



St. Michael's School

Countering bullying policy

Introduction

This policy draws on Welsh Government guidance entitled "*Rights, respect, equality: guidance for schools*" which although statutory for the maintained sector and non-statutory for the independent sector, contains many useful points and resources. It is nevertheless not bound by the scope of that document, nor is the school compelled to follow the approaches contained therein exactly as prescribed.

Aim:

At St. Michael's School we aim to provide a caring, safe and friendly environment, where our pupils can learn and develop in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is anti-social behaviour and will not be tolerated, as a result we have a robust set of procedures and actions to follow in order to address it. If bullying does occur all pupils and parents should be able to inform someone within the school and have confidence that the incident or pattern of incidents will be dealt with promptly, effectively and appropriately. We expect anyone who knows that bullying is happening to tell a member of staff or a person whom they trust.

Objectives:

- To provide a caring environment in which pupils develop respect for themselves and for others.
- To encourage pupils to be kind, fair and honest and so to develop within themselves a total rejection of bullying in any form.
- To ensure that all in the school community are aware that bullying will not be tolerated.
- To create an open and supportive climate for all pupils, so that bullying is reported and dealt with swiftly.
- To ensure that pupils and parents know about the school policy on bullying and know what they should do if bullying arises.
- To ensure that staff are familiar with the school policy on bullying and know what they should do if bullying is reported to them, dealing with it in a way that takes account of the needs of both the victim and the bully.

Considerations:

- Never assume that bullying does not happen in your school

- Never ignore suspected bullying
- Don't make premature assumptions
- Listen carefully to all accounts – several pupils saying the same does not necessarily mean they are telling the truth
- Adopt a problem-solving approach which moves pupils onward
- Follow-up repeatedly, checking that bullying has not resumed.
- Bullying can occur outside of school, sometimes exclusively so and sometimes with the aid of technology. The school has a separate policy for dealing with cyber bullying due to its specifically different nature.

The school takes a four pronged approach to bullying:

1. Educating pupils formally and informally, emphasising care and tolerance towards individuals. Raising awareness of signs of bullying via staff INSET.
2. Encouraging pupils to watch for and recognise signs of unhappiness in other pupils and be confident to report it to a member of staff or someone who they trust.
3. Provide a countering bullying policy and pupil complaints procedure.
4. Treating bullying cases fairly and in the first instance with a no blame approach, taking time to investigate what is going on, with care.

Definition

Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts others either physically or emotionally (RRE November 2019). Bullying may not necessarily include all individual examples of unpleasant, aggressive or anti-social behaviour. Bullying can be done face to face, through third parties or through sending messages or images by email, text or over the internet. It may be:-

- Emotional: being deliberately unfriendly, excluding people from groups, tormenting (e.g. hiding books or possessions, making threatening gestures, damaging property or theft of property)
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, spitting or using any form of physical violence (e.g. Goosing).
- Racist: racial taunts, gestures or graffiti
- Religious: anti-religious or sectarian taunts, gestures or graffiti
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments or rumours.
- Homophobic/Transphobic: focussing on the issue of sexuality, including name calling.
- Verbal: name calling, teasing, mocking, spreading rumours, making offensive comments.
- Focussed on special needs or disability.
- Cyber: misuse of all areas of the internet, such as email and chat rooms, mobile phones, text messaging, camera or video technology deliberately used to cause offence, torment or spread rumours.

Bullying hurts and can do lasting harm. Pupils who bully need to learn different ways of behaving.

Any child can be bullied, and although none of these characteristics can excuse it, certain factors can make bullying more likely and staff are encouraged to be familiar with these:

- lacking close friends in school
- being shy
- an over-protective family environment
- behaving inappropriately, intruding or being a 'nuisance'
- having a precocious talent
- being different in some obvious respect – such as stammering
- having Special Educational Needs or a disability
- physical, mental or sensory impairment
- scarring or disfigurement on the face or body
- mental illness
- having a long-term medical condition such as diabetes or asthma
- physical characteristics, such as 'thinness' or obesity. Different stages of puberty can mean individuals may be early or late developers. Being different from the perceived norm of the peer group may mean you are seen as a target for bullying.
- being from a different racial or ethnic group to the majority
- religious affiliation
- speaking a different language from the majority of the pupils
- coming from a small village to a city school or from a city to a small town or village school
- possessing expensive accessories such as mobile phones or computer games (or conversely not possessing these)
- a knowledge or perception that a child has a sexual orientation which is different from the majority
- having physical characteristics or traits which do not conform to recognisable traditional forms of masculinity or femininity
- coming from a different social background than that of the majority of the pupils
- evidence of poverty
- clothing
- being from a family with unorthodox or 'different' family structures
- Looked After Children or young carers.

Whole School Strategy to Prevent Bullying

- The St. Michael's School ethos emphasises the need for mutual respect and care within the school community.
- The PSHE Programme provides a range of opportunities for pupils to discuss issues to do with friendship, relationships, caring for each other in the community as well as discussing bullying as a specific topic.

- Whole School Assemblies, Tutorials and House Meetings (and Boarding Council) regularly focus on issues such as respect, friendship, community values and bullying itself.
- All staff are expected to treat all pupils with respect, fairness and justice.
- All staff have a pastoral duty within the school and most are assigned or affiliated to a house tutor team.
- Staff are asked to watch for early signs of distress in pupils (deterioration in work, spurious illness, isolation, avoidance of their own peer group) and report any concerns to the tutor.
- Pupils will be made aware of who they can talk to in confidence, including any member of staff who they feel they can trust and the school counsellor. All cases will be treated with discretion and sensitivity.

Procedure for dealing with bullying

All reports of bullying should be taken seriously and dealt with promptly. It should be acknowledged that it can be very difficult to separate out the sequence of events and exactly what has happened between two or more pupils, but that this should not preclude the necessary care and concern being taken, in addition to a meticulous and systematic approach to investigation. School leaders have to weigh up the information and evidence that they do receive on the balance of probabilities.

Teachers should listen carefully to accounts and try not to make premature assumptions, instead remaining open minded whilst further information is sought. Most reports will be dealt with in the first instance by the relevant form tutor, with support when required from the Deputy Head. The first priority is to stop the bullying and support both the victim and the bully from future re-occurrence.

Where bullying is also occurring outside of school or exclusively occurring outside of school, it will be dealt with in exactly the same way. Since pupils who are members of the school have the potential for their learning and relationships to be affected by all forms of bullying outside of school, the school recognises the need to intervene in a timely way and will treat such reports just as seriously.

1. Alert/Awareness

Any member of staff, form tutor or school leader can become aware of or have a bullying incident or multiple incidents reported to them. Once they become aware through whatever route, a note should be made so that details are not forgotten. The member of staff becoming aware should contact the form tutors of the victim and likely bully or group involved.

2. Investigation, initial action & record keeping

The form tutors of those involved will meet and carry out a preliminary investigation (with the alleged bully's tutor taking the lead), details of which should be kept and written up on Engage for the relevant pupils, as part of our commitment to identifying bullying and patterns associated with it. In cases of lower level

bullying, tutors will agree an approach between themselves and implement it with the pupils, by meeting separately with those involved and using the sanctions in our Discipline for Learning Policy if appropriate. If the allegations/reports are higher level and more serious, then the form tutors will inform the Head of Year in the first instance, who may instead carry out a preliminary investigation, followed by initial action. The Head of Year may involve the Deputy Head and the parents of the pupil if deemed necessary.

At the earliest opportunity the form tutor, Head of Year or Deputy Head will 'flag' the pupil concerned on Engage and inform the staff, asking them to observe the pupil and to report any incidents which might be regarded as bullying.

Serious Offences

If the offending pupil does not respond positively to attempts to stop the bullying behaviour or the bullying behaviour is sufficiently serious at the outset, the pupil will be dealt with according to the most appropriate stage of the school's Discipline for Learning Policy, which could lead to exclusion at the Headmaster's discretion.

3. Ongoing monitoring & case discussion

If reports and records indicate pupils involved are across form groups, the tutors concerned should meet twice weekly with the relevant pupils to discuss whether the problem is persisting. These meetings should be noted and the tutors should confer to ensure the pupils' accounts match up. This approach should continue for a minimum two weeks to ensure there is no recurrence.

If the cases are more persistent the tutors and Deputy Head will meet to exchange information and devise an action plan, setting out objectives with regards supporting the victim and the bully and to restore normal relationships. The group will set monitoring procedures and a date for a review meeting. A copy of this action plan will go to the Headmaster and if necessary to the parents concerned.

In some cases, where bullying has shown to be persistent the Headmaster may ask the Deputy Head to devise a Behaviour Contract for the individual or group of individuals who are engaging in bullying another pupil. This will set out the required behaviours and expectations of the student and the sanctions for failure to meet the requirements.

If a victim of bullying or their parents is not satisfied with the school's approach and/or the successfulness of the outcomes achieved, a pupil may use the pupil complaints and concerns procedure or parents may use the school's formal complaints procedure. This provides for, wherever appropriate, escalation to the governing body. Alternatively contact may be made with the independent person, the details of whom are available from the school office.

4. Long term review

It is the school's policy to keep a watchful eye, led by the relevant form tutors, where a previously reported bullying situation has been resolved. We recognise that it is possible that it may occur again in the future and that future re-occurrences should be treated with the same level of care and concern, returning to an appropriate stage in the above procedure in order to effect a timely resolution.

This policy itself will be subject to annual review, or at such times as new insights are learned following the addressing of a relevant situation or in response to newly published government guidance. The whole school community has an important part to play in the countering and prevention of bullying, likewise the view of pupils may be sought via the school council as to the steps the school will take when it comes to addressing bullying.

Organisations outside of school offering support

There are also people outside the school who would be willing to help. Details of organisations who may be able to help include:

- Childline: 08001111 or www.childline.org.uk
- Kidscape: www.kidscape.org.uk
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- Anti-bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
- Family Lives: www.familylives.org.uk
- Samaritans: www.samaritans.org.uk

Bullying of pupils by members of staff

Any allegations of the above will usually be received initially under the Pupil Complaints and Concerns Procedure, following the process described there. As a result of that procedure there may be follow-up action under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and/or Staff Disciplinary Policy. The school will automatically treat some complaints received, directly under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which are those deemed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their Deputy, to require investigation of that nature.

If you are a pupil and you witness bullying behaviour:

Do not, do nothing. Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that in your opinion what is happening to them is wrong. Encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself. Take the victim to a trusted adult as describes above and reassure them that doing something will make a positive difference, or suggest that you see someone on their behalf.

If you are a pupil and you are experiencing bullying:

- try to stay calm and look as confident as you can
- be firm and clear - look them in the eye and tell them to stop
- get away from the situation as quickly as possible
- tell an adult what has happened straight away.

After you have been bullied:

- tell a teacher or another adult in your school
- tell your family
- if you are scared to tell an adult by yourself, ask a friend to come with you
- keep speaking up until someone listens and does something to stop the bullying
- if your school has a peer support service, use it
- don't blame yourself for what has happened.

When you are talking to an adult about bullying, be clear about:

- what has happened to you
- how often it has happened
- who was involved
- who saw what was happening
- where it happened
- what you have done about it already

Date reviewed: September 2025

Date for next review: September 2026

Person responsible for this policy: Headmaster