

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

## Anti-bullying Mission Statement

Bullying is not tolerated in any form at Stanbridge Earls School.

## Anti-bullying Aims and Objectives

The school aims to reduce the threat of bullying through effective education and clear guidance and training given to pupils regarding definitions and intervention techniques. We treat all allegations of bullying seriously, and firmly believe in prevention rather than cure. Most importantly we subscribe and support the 'Don't suffer in silence' campaign, and encourage any pupil who feels threatened in this way to inform a member of staff or another pupil. Any form of bullying is contrary to our school ethos and aims.

## Why is an anti-bullying policy necessary?

In many cases, it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, and taking unusual absences or in the case of younger pupils, clinging to adults. There may also be evidence of changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration in the classroom or even truanting from school.

Staff note: As well as causing physical and mental distress it is very important for staff to recognise that, in extreme cases, bullying can be so serious an issue as to cause psychological damage to a child and even lead to suicide. (This guidance is as per section 68 of the ISI Regulations guide).

Stanbridge Earls School believes that its pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. It is important therefore that we have a clear written policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful or unpleasant behaviour that is directed towards another pupil and repeated over a period of time. There are criminal laws that apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

We recognise that bullying can take many forms, however, the school identifies four main types:

- a) **PHYSICAL** - such as hitting, kicking or pushing, where there is actual contact.
- b) **VERBAL** - as in name calling and personal insults. Personal insults include any racist, religious, cultural, sexual/sexist, and homophobic or disability remarks made to individuals or small groups.
- c) **INDIRECT** - This may involve spreading nasty stories or rumours about another pupil; excluding them from social groups or games; or interfering with and perhaps damaging or stealing belongings.
- d) **CYBER BULLYING** - Bullying through any remote, electronic, or digital means, such as via photographs, email, texting, mobile phone use, or via websites or internet chat rooms. Although we recognise that our effective jurisdiction is limited in this area, pupils are made aware that this type of bullying is also unacceptable. The school has introduced an anti-cyberbullying seven step code, delivered to pupils through citizenship lessons and tutor group workshops.

## Homophobia and Bullying

Homophobic bullying can involve physical or mental violence by a group or an individual. It is often aimed at someone who has poor defences and who, as a result, may be significantly upset. Victims may be male or female. What distinguishes it from other forms of bullying is the language that is used. Words like "queer" and "poof" and "lezzie" have been used abusively for many years. They have now been joined by words (such as "gay" and "lesbian") which were formerly descriptive but which now may be used as general insults. In some youth cultures, "gay" is now used as a derogatory adjective to describe objects and people that may

have no connection whatsoever with homosexuality. Both boys and girls may be subjected to homophobic abuse.

### **Curriculum Support**

Pupils are made aware that to accuse someone of bullying is a matter not to be taken lightly. The curriculum includes appropriate coverage of sexuality, although teachers are sensitive to the age and emotional development of pupils and to the cultural practices and religious beliefs of families. Discussions about bullying and abuse are included in assemblies, tutorials and a number of curriculum areas including Citizenship/PSHE, English, Drama, History and Media Studies. The aim of such discussions is to allow children to develop the skills, values and knowledge which they need in order to protect themselves from harassment and abuse of all kinds and to become non-abusing individuals themselves.

### **Measures to help prevent bullying**

Being bullied is never the child's fault, but there are skills taught to make pupils less likely to be bullied:

- i **Act confident** – pupils can do this by holding their heads up as they walk. Teach them to imagine walking tall and to look people in the eye.
- i **Make a point of finding friends** – pupils should take part in events wherever possible, such as sports or organised clubs where they will meet others interested in the same things.
- i **Hang around with friends** - when adults are not around, pupils should stick together with their friends. A bully probably will not approach a group.
- i **Staff tell pupils they admire and respect them** - when you listen to pupils you build up their confidence, self-esteem and trust in you.

Staff maintain a high profile around the school generally, being on time for their duty rotas and lessons, in line with the policy on the supervision of pupils. When on duty, staff are encouraged to thoroughly patrol the campus and be vigilant and available at all times. Staff are friendly and approachable, particularly when outside the classroom. Tutors and Houseparents are always looking out for signs of unhappiness or dejection, or noticing a loss of confidence in their pupils. Individual teaching staff also support pupils socially and build strong bonds of trust. Pupils are encouraged to look out and care for each other.

### **What can pupils do if they are being bullied?**

Remember that silence is the bully's greatest weapon.

- a) Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG**.
- b) Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual.
- c) Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- d) Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- e) Be assertive - shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- f) Fighting back may make things worse. If you decide to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent first.
- g) Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.
- h) If you are unable to talk to anyone at School or at home about a problem, you can phone **Childline or the Independent Listener**. The numbers are on notice boards.

Childline (free phone) 0800 1111

Independent Listeners Brian Taphouse 01974 516022

Jan Mills 01794 367891

### **If you know someone is being bullied:**

- a) **TAKE ACTION!** Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.

- b) If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult IMMEDIATELY. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- c) Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

**As a parent:**

- a) Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend School, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- b) Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunchtime was spent etc.
- c) If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the School IMMEDIATELY. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- d) It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- e) Tell your own son or daughter there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied.
- f) Make sure your child is fully aware of the School policy concerning bullying, and that they should not be afraid to ask for help.

**As a School we:**

- a) Organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying, e.g. provide increased supervision at problem times.
- b) Use any opportunity to discuss aspects of bullying, and the appropriate way to behave towards each other, e.g. the Citizenship programme.
- c) Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.
- d) Regularly review the School Policy and its effectiveness.
- e) Maintain a firm but fair discipline structure. The rules are few, simple and easy to understand.
- f) Do not use teaching materials or equipment, which give a bad or negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, sex, etc.
- g) Encourage pupils to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes a review of what friendship really is.
- h) Encourage pupils to treat everyone with respect.
- i) Treat bullying as a serious offence and take every possible action to eradicate it from our School.

**Action taken when bullying is suspected:**

If bullying is suspected any teacher should be told. They will contact staff in pastoral care roles who will talk to the suspected victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses. Details will be recorded on an incident form. If any degree of bullying is identified, help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the bullies. We recognise that bullying can sometimes be a way of pupils dealing with personal problems or issues arising from outside school, including medical issues. On occasions professional help from outside agencies may well be necessary. These problems can apply to the bully as well as the victim of any incidents.

**We support the victims in the following ways:**

- i By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- i Informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- i By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- i Arrange for them to be escorted to and from the School premises.
- i By taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

**We also discipline, yet try to help the bullies in the following ways:**

- i By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- i Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- i By continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- i By taking one or more of the eight disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

All teachers take pupils seriously and deal with bullies in a way that will end the bullying and will not make things worse.

#### **Disciplinary steps:**

1. They will be warned officially to stop offending.
2. The incident will be recorded in writing using an incident report form and will be stapled into the bullying book, found in the Main House Office.
3. Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
4. They may lose free time including break and/or lunch times.
5. A detention involving community service might be implemented.
6. If they do not stop bullying they will be suspended for a minor fixed period (one or two days).
7. If they then carry on they will be recommended for suspension for a major fixed period (up to five days) or an indefinite period.
8. If they will not end such behaviour, they will be recommended for permanent exclusion (expulsion).

Following any action the member of staff will then monitor the ongoing situation and check that the situation has improved, and if not, take further action.

#### **Confidentiality Issues**

Occasionally, a child who is being bullied will ask the trusted teacher to keep the matter confidential. This request should be respected if at all possible. However, depending upon the nature of the incident and the other pupils involved, the member of staff may need to explain that it is necessary to bring matters out into the 'open' in order to resolve the bullying issue as this might be the best way to move forwards.

Should the member of staff, after using their professional judgement, decide to retain confidentiality in minor bullying matters; they should employ other methods to encourage and support the pupil victim. For example, by encouraging them to engage more in group activities, such as playing with a group of friends who together present a united front to the bully, or simply by providing a safe haven and listening ear for the child to engage with as and when necessary.

#### **Staff Training**

Internal training and increased staff awareness gained through the discussion of the schools anti-bullying policy are recurring features of the schools in-service training days. All staff are issued with up-to-date copies of this policy via the staff handbook on the intranet and have their training updated every three years. Those with a particular interest or responsibility in pastoral or behavioural issues are encouraged to take further professional training in this area.

#### **Monitoring of bullying**

It is important to consider, monitor and review current practice and this is particularly important when dealing with issues such as bullying and how it dovetails with the school's behaviour policy. The Deputy Headmaster – Pastoral regularly reviews reports on bullying and oversees the whole school anti-bullying pupil questionnaire. Incident reports and complaints are promptly dealt with by pastoral staff and monitored by senior management. Pupil welfare is regularly discussed and kept high on the agenda of fortnightly Senior Management Team and Housemasters' meetings.

It is important to recognise that we are a happy and friendly school where bullying is rare and dealt with swiftly. We aim to work together so that we can keep it this way.

This policy is reviewed annually.

**R J Bailey**  
**June 2011**