



ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Mount St Mary's Catholic High School Anti-Bullying Policy

Adopted by Mount St Marys' Governing Body on 20 September 2022

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe R P', is written over a horizontal line.

Chair of Governors

Review date: 20 September 2025

This policy has been compiled in accordance with The Education and Inspections Act 2006, Section 89 which outlines the duties of the Headteacher with regard to behaviour and the policy should be read in conjunction with many MSM policies but particularly the MSM Single Equality Policy, MSM Child Protection Policy, MSM Behaviour Policy, MSM Acceptable Use Policy, MSM E-safety Policy and perhaps the MSM Complaints Policy.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide guidelines as to how at Mount St Mary's Catholic High School (MSM) we can create and maintain a learning environment where all students and staff feel supported, cared for, safe and free from fear of bullying by anyone on the MSM site. That said, MSM is not ignorant of the fact that bullying in some form is an issue at every school, but so long as MSM and its community continually strive to achieve this aim the environment will be as free from bullying as any organisation that claims to be free from bullying. It is only by working together, trusting each other and feeling comfortable about communicating with each other that this can be achieved.

Scope of this policy

Any and all parts of this policy are relevant for MSM staff and students. MSM acknowledges that bullying in a school is not limited to student on student, it could also be staff on staff, staff on student or even student on staff. All victims of bullying have the right to be released from being subjected to it.

Definition of bullying:

Bullying is actions and activities performed with the intention of hurting at least one other person. Bullying actions and activities result in pain and distress for the target of them.

The list of possible categories of familiar bullying below is not exhaustive, and targeted bullying often involves more than one category:

- Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding or tormenting (e.g. hiding items belonging to others, threatening gestures).
- Physical – any type or degree/level of violent conduct which could be simply shoving in a doorway.
- Racist – taunts, graffiti, gestures, can also be violent.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact with sexual connotations or sexually abusive comments.
- Homophobic – negative conduct focussing on the issue of sexuality.
- Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- Cyber – all areas of internet based communication can be used for any of most of the above. Includes use/misuse of mobile communication devices and their communication facilities too.
- Any of the above used to discriminate against anyone for any reason at all and for any actual or perceived differences they may or may not have or exhibit.
- If someone's perception is that they are being bullied then their feelings are very real, regardless of whether or not the accused bully is aware of what they are accused of doing or have behaved in a certain manner without realising the impact.

Anyone could be deigned to be involved in bullying if they:

- Provide an audience for, or laugh at, bullying actions or activity;
- Fail to support someone who is being bullied – this does not have to be directly getting involved, it could be informing a relevant person immediately, but choosing to do nothing demonstrates compliance;
- Perpetuate the circulation of rumours; or
- Involve themselves in passing bullying messages/notes.

Possible exceptions:

- Students fall out resulting in isolated incidents of some or any of the above; or
- Perceived bullying where the victim is convinced of another's bullying behaviour toward them e.g. ignoring a question or other comments but they haven't actually been heard.

There are many possible signs and symptoms of bullying some of which are listed below. This list is not exhaustive and the list does not refer exclusively to bullying.

- Fear of moving to and from school.
- Refusing to use the school bus.
- Refusing to enter certain parts of the school.
- Reluctant to go home.
- Apparent school phobia.
- Begins to truant.
- Behaviour and quality of work deteriorates.
- Becomes withdrawn or anxious.
- Stammering.
- Threatens or attempts suicide or running away.
- Frequent and/or regular illness, minor or otherwise.
- Cries at night and has nightmares.
- Returns home with damaged or stolen possessions and/or clothing.
- Asks for, or steals, extra money beyond the normally given amounts.
- Physical injuries.
- Lack of appetite.
- Very hungry despite lunch believed to have been taken to or purchased at school (stolen or extorted).
- Begins bullying.
- Develops a seemingly irrational fear of using the internet or other communication devices.
- Reluctance to discuss problems or provides improbable excuses for any of the above.

Statements of commitment

- Every person has a right in a Catholic/Christian community to be able to go about their daily lives feeling secure.
- The whole of the MSM community is entitled to be treated with respect.
- The MSM community believes in the safety and happiness of all its members.
- The MSM community firmly believes that any form of bullying is wrong.

At MSM any perceived or actual incident of bullying, whether physical, verbal, racially motivated or in any other form is totally unacceptable and is always taken seriously. If an individual perceives behaviour as bullying then effectively it is and as such it should be investigated and both parties involved have the opportunity to explain the occurrence. Depending on the nature of the incident and the students involved, a variety of approaches may be employed, the only constant being that all bullying is unacceptable. Bullying is the concern and responsibility of every member of the MSM community and, as such, all students are strongly encouraged to report incidents they perceive as bullying. Investigation will ascertain whether the incident is perceived or actual.

Psychological studies suggest that some students who observe unchallenged bullying may copy this anti-social behaviour. We believe by challenging such anti-social behaviour we will be educating all members of the community about acceptable social behaviour and promoting respect between all individuals and groups. It is hoped that these lessons will impact positively upon the lives of our community members and their involvement in communities beyond MSM.

Procedures

It should be noted that the distinction between bullies and victims is rarely clear-cut and it is perfectly possible for a student to be both of these simultaneously. The situations can be complex, as can the procedures involved. The victim is always assured that none of what has occurred has been their fault. However, below are the generalised approaches and principles upon which individual procedures are designed.

If bullying is experienced or observed it should immediately be reported to a member of staff whom the victim or observer feels comfortable talking to. If immediate action is not taken the bullying can continue and become entrenched as a behaviour, for both the bully and the victim, making it much more difficult to eradicate. If bullying is not tackled, the message sent out to the bullies and others is that the bullies can continue and is almost an indirect encouragement to perpetuate their oppressive behaviour; it could also suggest that the victims are of little concern.

So above all, the most important thing is to report any incidents of bullying or suspected bullying immediately. We advise that anyone reporting an incident takes someone with them if that will help them feel more relaxed and confident about reporting an incident. We also advise that reporting an incident to parents/carers so that they might report it to the school, is a good idea.

Addressing the bullying issue

1. Preventative education – continual programmes of education and reinforcement of principles permeating PHSCE and some other curriculum areas and pastoral assemblies; teaching/learning methods encouraging cooperative work. Rewarding good behaviour and both pastoral and academic achievement which all serve to increase self-esteem.
2. No blame approach – this concept centres on getting the bully to reflect upon the incident and situation from the victim's perspective and suggest how the situation could be improved. It may also involve face-to-face meetings between the bully and the victim.
3. Contact or meeting with parents/carers – parents are invited to be involved in any of the process, and their involvement is often the most powerful tools they were unaware of their child's actions and behaviour.
4. Remedial education – this can involve working with a member of staff, perhaps a student mentor or advocate, or representatives from outside agencies to discuss their behaviour and how it could be improved e.g. anger management.
5. Restorative justice – this can be as a result of point "4" culminating in decisions being made about an appropriate course of action to address what they have done.
6. Monitoring will be done as a matter of course after any incident.

Consequences

Quite simply, depending upon the individual incident, these can vary in severity from a discussion between the bully and victim to making apologies and reparation, through to a fixed period of exclusion and police involvement.

All behavioural incidents are recorded on the computerised information storage system, with bullying incidents being recorded in a special behaviour category of their own. Incidents of racial abuse are recorded separately on CPOMS.

Advice to parents

Parents and families have an important part to play in helping schools deal with bullying:

- Discourage your child from using bullying behaviour at home or elsewhere. Show them how to resolve the difficult situations without using violence or aggression.
- Watch out for signs that your child is being bullied, or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect that a problem exists. Don't dismiss it. Contact the school immediately if you are worried. Don't wait, better to be wrong than late.

If you believe your child has been bullied:

- Calmly talk with your child about his/her experience. Make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened.
- Reassure your child that he/she has done the right thing to tell you about the bullying.
- Explain to your child that should any further incidents occur he/she should report them to a teacher immediately, make an appointment to see your child's Year Leader, explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing.

Talking with teachers about bullying:

- Try to stay calm - bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident.
- Be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened - give dates, places and names of other children involved.
- Make a note of what action the school intends to take, ask if there is anything you can do to help your child or the school.
- Stay in touch with the school; let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.

If you are not satisfied:

Families who feel that their concerns are not being addressed appropriately by the school might like to consider the following steps:

- Refer to the MSM Complaints Policy.
- Make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Headteacher; keep a record of the meeting.
- If this does not help, write to the Chair of Governors explaining your concerns and what you would like to see happening.

Useful websites:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk