



ST MARGARET'S PREP
CALNE

Anti-bullying Policy

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Anti-Bullying Policy

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for the prevention of bullying at St Margaret's Preparatory School. It was developed through a process of consultation and should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct for Staff, the Safeguarding & Child Protection, Behaviour & Discipline, eSafety (acceptable use) and Equal Opportunities Policies, as well as statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024).

'No-one ever deserves to be bullied'

Statement

St Margaret's is committed to providing a safe and caring environment where children and staff can work and live together free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment. We expect our staff and pupils to treat each other with courtesy and co-operation so that they can teach and learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All members of the school community should care for and support each other. This is one of the most important life skills we can teach the children and we hope that they will all learn how to be a valuable and valued member of the community during their time with us.

St Margaret's prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. We have a diverse community, with pupils from a variety of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds. Some children require additional support and help. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all of our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable. Where necessary, we will apply the sanctions described in our Behaviour and Discipline Policy for behaviour that constitutes bullying or harassment of any kind.

What Counts As Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally and includes all children and adults within the St Margaret's community.

Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against protected characteristics, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Bullying includes for example: name-calling; taunting; mocking; making or passing on unkind or offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; taking belongings; inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups; spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle but can also be overt and intimidatory. In evaluating bullying it is always important to fully consider the impact on the individual person and how they perceive the issues. In this context, the perception and the individual sense of being bullied must always be taken seriously.

Child on Child Abuse

In rare situations where one or more children may commit abuse on another, the school will then refer immediately to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, and follow the appropriate course of action, which may include referral to the DOFA. A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection (CP) concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.' St Margaret's is mindful of the potential for child-on-child abuse and will consider this issue when bullying is alleged or patterns of bullying are identified, including through the use of electronic communications.

Where/When Does Bullying Occur?

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. It can cause serious and lasting psychological damage and even suicide. Harassment and threatening behaviour are criminal offences. We always

treat incidents of bullying very seriously. Bullying conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

Although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others. Bullying is most likely to occur when adults are not around, although staff need to be alert for signs in the classrooms or around the school generally, that a child is systematically being treated unkindly by others.

We all need to differentiate between occasional thoughtlessness or loss of temper, and systematic bullying; the arguments which are part of the normal turbulence of childhood relationships are not always the same thing as bullying.

Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (eg giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary, altered eating habits)
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequently complaining of stomach pains/headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Preventative Measures

All children and staff are made fully aware of our anti-bullying procedures and the pupils know that the school cares about eliminating incidents of bullying.

It is our experience that within the community of St Margaret's bullying is rare. The children tend to be very supportive of each other and are generally quick to tell an adult if they think someone is being treated unkindly. Sometimes a child will confide in his/her class teacher or another trusted adult that s/he is unhappy about the way s/he is being treated. Such confidences should always be treated seriously. Concerns should initially be passed on to the class teacher, who will inform the Deputy Head and/or relevant other staff of what is happening and of any action taken.

Managing relationships through challenging times requires tact and sensitivity; all staff should feel able to discuss concerns with experienced colleagues as appropriate. Incidents are recorded and investigated. We always monitor reported incidents.

We are proactive in our anti-bullying procedures at St Margaret's:

- All pupils from Y1 – Y6 are issued with an individual 'EASY' card, which they should keep with them in school. They may wish to put it in a pencil case, a desk/drawer or in some other appropriate place. In the EYFS classes and other teaching rooms a large 'EASY' card is displayed in a visible position. The children in the pre-pre department also have an EASY bear that they can hold if they are feeling sad.
'EASY' cards provide the children with a constant visual reminder that it is **easy** to talk to someone if they are unhappy at school. The cards are coloured green, which means **go** and reminds the children that this is a positive step to take. The letters in the word 'EASY' stand for 'Enjoyment At School – Yes!'
- We have an 'EASY' theme each term which promotes acceptable behaviour through a range of activities. We also support National Anti-Bullying Week.
- Behaviour rules and expectations are continually enforced in the classrooms and in our Assemblies.
- The PSHE and RSE programme is structured to give children an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school and reinforces the message about community involvement and taking care of each other.
- Children agree to 'Responsible Internet Use' and links between Computing and PSHE and RSE reinforce the message that cyber bullying is unacceptable.
- Other lessons, particularly RE, English and Drama may be used to highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce anti-bullying messages by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- Staff receive guidance on areas of the school site which require greater supervision and of the need to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- House Buddies offer advice and support.
- Assemblies provide opportunities to explore the aims and ethos of our school, our commitment to the British Values of tolerance and mutual respect and ways in which pupils and staff can support one another.
- Staff are alert to children and their peers who may be vulnerable and at risk of being bullied. Support for pupils with protected characteristics such as SEN/D or LGBTQ+ is provided by staff or, sought via external agencies as appropriate.
- All parents are issued with an Anti-Bullying Information Sheet when their children start at St Margaret's. We firmly believe that parents, staff and pupils should work together to provide a caring environment in which all parties can live and learn. This incorporates being vigilant to a range of behaviours, including bullying and online bullying, and communicating openly and in a timely manner, including when they find themselves as bystanders.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Incidents

Dealing with bullying behaviours

Unkind behaviour can often be stopped in the early stages by a low-key approach from an adult, usually the class teacher or the one of the Deputy Heads. It is important that adults try to understand why an individual wishes to 'bully' their peer. It must be clear that it is the behaviour which is unacceptable, not the child him/herself. The most effective way forward is a 'no blame' approach, which focuses on the impact of the behaviour while remaining non-judgemental about the miscreant. Conversations with the bully should be calm and dispassionate. It is always important to consider the needs of the alleged perpetrator of bullying and what it is that might be happening in their lives leading to their unacceptable behaviour. There may be a need to consider issues beyond the school and reasons for unhappiness or stress.

A discussion with a bullying child should

- clearly identify what is unacceptable in his/her behaviour
- ask the child for his/her point of view
- try to get him/her to see the other person's point of view
- try to get him/her to appreciate the other's feelings
- look at other ways to handle irritation or dislike
- make a clear statement that this behaviour must stop

Responding to children who feel they are being bullied

Bullied children can be extremely scared that telling an adult who then intervenes will make matters worse, giving the child reassurance is therefore the vital first step. A child who speaks out against bullying will never be chastised. A child's wishes to speak in confidence should be respected, with the clear proviso that if the adult is told something which is a cause for grave concern about the child's safety or well-being, the adult will have an obligation to discuss the matter with the school's DSL.

The discussion with a distressed child should

- reassure him/her confidentiality will be kept (with the above proviso)
- identify clearly what is upsetting him/her
- encourage his/her sense of self worth
- remind him/her that no-one deserves to be treated unkindly
- look at assertive ways to respond to unkindness
- encourage him/her to help him/herself by identifying moments which may have triggered unkindness & looking at ways to handle such situations
- reassure him/her that more help and support will be forthcoming

Actions and Reporting Procedures

If the bullying behaviour continues, the adult who has been handling the situation until this moment should consult the Deputy Head/Head of Prep School as it may be that more assertive intervention is necessary. The Deputy Head/Head will see the bullying child, tell him/her clearly which aspects of his/her behaviour must change immediately and that the consequences of continuing to act unkindly will be severe. It may be appropriate at this point for the bully's parents to be informed and their help enlisted. The peer group should be made aware, by their class teacher, of their collective responsibility to support the bullied child and to help the bully to effect a change by

expressing their liking of him/her but their disapproval of his/her behaviour. Careful monitoring will take place to prevent any recurrence of bullying and everyone is responsible for supporting the victim and for helping the bully to change their behaviour. If these steps are ineffective, the school reserves the right to express its unacceptance of bullying by suspension or ultimately expulsion.

All reported incidents of bullying are logged and regularly monitored by the Head of Prep School and the Deputy Head. Themes and patterns of behaviour are tracked through iSAMS and anti-bully procedures are implemented as appropriate.

Strategies for recognising and managing incidents of bullying are regularly debated in the 'pastoral' aspect of staff and departmental meetings. The Deputy Head Pastoral meets with support staff every term to highlight specific children and to give guidance regarding preventing and resolving problems. All staff are aware of their legal responsibilities towards keeping children safe and of the requirement to log incidents of bullying on iSAMS – these are then tracked by the Deputy Head Pastoral. The Head of Computing oversees the programme for the prevention of online bullying and staff INSET ensures that this is understood by all parties.

Staff awareness is raised through our regular briefing meetings, CPD and training; our guidelines for supervision of pupils in the Staff Handbook highlight the need for vigilance to reduce the opportunities for bullying to take place. Pupil awareness is raised using educational elements such as personal, social and health education in the PSHE and RSE programme, through awareness sessions in Computing lessons, in Assemblies, through drama, stories and literature, projects and through the study of historical and current events. All staff are clear about the way in which to approach the subject, should it arise in their lessons, and opportunities are taken to deal with the subject of bullying by different subject areas when appropriate.

St Margaret's staff members have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises. Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 say that a school's disciplinary powers can be used to address pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff, but only if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate pupils' behaviour in those circumstances. This may include bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying outside St Margaret's is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Head of Prep School will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour co-ordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed. While school staff members have the power to discipline pupils for bullying that occurs outside school, they can only impose the disciplinary sanction and implement that sanction on the school premises or when the pupil is under the lawful control of school staff, for instance on a school trip.

This policy considers at its heart, children's rights as exemplified by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Specifically:

- Article 2 – The Convention applies to everyone, whatever their race, religion, or abilities, whatever they think of say, whatever type of family they come from.
- Article 12 – Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.
- Article 13 – Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.
- Article 16 – Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child’s private, family and home life.
- Article 19 – Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 23 – A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support for disabled children.
- Article 31 – Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

AH/ JH Sept 2024

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Senior Leadership Team.

Effective Date

This policy was last reviewed in Sept 2024

Date of next Review

Sept 2025