

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The aim of our anti-bullying policy is to clarify for pupils and staff that bullying is always unacceptable. We wish to encourage an environment where independence is celebrated and individuals can flourish without fear. Every pupil has the right to be safe and happy in School, and to be protected when they feel vulnerable. We will endeavour to respond quickly, appropriately and sympathetically to any disclosure of bullying.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is a deliberately hurtful act repeated often or over a period of time which is difficult for the victim to defend themselves against.

There are different sorts of bullying, but the main types are:

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| Physical | - hitting, kicking, taking, moving or hiding belongings including money. |
| Verbal | - name calling, threatening, teasing, insulting, writing unkind notes/ |
| Indirect Emotional | - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, spreading rumours, spiteful looks. |
| Racial | - can be identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used, and/or by the fact that the victims are singled out because of the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their ethnic grouping or by their religious or cultural practices |
| Sexual/Sexist | - can range from sexualised name-calling and spreading rumours about someone's sexual behaviour to criminal offences such as assault or rape |
| Homophobic | - occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people. As with other types of bullying, schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with in schools |
| Disability | - children with special needs or disabilities are far more likely to become victims of bullying than are other children. Schools need to be especially vigilant in this area |
| Cyber | - especially e-mails, text messages of an unkind nature, but also involving social network sites, mobile phones, and the digital transmission of photographic material . |

People react differently. It is not always possible to tell if someone is hurt or upset. Often other pupils are present and may join in or encourage the bully, which itself is a serious matter. Certain factors can make bullying more likely: lack of friends, shyness, ethnic difference, having a disability, behaving inappropriately (being a nuisance) or possessing expensive accessories.

Bullying is a serious offence which can lead to psychological damage amongst both victims and perpetrators. In the most extreme cases, it can also lead to suicide. It is important that all members of the school community are as proactive as possible not

only in dealing with bullying when it occurs, but also in seeking to prevent its occurrence in the first place.

As part of its commitment to prevent bullying, the College will not tolerate “initiation ceremonies” of any kind.

PSHEE AND BULLYING

When pupils enter the College, they are made aware of the importance of getting on together.

Early in Years 7 and 8 PSHEE sessions will run where pupils are given the opportunity to explore bullying, what causes it, how it feels for the bully and the victim, and how it can be stopped.

In Year 9 & 10 there are further opportunities to discuss relationships. Pupils are also involved in assemblies and workshops directly about bullying and cyber bullying. Assemblies are often based on the importance of tolerant behaviour and good relationships.

POSSIBLE SIGNS

Pupils who are being bullied may lose self esteem and show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or clinging to adults. They may show changes in their work patterns, may lack concentration or may even play truant or be reluctant to come to School.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO TELL

At Plymouth College we are very concerned to prevent bullying, and should it occur, to protect the victim. If you feel that you are being picked on you must talk to someone: you will be given all necessary help to protect you. There are lots of people you can approach: a prefect, a teacher, the school nurse or chaplain, parents or a friend. Never suffer in silence. It is important that we create an atmosphere in the College where pupils who are being bullied or know about someone who is a victim, feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action taken will be swift but sensitive to their concerns. Not telling protects the bully or bullies, and gives the message that they can continue, perhaps bullying others too.

Procedures

Stage one: In the first instance, it is important to make it clear to the victim that revenge is not appropriate, and to the bully that such behaviour is unacceptable, and has caused distress.

Both parties are talked to and the bullies are made aware of how they have made the victim feel and are warned of the consequences of a recurrence. Staff are alerted to the possibility of an occurrence. The circumstances are recorded. Victims are also spoken to about social skills, assertiveness and conflict resolution. Parents may be notified if appropriate.

Stage two: If there are any signs of recurrence parents of both parties will be informed of what has happened, and how it has been dealt with. Some initial sanctions or constraints may be applied to the bully at this stage if appropriate.

Stage three: If the bullying still continues, and counselling has not worked, then stronger sanctions may follow in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy.

At all stages of the procedure, a written record will be made by the investigating person and subsequently kept in the relevant pupil file(s). All incidents will be logged centrally by the designated Child Protection Officer.

PARENTS

Plymouth College works together with parents to tackle bullying. If you think your son or daughter may be being bullied, or tells you that they are, please let us know straight away. Please reassure your child that we will deal with it sensitively but firmly. If your son or daughter tells us that they are being bullied, or we discover that they are bullying others, we may contact you to discuss together how the situation can be improved.

TEACHERS

If you have any concerns that bullying is happening, tell the Tutor or Head of Year. If in a boarding environment tell the House Parents or Boarding Tutor. We need to be vigilant at all times, out of lessons and around School. There are times and places where victims are more vulnerable and bullying is not easily seen. The playground, toilets and changing rooms could become particular hot spots for bullying. Appropriate staff training will be arranged on a regular basis to ensure that teachers and other staff are properly informed and made aware so that the school remains a safe and happy environment for all. Certain Heads of Year will be trained in restorative justice techniques.

PREFECTS

Senior Prefects assigned to tutor groups have appropriate guidance in mentoring and listening skills to help victims, as do boarding prefects.

SANCTIONS

Plymouth College takes all bullying very seriously and will tackle any such behaviour firmly and, if necessary, involve the police. The Police are increasingly likely to be involved in cases of cyber bullying. Sanctions (of the kind identified in the College's *Behaviour Management Policy*) will be applied in a way appropriate to each individual case and the victim(s) may be consulted before action is taken where this is deemed to be in the best interests of all concerned. In the most serious cases, temporary or even permanent exclusion is a possible punishment.

Pupils will also be made aware that there is zero tolerance towards cyberbullying involving members of the school. Any incident that occurs inside or outside of school hours, on or off-site, will be dealt with very seriously and will most likely result in a suspension and, if repeated, ultimately end in permanent exclusion.

REVIEW

This policy is reviewed regularly by the pastoral team and any interested staff.

This Policy is made available to parents, current and prospective, and all staff and pupils through the College's Intranet site. It is also sent directly to the parents of all boarders as required under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding.

S.J. Dunn
Deputy Head

Reviewed: November 2011
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