



ST. EDWARD'S OXFORD

Anti-bullying Policy

1. **Bullying**

Much attention and research has recently been devoted to the whole topic of bullying in schools, stimulated, in part, by the Children Act of 1989. Clearly St Edward's, like all schools, sets itself firmly against bullying. A definition of what we mean by this is not as easy to achieve as it might seem. Regrettably a degree of badinage, back-biting and even intimidation is a feature of the human condition at any age. Indeed, much recent research has concentrated on the repeated exercise of these behaviours by adults both against each other and against children. A bullying policy, while recognising that bullying arises from an extension and persistence of these traits, will concern itself, in practice, with the persistence rather than with the occasional breach of civilised manners.

Kindness

Over the past few years there has been an increasing emphasis on kindness behaviour. Kind behaviour is recognised and rewarded in Assembly with the Sub-Warden's awards. This has enabled the school to target unkind behaviour and deal with this before it develops into bullying.

Aims

1. To demonstrate that the school takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated. This includes any incidents of bullying that may take place while pupils are not under the School's control.
2. To take measures to prevent all forms of bullying in the school and on off-site activities.
3. To support all staff and pupils in the actions to identify and protect those who might be bullied.
4. To demonstrate to all pupils and staff that the safety and happiness of pupils is enhanced by dealing positively with bullying.
5. To promote an environment where it is not an offence to tell someone about bullying.
6. To promote positive attitudes in pupils (including assertiveness training).

Definition

For working purposes at St Edward's bullying is defined as "repeated intimidation of a victim that is intentionally carried out by a more powerful person or group in order to cause physical and/or emotional hurt".

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, hitting, kicking, punching or any use of violence.
- Racist - racist taunts or comments.
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact (e.g. groping, lifting clothes or pulling down trousers) or sexual abusive comments.
- Homophobic - because of or focussing on the issue of sexuality.
- Disability - any name calling, teasing or physical acts directed at a person's disability or special educational needs.
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- Religious - making comments about a person's religious beliefs
- Cultural - unwanted comments about someone's cultural beliefs
- Cyber - All areas of internet, such as email and chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls.

Bullying can seriously damage a pupil's confidence and sense of self-worth, and they will often feel that they are at fault in some way. It can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage for an individual. Young people have been known to commit suicide as a result of persistent bullying. Those who conduct bullying or witness bullying can also experience emotional harm. Cyberbullying can be particularly hurtful as it can invade a person's private space. Pupils need to be aware that the school will take action to prevent all pupils from harm even when they are off-site or during the holidays. Furthermore, the school will treat bullying as a safeguarding concern where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. In such a case, the DSL will judge whether to contact the Police and/or children's social care in line with the School's safeguarding policy.

A practical problem in all schools when approaching misdemeanours of any kind is to achieve consistency given the great variation between personalities and circumstances. Nonetheless, we should aim through constant discussion, formally and informally, to minimise inconsistencies.

Timing is also important. To ignore minor incidents of unkindness, intimidation or nastiness is generally not wise, and reaction should be immediate, before things get worse.

Most evidence indicates that we should be predominantly concerned with bullying within a year group. Intimidation of younger pupils by older ones is not unknown but is much less common than in the past. These guidelines are mostly relevant to bullying within a given year group, usually among the younger pupils.

2. Detection of Bullying

This will not be as easy as it might seem at first sight, as many of the signs may be symptoms of other problems; but in any case, they will normally require pastoral attention. All responsible people within the school, teachers, House Matrons, Health Centre nurses, prefects and other senior pupils should be on the look-out for signs which may point to bullying or other problems.

- (a) A decline in work effort and standards.
- (b) A growing lack of interest or commitment in some or all areas of school life.
- (c) Withdrawal in class or from other groups.
- (d) Disturbance of or loss of possessions and property.
- (e) Unexplained bruises, scratches etc.
- (f) Evidence of poor sleeping habits.
- (g) Recurrent visits to nurses or other staff with very minor or non-existent ailments.
- (h) Any extremes of distress.
- (j) Feels ill in the morning.
- (k) Stops eating.
- (m) Frightened to say what's wrong.

There is a natural tendency to concentrate on signs of victimisation but, as professionals, we will also look for signs among pupils which might identify the bullies themselves. Again, these signs will not necessarily detect a bully but they may be surface symptoms.

1. Bragging and over-confident showing off.
2. An assertive tendency to shout down or intervene in class or any other group.
3. A tendency to “behind the hand” sniggering or comments.
4. An inclination to gather “disciples”.

Parents should be made aware of these sorts of signs, as they may be among the first to detect any signs of bullying. It is important to stress to parents that the School works with them both to detect and prevent bullying.

3. **Policies and Actions to discourage bullying**

The main aim here is to create an anti-bullying ethos which needs to be constantly reinforced by all adults. Pupils need to be aware that both staff and senior pupils disapprove of bullying behaviour and will act if it is brought to their notice. All pupils must be encouraged to bring such behaviour to the notice of staff or senior pupils. The pupils who are not involved are the most effective group for prevention and cure. Among courses of action to discourage bullying are the following:

- (a) Frequent discussion at Prefects’ meetings with examples and case studies. Senior pupils should be encouraged to discuss the phenomenon, and to try to achieve a common approach to what is bullying and why it occurs. These general issues will be more familiar to adult staff, but, nevertheless, such discussions between teachers, matrons etc., should occur from time to time.
- (b) All members of the Upper Sixth receive formal child protection and anti-bullying training as part of their Prefect induction during the summer term of the Lower Sixth.

- (c) Discussion of particular cases, when there are signs of bullying, is important, and enlisting the advice and support of other adults involved with the pupil and of senior pupils.
- (d) The anti-social and harmful nature of bullying will be discussed during PSHE and citizenship lessons. Heads of Department (eg Drama, English) are also responsible for introducing anti-bullying material in their schemes of work.
- (e) Both adult staff and senior pupils should be given guidance on what action is appropriate in particular circumstances, the extent of the discretion allowed etc. (See below for more details).
- (f) It is usually advisable for a member of the adult house staff and a senior pupil to be given the specific responsibility of keeping an eye on younger pupils, especially new ones, who might be vulnerable. A sympathetic prefect or senior pupil may be the victim's initial confidant.
- (g) At pastoral conferences for senior pupils bullying should be made an issue, among others, for frequent discussion.
- (h) Above all, a constant reminder to all pupils that bullying is unacceptable, that it is totally acceptable to report cases of it, and not to hope that it will go away and to encourage open discussion. Openness of discussion and confrontation of bullying behaviour is half the battle. Younger year groups should have these issues discussed in year group pastoral conferences, health education and possibly religious education.
- (i) During the normal patrolling of school spaces by adults and prefects, care should be taken to observe those areas where bullying behaviour might be expected to occur most easily.
- (j) Pupil surveys (eg Annual Lower School survey) help create an open society and help encourage pupils to report cases of bullying.
- (k) Pupils often report that bullying often takes place while classes are waiting to enter a classroom. For this reason, it is important that all staff arrive before the start of a lesson. Late attendance for a class only increases the risk of anti-social behaviour by a pupil.

4. **Measures to deal with detected bullying**

These remarks apply, for the most part, to both adult staff and to senior pupils when tackling bullies.

1. Find out the facts; it is essential, when we move on bullying issues, that we do so on an evidential basis. Very often it will be proper for the bullies, the bullied and the witnesses to write down what occurred. This provides a "cooling off" period and usually reveals telling discrepancies. Individuals must be talked to separately and rapidly after the event, if possible, so as to prevent a common cover-up strategy emerging. As far as possible, pupils should not be given the opportunity to connive over their answers to questions. It is usually helpful, when the incident is over and has been investigated and dealt with, for the whole group to be convened and to be encouraged to discuss the situation in the group. This can bring out the group dynamics and encourage people to sympathise and empathise. It is especially useful to get neutral pupils to play a part in this and to take responsibility within the groups when tensions arise.

2. Bullies must know that their behaviour is bullying and why it is unacceptable. An aspect of our approach is to place the bully in the shoes of their victim. In the interests of fairness, and as a means of improving the situation, we will at this early stage aim to avoid the apportionment of blame while recognising that there is a victim. We listen to all parties involved, and lay down clear expectations for future behaviour.
3. We must try to understand why bullies are behaving as they are and this may involve investigations of background and may require expert assistance from medical staff or the School Counsellor. Such understanding does not lead to the condoning of bullying.
4. A report of all bullying incidents should be kept, not just for the purposes of the Children Act, but also to help with future incidents and the evolution of a consistent policy. A bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases, the DSL must contact the LADO.
5. HMs will keep a record of all cases of bullying or unkindness, using 3SYS. This will enable them to identify any patterns in such unsocial behaviour.
6. It is important, without being alarmist that parents are kept informed. Here, adult staff will judge when this should occur; but, generally, it should be sooner rather than later if a victim or a bully are emerging. (In this context it is worth remembering that the parents of the bully and not just of the victim have an equal right to information and an expectation on the School's part that they will help.) Face to face discussions with parents are much to be preferred to other forms of communication.
7. Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken by the School. Such penalties have three main purposes, namely to:
 - Impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable
 - Deter him/her from repeating that behaviour
 - Signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

In serious cases of bullying the School has the right to exclude the perpetrator from the school.
8. The perpetrator will be required by the school to see a School Counsellor for three sessions. The school has a duty to support and educate the perpetrator so that he or she does not behave in an unkind way again.

5. **Helping the victims of bullying**

Again, these remarks apply in most cases, to both adult staff and senior pupils.

1. If we can identify those who are likely to be bullied or who are in the early stages of victimisation (see section 2 above), we should try to minimise the characteristics that might make them susceptible. Evidence suggests that there are broadly two sorts of victim.
 - (a) The passive - unassertive within the peer group.
 - (b) Provocative - draws unwelcome attention through hyperactivity.

Victims should be helped through discussion to understand what has happened and how they can learn to help themselves. Case studies might be useful here. Above all, they, like the bully, need to think about relationships and how to maintain friendships.

2. Victim Support - It may be possible to encourage neutral pupils to assist the apparently friendless victims and, where appropriate, victims could be brought together to discuss their problems. It is sometimes possible to bring the bully and the victim together on “neutral territory” to discuss their problems with the adult concerned.
 3. Victims must be encouraged to say “no”, when under pressure from bullies, and above all to “tell”. Once a victim has been identified it is essential that channels of communication are kept open.
 4. Every effort must be found to reinforce the group against bullying, and particularly to avoid a feeling in the group that they are failures. Again, the neutral members of the group are usually key figures here.
 5. The victim's self-esteem is likely to be low and a commendation procedure can often help.
 6. It will be appropriate in many cases to engage the support of the School Counsellor.
 7. The school also has the right to deal with any incidents of bullying that may occur while pupils are not under the school’s control.
6. **Training**
1. All members of the Upper Sixth form are given anti-bullying training by the Sub-Warden as part of their induction programme as a prefect.
 2. Managing bullying within the school is regularly discussed at HMs meetings.
 3. Bullying is one of the many topics covered by PSHE.
 4. HMs will discuss dealing with bullying incidents with their tutor teams.
7. **Recording and Monitoring Incidents of Bullying**
- St Edward’s is required to record incidents of bullying and to monitor records to identify patterns or trends.
 - HMs will report any incident of bullying to the Pastoral Deputy who will maintain a central register. HMs are required to send a very brief summary of the incident which will be stored along with names of pupils and date(s) of the incident(s).
 - The Counsellors and Nurses will also report any concerns about bullying at the weekly care group meeting.
8. **Other Policies**
- The Anti-bullying Policy forms part of the School’s Disciplinary Policy which is designed to promote good behaviour throughout the school and encourage young people to respect one another. This policy also relates to the School’s Safeguarding Policy.

Conclusion

Generally, a school which approaches the social phenomenon of bullying from a narrowly punitive position will not get very far. If careful intervention has not helped towards a resolution of the situation, there may come a time when the school nonetheless has to ask the bully to leave. Nonetheless, with a constructive bullying policy of the sort outlined above, most cases of bullying - and it should be reiterated that bullying is a persistent development of commonplace bits of nastiness - can be stopped.

In the inevitable rough and tumble of young adolescence, pupils will test the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and a great deal that is constructive can come from incidents which in themselves are reprehensible. Staff should be aware of this and seek to turn negative situations into positive developments for the future. With the sort of guidelines outlined above, this can often be achieved and it is the aim of St Edward's School to maximise these positive approaches.