



Anti-Bullying Policy

St Thomas More Catholic Secondary School

‘One body in Christ’



Policy last reviewed:	March 2022
Policy due for renewal:	March 2023
Lead member of staff:	J Hopkins

Rationale

St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so that they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School will take both pro-active and reactive in its approach to tackling bullying within the school community and the wider community.

At St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School, all stakeholders are responsible for creating an environment which promotes positive attitudes towards tolerance, respect and learning at all times. Every member of the community has the right to feel safe and respected; we all share a collective responsibility in ensuring that the rights of no one member of our community are abused at any time and all stakeholders have a shared responsibility to report bullying.

We recognise the individual needs of our students and endeavor to employ a wide range of strategies to enable our students to behave in a way that allows them to foster positive relationships with each other and to learn as effectively as possible. As part of our wider curriculum, students will be taught that bullying is unacceptable in all its forms and students will be made aware of the impact of bullying on victims. Students have a voice at all times and should feel that they are able to speak out against bullying whether it affects them directly or they aware that bullying is affecting other members of the school community.

The Policy forms an integral part of School Improvement, PHSCE and Safeguarding. The beliefs and ethos of the school underpin this and the Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed and reviewed on a regular basis.

Legal Frameworks and guidance

- Keeping Children Safe In Education 2021
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (89)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Childrens Act 1989
- The Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988/The Communications Act 2003
- The Public Order Act 1986
- The Use and Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Strategies in Schools 2010 DFE RR098 • Preventing and Tackling Bullying in Schools – guidance from the DFE 2017.

Policy Aims:

- To provide a definition of bullying for all stakeholders.
- To increase awareness of the signs and impact of all types of bullying.
- To identify pupils who may be particularly vulnerable to bullying.

- To ensure all stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities for reporting bullying incidents.
- To identify strategies employed by St Thomas More Catholic Teaching School to prevent bullying.
- To identify the channels which exist for students to report bullying to trusted adults.
- To make clear the Academy's response to all forms of bullying, both on and off site.

Responsibilities

As a 'Living Policy' the whole school community understands that bullying will not be tolerated and is clear in the steps that are taken to prevent and respond to bullying.

It is the responsibility of:

- All Teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and pupils within the school community
- All Teaching and non-teaching staff within the school community to be aware of the policy and implement it accordingly
- All Teaching and non-teaching staff to communicate the policy to the school community
- The Principal and Governors to take the lead in monitoring and reviewing the policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying is a form of peer on peer abuse and can be defined as "behaviour by an individual or a group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally". (DfE "Preventing and Tackling Bullying", July 2017)

- Bullying can include name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; taking belongings; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours.
- This includes the same unacceptable behaviours expressed online, sometimes called online or cyberbullying. This can include: sending offensive, upsetting and inappropriate messages by phone, text, instant messenger, through gaming, websites, social media sites and apps, and sending offensive or degrading photos or videos.
- Bullying is recognised by the school as being a form of peer on peer abuse. It can be emotionally abusive and can cause severe and adverse effects on children's emotional health.

Different types of bullying behaviour include:

Physical

- *e.g. pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and any other forms of violence, threats*

Verbal

- Hurtful remarks regarding a person's physical appearance
- Hurtful remarks regarding a person's intelligence/interests etc

Social/ Emotional

- Emotional – tormenting, ridicule, humiliation, exclusion from groups/friendships
- Non-physical - look across a crowded classroom, gestures
- Literature and language – notes, name calling, graffiti, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing

Cyber

- Inappropriate text and electronic messaging (including through websites, social networking sites and email)
- Sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet (cyber bullying)

Sexual

- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or abusive comments
- Sexting

Homophobic

- Homophobic remarks, directed towards a person's sexual orientation

Prejudicial bullying (against people/pupils with protected characteristics):

- Bullying related to race/culture
- Religion
- Faith and belief and (for those without faith)
- Gender/sexual reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Pregnancy and maternity

Recognising victims

Bullies pick on vulnerable children. Some children are temporarily vulnerable because of a particular circumstance. Sometimes the victim is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Some children need help to become more assertive and learn strategies to enable them to avoid or deal with difficult situations.

Vulnerability isn't always visible to adults. The victim may seem exactly like any other child. He or she may also be anxious to cover up the fact that they are being bullied.

Victims may be pupils who:

- are new to the class or school

- are considered to have SEN (SEN students are particularly vulnerable to bullying and may not be able to report it effectively - staff should be particularly vigilant)
- are 'looked after'
- are 'previously looked after'
- Children for whom English is an additional language (EAL)
- are on the SEN register
- are considered Pupil Premium or Free School Meals
- are different in appearance, speech or background from other pupils
- suffer from low self-esteem (but this might be a cause or effect of bullying)
- are having difficulties with school work
- have suffered from bereavement
- are suffering emotionally due to difficult family circumstances
- have been bullied before
- are pregnant

The following are typical signs or behavioural patterns which may indicate that a child is being bullied – they may also indicate other kinds of distress, even abuse.

Children may:

- suffer depression
- have low self esteem
- be frightened of walking to or from school
- be unwilling to go to school and make continual excuses to avoid going
- change their route to school every day
- arrive late to school
- begin doing poorly in their school work
- truant
- regularly have clothes or books or schoolwork torn or destroyed
- come home hungry (avoids lunch queues, gives away or 'loses' dinner money)
- become withdrawn
- start hitting other children (as a reaction to being bullied)
- stop eating or become obsessively clean
- develop stomach aches or headaches due to stress
- cry themselves to sleep
- begin wetting the bed
- have nightmares
- have unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- have their possessions 'go missing' repeatedly
- ask for money or begin stealing (to pay the bully)
- continually 'lose' their pocket money
- refuse to say what's wrong
- give improbable excuses to explain any of the above
- threaten or attempt suicide
- be at increased risk of sexual and criminal exploitation
- be at increased risk of radicalisation

Actions to prevent bullying behaviour:

- A link Governor will be assigned to oversee the school's Anti-Bullying strategy and provision.
- Outline the Academy's Rewards and Sanctions Ladder and Anti-Bullying ethos in the Home/School Agreement.
- We will use the curriculum, termly assemblies and Collective Worship to educate children and to create an anti-bullying ethos within the school.
- We celebrate Anti-Bullying week annually to promote Anti-Bullying.
- Ensure staff are vigilant and constantly look for signs of bullying.
- Ensure staff take reports of bullying seriously by reporting them onto PC/SLT as appropriate.
- Use displays effectively to promote ethos within school, remind students of the channels for reporting bullying (including external agencies and helplines) and to celebrate achievements within school.
- Continue to make good use of our pupil Student Council and Wellbeing Ambassadors to give students channels to report bullying via peers.
- Use Pastoral Postbox and school website as an anonymous channel for students to report bullying.
- Use our 'Pupil Mentors' to support students who we feel may be at risk of bullying.
- Use restorative justice and reconciliation as one of a range of specific strategies designed to combat bullying.
- Involve parents and the school's PCSO/Police Liaison officer as appropriate.
- Use Bedford Borough's EHA protocol to support both aggressors and victims of bullying as appropriate.
- Running a School Council to allow nominated students the opportunity to represent the views of others on issues including bullying and general behaviour around school. .
- Having effective and organised duty teams to supervise the school during unstructured time such e.g. before and after school, during morning break.
- Ensuring staff are easily contactable to parents through email addresses available on the school's website.
- Train all staff, including: teaching staff, support staff (e.g. administration staff, lunchtime support staff and site support staff) and pastoral staff, to identify all forms of bullying and take appropriate action, following the school's policy and procedures, including recording and reporting incidents
- Pupils will be consulted about this policy and practices of the school through the school council and through regular pupil discussions.

Responding to bullying

The following steps may be taken when dealing with all incidents of bullying reported to the school:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached or witnessed the concern.
- The school will provide appropriate support for the person being bullied – making sure they are not at risk of immediate harm and will involve them in any decision-making, as appropriate.
- The Head of Year/Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or another member of leadership staff will interview all parties involved.
- The DSL will be informed of all bullying issues where there are safeguarding concerns.
- The school will speak with and inform other staff members, where appropriate.
- The school will ensure parents/carers are kept informed about the concern and action taken, as appropriate and in line with child protection and confidentiality policies.
- Sanctions, as identified within the school behaviour policy, and support will be implemented in consultation with all parties concerned in proportion to the issue
- If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, such as the police, if a criminal offence has been committed, or other local services including early help or children's social care, if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm.
- Where the bullying of or by pupils takes place off school site or outside of normal school hours (including cyberbullying), the school will ensure that the concern is investigated as fully as is possible. If required, the DSL will collaborate with other schools. Appropriate action will be taken, including providing support and implementing sanctions in school in accordance with this policy and the school's behaviour policy.
- Bullying incidents will be recorded by the school in accordance with existing procedures. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and action taken.

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the school will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified
- Provide appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied and work with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that it does not happen again
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist any investigation
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include:
 - o looking at use of the school systems;
 - o identifying and interviewing possible witnesses;
 - o contacting the police, if necessary.
- Work with the individuals to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include:
 - o Support reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content.
 - o Confiscating and searching pupils' electronic devices, such as mobile phones, in accordance with the law and the school searching and confiscation policy.

- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying; the school will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensuring access to any additional help that they may need.
- Inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed.
- Provide information to staff and pupils regarding steps they can take to protect themselves online. This may include:
 - advising those targeted not to retaliate or reply;
 - providing advice on blocking or removing people from contact lists;
 - helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain.

Supporting pupils

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Reassuring the pupil and providing continuous pastoral support.
- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their teacher, the designated safeguarding lead, or a member of staff of their choice.
- Being advised to keep a record of the bullying as evidence and discuss how respond to concerns and build resilience as appropriate.
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence.
- Providing ongoing support; this may include: working and speaking with staff, offering formal counselling, engaging with parents and carers.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this could include support through Early Help or Specialist Children's Services, or support through CAMH/CHUMS.

Pupils who have perpetrated bullying will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened, establishing the concern and the need to change.
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child.
- Providing appropriate education and support regarding their behaviour or actions.
- If online, requesting that content be removed and reporting accounts/content to service provider.
- Sanctioning, in line with school behaviour/discipline policy; this may include official warnings, detentions, removal of privileges (including online access when encountering cyberbullying concerns), periods of internal isolation and fixed-term or permanent exclusions.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this may include involvement from the Police or referrals to Early Help, Specialist Children's Services, or CAMH/CHUMS.

For students:

(These things have been suggested by students)

If you are being bullied:

- Tell someone you trust
- Try to ignore the bully
- Try not to show that you are upset
- If possible avoid being alone in the places the bullying takes place
- Try to be assertive
- Walk away quickly and confidently, even if you do not feel that way inside
- Your safety is more important than your possessions. If you are in danger do not hold on to them.
- Be proud of who you are.

Friends:

- Listen and talk it through
- Try to be sensitive
- Try not to leave them on their own
- Persuade them to talk to an adult

Bystanders:

- Even if you do not take part in the bullying but see it and walk away, you are ignoring your responsibilities.
- Get help
- Give sympathy to the person being bullied

For staff:

- Never ignore suspected bullying
- Always report and record incidents of bullying
- Don't make premature assumptions
- Listen carefully to all accounts-several pupils saying the same the thing does not necessarily mean they are telling the truth
- Adopt a problem solving approach with all pupils involved which helps to move the pupils forward and away from a cycle of blame
- Follow up repeatedly, checking bullying has not resumed

For parents/carers

Any of the behaviour above may indicate other problems. However, if you become aware of and are concerned by any of this behaviour and think your child is being bullied

- Encourage him/her to talk about the problem
- Reassure him/her of your support
- Try to listen calmly and not over react
- Attempt to find out where and when the bullying takes place. Is there a pattern?
- Contact the Head of Year to discuss the problem
- Work with the Head of Year to support your child within or outside school

- If the bullying takes place outside school consider reporting the matter to the police

Links with other school policies and practices

Our Anti-bullying Policy links with the following school policies and practices:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- PSHE Programme
- School Improvement Plan
- Sex and Relationships Policy
- Equality Policy

Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually. However, should there be the necessity for immediate developments, the policy will be developed to reflect this. The school uses the guidance by the DFE, the updates from Bedford Borough Behaviour and Attendance Strategy, Bedford Borough Against Bullying Guidelines and audits to inform its action planning to prevent and tackle bullying.

All teaching and non-teaching staff are responsible for reporting bullying incidents to the appropriate members of staff. These are coordinated and analysed by senior staff to identify any patterns of bullying behaviour.