordinate all actions in cases of bullying, and keep a written record of each incident and how it is resolved. In addition to a record in an individual boy’s file he will also keep a record on a designated log in order to monitor patterns. Part of the record keeping system involves a written reflection by the alleged bully himself on the possible effect of his behaviour and a statement of his future intentions.

Bullying by/of a member of staff, or by/of a parent, will also be regarded as a very serious matter and dealt with by the Headmaster in accordance with the Abbey’s policy.

Awareness training



Staff will receive regular training to encourage them to help raise awareness of potential bullying. Pupils will also be taught via PSHE, assembly, tutor groups, occasional drama presentations and form period lessons the importance of embedding an anti-bullying culture in the school. Opportunities abound throughout the curriculum for discussing anti-bullying strategies and all staff will be encouraged to exploit such opportunities. In particular, pupils are taught about the dangers of cyber bullying as part of the ICT curriculum and this message is reinforced annually at the start of the school year.

Safeguarding

Any bullying which may constitute a safeguarding concern (including behaviour outlined in the “Prevent” strategy) will be managed in accordance with our safeguarding policy.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The School will review this policy annually – with the assistance of pupils - and evaluate its effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School.