# Bullying Policy

| 1. | RATIONALE |
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1.1 This policy needs to be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Modification Policy and the Stand-down, Suspension and Expulsion Policy.

1.2 **Bullying behaviour** can be found in every school; it is an unfortunate part of growing up. It is important that we as a school family recognise the extent and impact of this form of behaviour and that we take steps to stop it happening. Our continuous endeavour is to strive for a school environment which is free of bullying behaviours. Given that bullying will almost always take place out of the view of staff, the school relies upon pupils and parents informing appropriate staff when bullying behaviour is experienced or witnessed.

1.3 **Conflict** between pupils may also be found in every school. Learning how to deal with conflict is a natural and inevitable part of the social learning of every child. As they are immature, children may, from time to time, use inappropriate means of resolving conflict, sometimes through actions which are physically or emotionally abusive. This is not bullying, but it does require remedial action by staff.

1.4 In most instances, intervention by staff will result in an immediate stop to bullying behaviour, a positive outcome for the victim of bullying and recovery of normal relationships over time. Where a pupil engages in repeated bullying behaviour, the response and consequences may need to become increasingly focussed. Heads of Department will inform the Principal. Where a pupil who engages in bullying does not respond positively to the measures taken, he/she may be removed from the school (refer Stand-down, Suspension and Exclusion Policy).

1.5 Constructive dialogue between the parents of pupils who are in conflict can be very effective in changing their respective children's behaviour. However, the degree of emotion involved in a bullying situation often means that such dialogue is best mediated through the staff of the school who may bring the parents of both parties together as part of the process of changing relationships.

1.6 Direct involvement, in which a parent interacts with another parent's child, is almost never useful in bringing about constructive behavioural change and may indeed make the situation worse. Despite strong desire to the contrary, parents of pupils who are victims of bullying should refrain from any interaction with the protagonist pupil in the school environment.

| 2. | OBJECTIVES |
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2.1 To maintain a bully-free and safe school environment.

2.2 To maintain and enhance school-wide intolerance towards aggressive behaviour.

2.3 To provide pupils with appropriate resilience and skills to resist aggression by others.

2.4 To create procedures for the recovery of the self-esteem of the victims of bullying and for the behavioural modification of pupils who exhibit bullying behaviours.

2.5 To work in partnership with the parents of the pupils directly involved.

| 3. | DEFINITIONS |
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3.1 Bullying is behaviour which is:
- deliberate
- hurtful
- repeated
- targeted (at an individual or small group)

Bullying can take several forms:
- physical: hitting, kicking, theft or interference with possessions
- verbal: name-calling, put-downs, racist remarks, texts, emails etc.
- indirect: exclusion from games or groups, ostracism, etc.

3.2 Conflict will include aggressive behaviour which does not meet the criteria for bullying (above) but which inevitably will be inappropriate in the school environment and must attract an appropriate response by staff.

| 4. | POLICY |
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4.1 All areas of the school will teach and model appropriate behaviours and the strategies/skills involved in conflict-resolution, positive assertiveness and intolerance of inappropriate aggression.

4.2 Programmes will be targeted to assist the following groups:

- Bullies – those who engage in bullying behaviour. Programmes will teach pupils how to channel emotions appropriately, to empathise with other viewpoints, social skills and anger management.

- Neutrals – those who might otherwise not intervene where bullying is taking place. Programmes will teach pupils leadership, why and how to intervene appropriately when bullying or aggression takes place, how to make friends, tolerance, how and when to "tell".

- Victims – those whose personality, social skills, social status and passivity make them likely to be targets for aggressive behaviour. Programmes will teach pupils appropriate assertiveness, how to make and keep friends, where one can go to feel safe and who one can trust when you feel bullied.

4.3     The regular monitoring of locker rooms, classrooms and more isolated areas of the playground during recesses is a vital task of the teacher-on-duty who needs to be proactive in ensuring that playground behaviour is appropriate.

4.4     Name-calling, ridicule, harassment, verbal abuse and put-downs (including the use of notes, e-mail messages, text messages), physical abuse, interference with another's possessions or exclusion of a class member from participation in playground games or groups will be treated by staff as serious breaches of acceptable behavioural standards.

4.5     Every reported incident of bullying will be investigated sympathetically, viewed as potentially serious and where confirmed, will be reported to the appropriate Head of Department, Assistant or Deputy Principal, and/or the Principal.

4.6     The victim will be treated with empathy while the extent of the bullying is being investigated and, where appropriate, will be given suitable protection from retaliation. The parents of the pupils directly involved will be informed of any actions taken.

4.7     Appropriate action will be taken to assist any pupil found to be deliberately bullying another pupil to change this behaviour.

- Use of no-fault counselling, where appropriate, and the involvement of parents will be features of remedial action in instances of bullying.
- Recognition that the actions of the bullying child may in turn be a response by that child to emotional pressures in his/her environment will be part of the response by staff.

4.8     Following appropriate action by staff, the victim of bullying will be monitored on an on-going basis to ensure that the bullying has ceased.

## 5.     PROCEDURES

5.1     Interventions when bullying behaviour has occurred may include:
- Involvement of the parents of pupils
- Isolation and/or withdrawal of bully
- Empathy raising
- Reflection on virtues
- Opportunity for face-to-face apology and commitment to future
- Jeopardising of any kudos of the bully within his/her peer group
- Withdrawal of privileges
- Reporting programmes
- "No Blame Approach" (see Appendix I)
  Application of the provisions of the Stand-down, Suspension and Expulsion Policy

# Appendix I: "No Blame Approach" Procedures

| Step | Purpose | Process |
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| 1. Victim interviewed | • The victim is reassured that the problem can be solved<br>• The main threatening figures, the "bullies" are identified<br>• Those present, but not actively involved, the "neutrals", are identified<br>• Those whom the victim finds supportive, or would like to have as friends, are identified | • Accept all that is said, without questioning its validity<br>• Do not concentrate on feelings of victim<br>• Reassure victim that the problem can be solved<br>• Tell victim that a group of pupils will be asked to make him happier in school<br>• Elicit the names of "bullies", "neutrals" and "supporters" if they have not already been mentioned |
| 2. Support Group selected | • Members of all three groups are selected<br>• All selected members understand why they have been selected<br>• No members feel that they have been pre-judged | • Select 6 – 8 members for the support group including all main bullies and some neutrals and supporters<br>• See the group separately from the victim<br>• Reassure all members that they are not in trouble. No-one is to be labeled<br>• The group is told that X is unhappy at school and that they have been chosen because they can help – this is what they have in common<br>• The term "bullying" is avoided as it assumes pre-judgment<br>• Non- judgemental atmosphere is maintained with the group<br>• Parents of victim are informed of the process |
| 3. Empathy with victim sought | • Members of the group develop empathy for the victim | • Group is asked if they have ever been unhappy at school<br>• Feelings of victim not relayed to group<br>• When members provide examples, say "X must be feeling like that" |
| 4. Reasons sought for victim's unhappiness | • The group expresses their view of the problem in a non-judgemental atmosphere, thus owning the problem | • Explain that X is unhappy at school and as they know X they probably know better than anyone why he/she is unhappy<br>• Seek responses – be non-judgmental. Maintain non-judgmental atmosphere by not allowing the use of names<br>• No punitive action can follow this discussion<br>• When members provide examples, say "X must be feeling like that" |

| Step | Purpose | Process |
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| 5. The group makes suggestions | • The group makes suggestions as to how X can be helped to be happy at school<br>• The group collectively owns the plan | • The members are asked to make suggestions<br>• No-one is asked to make promises nor are they given jobs<br>• The actual suggestions themselves are not significant except insofar as they demonstrate commitment to the group goal<br>• Inappropriate suggestions can be gently rejected |
| 6. Responsibility for implementation passed to the group | • The group is given responsibility for the implementation of the plan – and its success<br>• This is a critical step | • The group is thanked for their support<br>• The plan is praised<br>• The members are told that they will report back all they have managed to do in a week's time at the review meeting<br>• A time for the review meeting is made |
| 7. Review meetings | • The situation is reviewed with victim<br>• The situation is reviewed with the support group<br>• Further review meetings are scheduled as necessary – maximum of two | • Victim is interviewed separately<br>• Members of the support group express how they things are with X, and what they have done to help<br>• Members are thanked for their contributions<br>• Members are asked if they are willing to continue for a second week<br>• A second review is arranged<br>• Parents of victim are kept informed of process results<br>• Support group members rewarded for involvement |