

St Mary's Bryanston Square

Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at St Mary's School.

All members of the school community have a duty to be alert to notice it and to report it.

Any person who is bullied should feel secure in the knowledge that it is safe to tell and that it will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

The high standard of behaviour expected at St Mary's is the result of work done throughout the school on an ethos of mutual kindness, respect, tolerance and unselfishness. This work takes place in our assemblies, class lessons, 'circle time' and through the example set by the older members of our school community - children and adults.

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that is intended to threaten, frighten or humiliate an individual or group of people. Bullying is aggressive: this may include physical aggression, although not all physical aggression is bullying. However, all fighting and other serious disagreements must be taken seriously as they may lead to bullying if they are not resolved.

Bullying takes many forms:

- Physical: hurting the victim or damaging belongings;
- Verbal: racist remarks, name calling, insulting, repeated teasing, spreading malicious rumours;
- Indirect: excluding someone from social groups, ignoring.

Who is bullied?

Anyone in a close working community, such as a school, may be bullied.

The intention of this policy is to address the problem of pupils being bullied by their fellow pupils, but adults may also bully and be bullied and their duties in these situations are identical to their duties towards children bullying each other.

Children are vulnerable for many reasons:

- being perceived as different on account of race, class, appearance, opinions;
- joining the group at a later stage;
- attitudes towards their peers;
- perceived vulnerability and many other individual reasons.

Who bullies?

Children who bully do so for a variety of reasons, some of which may be obvious and some hidden. Adults should be aware that to find a solution it may be necessary to address the cause ie. Work with the bully to change his/her attitudes.

Reasons for bullying include:

- behaviour learnt from aggressive or dominating family members or members of the local community;
- feelings of insecurity leading to a need to dominate other children;

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- retaliation for real or imagined wrongs;
- acting out the child's own experience of being bullied.

How can bullying get a hold?

- The most significant part of bullying is the victim's fear; particularly of the consequences of telling.
- Bullying happens in secret; bullies are careful not to be seen or heard by anyone who would expose them.
- Once a bullying relationship is established the bully may only need to look threatening to intimidate the victim.
- If very small indications are not acted on very firmly bullying escalates.

How is bullying dealt with?

- Members of staff must take all reports of bullying seriously, no matter how trivial it may seem. To stand by and do nothing is to support the bullying.
- Members of staff must be aware and sensitive to the difference between spontaneous aggression and bullying and deal with each appropriately.
- Parents should contact a member of the teaching staff if they suspect their child is being bullied. This will be investigated as a matter of priority.
- Children should feel confident that their report will be taken seriously.
- Both bully and victim will be given support. Whenever possible reconciliation will be the aim.
- Retaliation by, or on behalf of, the victim is unacceptable: this is also a form of bullying.

Investigating bullying.

Investigating bullying is rarely simple. Members of staff need patience, sensitivity and perception to discover the truth in what may be an emotional and very confused situation.

Members of staff should be alert to resorting to bullying tactics in their anxiety to discover the truth, especially when shocked or angry at the bullying behaviour.

Parents called in to discuss their children's behaviour or treatment at the hands of a bully may be stressed and behave in a bullying way towards members of staff.

Parents may need to be encouraged to accept that it is necessary to be patient and listen to both sides of the dispute in order to avoid a miscarriage of justice.

Members of staff should recognise that it is very difficult for parents to accept that:

- their child is a bully;
- bullying is unacceptable even if apparently provoked;
- the victim may have provoked the bully;
- strong punishment for the first offence is not the best way of dealing with bullying. The 'no punishment for the first offence' must be explained to the victim's parents.

When the facts are established.

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If it is a first offence

the bully will be:

- counselled
- warned
- monitored for a change of attitudes and behaviour
- supported

The bully will not be punished and will not have any reason to retaliate against the victim for getting him/her 'into trouble.'

The victim will be:

- counselled
- supported

If it is a second offence

The bully will be:

- considered to have made a positive choice to behave unacceptably and will be dealt with severely. The punishment for a second offence may include exclusion and will certainly lead to exclusion for any subsequent offence.

The support of parents in the work to modify a bully's behaviour is essential.
The support of parents in the work to strengthen the self esteem of the victim is very important.

For these reasons it is crucial to maintain positive relationships with all of the parents involved.

Recording incidents of bullying

A record will be kept of the investigation of bullying incidents, however trivial they seem.

A report (or summary) of the incident and outcome will be kept with the individual file of the children involved.