

# The St Michael Steiner School

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### Statutory duty of schools

Schools have a legal duty under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among pupils and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils.

### What is bullying?

Some schools take the approach of banning all physical contact between pupils. We believe that a certain amount of physical interaction and banter between children is a normal and healthy part of the process of learning what is and is not acceptable social behaviour. It is our experience that children do not learn by being told things, but by experiencing them; it is to be expected that they will test themselves against each other in different ways and sometimes they will get hurt or hurt others in the process. This, in itself, is not bullying.

Bullying has been defined as the systematic abuse of power by more powerful individuals or groups<sup>1</sup>. In schools it manifests as deliberate and persistent hurtful behaviour, where those towards whom this behaviour is directed find it difficult or impossible to defend themselves. It is the use of superior strength, age or social status deliberately and repeatedly to subjugate, hurt or humiliate someone younger, smaller or, in some way, weaker. It is anti-social behaviour that can destroy the social fabric of the school. It affects everyone and it cannot be ignored or tolerated.

### Bullying can take many forms, but four main types are:

- physical (hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, theft, inappropriate touching)
- verbal (name calling, sarcasm, threatening, making racist, sexist or other remarks designed to humiliate or intimidate)
- indirect (spreading rumours, unfair exclusion, using peer pressure to coerce or manipulate)
- 'cyber' bullying (using text messages, social networks etc. to spread rumours, threaten or make remarks designed to humiliate or intimidate) (See Media and e-safety Policy)

There is a danger that the behaviour itself is seen as bullying, regardless of its motivation or the social context in which it occurs. This is not so. For example, a blow may be struck in self-defence; a child may be excluded from an activity because he is too young. We must be aware that bullying behaviour is intended to hurt and is typically repeated over time.<sup>2</sup>

### Prevention

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kenrigby.net/Bullying-in-brief>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.kenrigby.net/02a-Defining-bullying-a-new-look> para. 6

Recent research suggests that bullying stems from the pursuit of high status within a peer group and that its maintenance depends on the behaviour of the group<sup>3</sup>. The critical, competitive celebrity culture of the 21st century encourages the belief that to be less than the best is to fail, and that failure is humiliating and must be avoided, even if that means putting someone else down to make yourself look or feel better.

Many of the strategies that have been implemented to prevent bullying have proved ineffective because they do not acknowledge that this is an issue that affects all of us and for which the whole community has responsibility. Bullies need collaborators and their behaviour cannot persist without the support of the group. This support usually comes in a tacit form; in most cases, children who witness bullying do not report it.<sup>4</sup>

With these facts in mind, our approach is to address the underlying attitudes that lead to bullying and to do that throughout the school through the curriculum and the way we talk, think and learn about people - human beings. We aim to create a culture where:

- everyone's gifts are valued and there is no hierarchy of subjects.
- failure is expected and is valued as a tool for learning.
- children are not expected to reach standardised benchmarks and are not subjected to standardised testing that ranks them against one another.
- bullying behaviour is not considered acceptable and is not supported or tolerated.

The ethos behind our education aims to foster an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect among staff and pupils, and the long term relationship between the children and their Class Teacher in the Lower and Middle School is one of the most important contributors to the building of trust and security in the school. Pupils and teachers are expected to treat each other with respect. Expectations of behaviour are discussed in staff meetings to ensure that students and staff understand what is acceptable and what is not throughout the school. (See Code of Conduct/Behaviour Policy).

Our curriculum approaches study of the human being in a respectful way: saint stories and fables in Class 2 contrast the lower, animal nature of Man with the higher, noble qualities that we can strive for; comparison of the human being and the animal kingdom in Class 4 highlights the responsibilities that come with freedom and intelligence; studies of anatomy and physiology in the Middle and High School do not view the human body as a machine, but with reverence for its beauty and complexity. By raising the human being above both animal and machine, we try to engender respect for all of humanity.

There is no formal assessment of pupils in the school before Class 10. All aspects of the curriculum are considered equal in status, no child struggles with - or is good at - everything, so there are plenty of opportunities for every child to shine, to meet challenges and sometimes to fail without being humiliated.

We try to provide an environment in which everyone feels supported, safe and valued and where they can learn, work and mix socially with their peers without fear. However, in spite of our best endeavours, occasional incidents of bullying are inevitable, so children and staff need to experience that bullying is not acceptable or tolerated, and that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.

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<sup>3</sup>KiVa Anti-Bullying program <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=100>

<sup>4</sup> Craig and Pepler (1997) reported that only 11% spoke out when they observed bullying taking place in the school playground.

## **How to know if someone is being bullied**

It can sometimes be difficult to find the line between bullying and normal physical/verbal interaction, but bullying can usually be distinguished by the effect it has on the victim or by noticing whether it is always the same person who gets hurt or put down.

Children who are suffering bullying will experience and sometimes express that they are being oppressed; they may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn, nervous or tearful, pretending to be ill, having frequent stomach and headaches, frequent absences, clinging to adults. There may be changes in the pupil's work, a lack of concentration, deterioration in behaviour or truanting from school.

Some children and young people are especially vulnerable to bullying, such as those who are physically or learning disabled, young people who experience abuse or neglect, gay and lesbian young people, children from minority ethnic communities, and those growing up in care. Others perceived to be different, for instance, in terms of their size, shape, or because they wear glasses or don't wear 'the right' clothes, may also be picked on. Some children and young people are bullied for no apparent reason and may be bullied by former friends, often through text messages or social networks. (See the Media and e-safety Policy)

Staff as well as pupils can be the victims or perpetrators of bullying. Signs of bullying in adults include lack of confidence, depression, anxiety and self-harming. Sometimes the person who is bullied also bullies others.

## **Responding to bullying**

Staff need to be alert to the signs and take appropriate action when they know or suspect that someone is being bullied. Sometimes there are no outward signs, but the person will need to be able to tell someone if they want to. Staff must work towards ensuring that the school is a place where pupils and staff feel they can and should report incidents of bullying whether they themselves, or someone else, is the victim.

Communication between parents and teachers with regard to children's behaviour and welfare is essential. For example, if a child is suddenly and inexplicably reluctant to come to school, this could indicate that the child is experiencing difficulties that need to be addressed. If parents are worried about their children's emotional well-being or know of circumstances which may be affecting their behaviour, the child's Class Teacher or guardian needs to be told.

### **To enable incidents of bullying to be identified and addressed, we:**

- ensure that the whole school community understands what is meant by bullying.
- create a culture where children feel that it is right to report bullying incidents, rather than feeling that they are telling tales or that they will become victims themselves.
- create clear systems for people to report bullying.
- ensure that all reports are taken seriously, investigated and, if necessary, acted upon.
- provide a thorough and systematic recording procedure for incidents.
- provide clear procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying.
- review and evaluate the policy annually and as needed and ensure all staff are aware of changes.

- provide information about the policy and procedures for new staff and pupils

## **Procedure**

1. All members of staff have a duty of care towards pupils and colleagues and must take action if they witness bullying or have it reported to them.
2. If a member of staff witnesses or has reported to him/her, an incident of bullying of/by a pupil, the following steps will be taken:
3. If necessary, he/she will intervene to stop the current incident immediately and then:
4. Inform the Class Teacher(s) or guardian(s) of the child(ren) involved who will then:
5. Listen to the people involved. The victim should be allowed to speak first, privately if it seems best.
6. Consider the individuals involved with regard to age, temperament, history and personal circumstances.
7. Make an assessment of the situation, for example, is it an isolated incident? How serious is it? What was the attitude of the perpetrator? Of the victim?
8. Assess, in consultation with at least one other member of staff, what steps need to be taken, for example whether parents need to be informed, whether other pupils should be involved, whether exclusion is appropriate.
9. Initiate the action required including, if appropriate, informing parents, planning a strategy to prevent further occurrences.
10. Sanctions will be used as appropriate and in consultation with other staff and, if appropriate, other pupils and the child's parents.
11. Record the incident in the Incident book, including sanctions and further steps taken. Reports in the Incident book are read weekly at the College meeting.

## **Reporting and Support**

- Pupils should speak to their Class Teacher if they are being bullied or know someone else who is.
- If they prefer, they may speak to any other member of staff. All staff are aware of the procedure for dealing with bullying and have a duty to take action when incidents are reported to them.
- Pupils will usually be supported by their Class Teachers in the first instance, because of the relationship that is already established.
- Sometimes another teacher or member of staff will help, for example, a girl who has a male Class Teacher may need the support of a woman and vice versa.
- Sometimes the pupil's class or other pupils will be involved either in advocacy, support for the victim or in helping to plan a strategy to improve the situation.
- Action taken and the form of support given will vary depending on the pupil affected and the nature and circumstances of the bullying.
- Other members of staff will be made aware at Pedagogical or College meetings of any difficulties pupils are experiencing, although sensitivity will be exercised about what details are given.

## **Steps taken to improve behaviour or alleviate suffering after an incident may include:**

- Modelling of appropriate behaviour; while the child still acts out of imitation (young children) this approach can be very effective and is, anyway, necessary and appropriate at all ages.
- In the Lower school, a pedagogical story or, as the children get older, a biography of someone who has suffered or overcome a situation of hardship can work powerfully through a child's imagination.
- Older children will be spoken to directly about their behaviour to help them understand why they behave that way, that it cannot be tolerated and what the consequences will be in the short and long term if it does not stop.
- In the case of older children, their peers will usually be involved in planning a strategy to resolve conflict, prevent further incidents or to help someone who is being bullied.
- The teachers may decide to work through a Child Study or a Class study in the pedagogical meeting to examine the social issues in more detail.
- Sometimes the advice of the school doctor will be sought for the victim or the perpetrator.

## **Sanctions**

- The school's first responsibility in cases of bullying is to protect the victim.
- Perpetrators of bullying will be spoken to and warned to stop the behaviour.
- Staff will be vigilant and supportive to guide 'bullies' away from what may be habitual behaviour and towards more constructive and acceptable ways of interacting with their peers.
- If the bullying does not stop, the perpetrator must be removed from the situation either temporarily or permanently. The steps that may then be taken are as given in the 'Policy for Exclusion and Suspension of Pupils'

## **Raising Awareness**

We are committed to raising awareness of these issues in the school community including:

- Reviewing this policy annually and as needed with regard to its effectiveness.
- Making this policy available to parents and pupils via our website.
- Ensuring that children and staff know who they can talk to if they experience, or know that someone else is experiencing, bullying
- Providing online training for staff via Educare
- Providing training on INSET days for all staff.
- Ensuring that new staff are made aware of this policy as part of their induction.
- Providing a simple guidance document for temporary staff.
- Encouraging key members of the governing body to attend anti-bullying training.

## **Reviews**

This policy will be reviewed annually and as needed to maintain its effectiveness. All staff will be consulted in any review and will be made aware of any changes in the school's policy. All policies are available at reception or on the school's website.

### **Useful links**

<http://www.kenrigby.net/Home>

<https://www.crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=100>

[http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/77352/making\\_schools.pdf](http://www.ncb.org.uk/media/77352/making_schools.pdf)