

PRIORY SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

As a school with a Christian ethos, we have a very particular approach to dealing with any kind of bullying as we see it in any form, be it physical, verbal, emotional, psychological, and above all if it involves use of any kind of mobile or digital transmission that multiplies the fear and anxiety that bullying generates in an often uncontrolled and exponential way, as an assault upon the dignity and integrity of another human being, replacing the respect each of us should have for one another as human beings of equal worth, all being the children of God, with the exercise of power to induce fear or inflict pain. As such it is utterly antithetical to every value we stand for and is subject to the full measure of the disciplinary process and its sanctions.

For a fuller explanation of the school's Christian ethos, please see the introduction to the school's Child Protection Policy in particular para 2, to be found on the school's website and available in digital or paper form on request at any time.

We will not hesitate to suspend and exclude any bully who cannot or will not amend his or her behaviour. Issue of bullying cross the "red lines" of the school's behaviour policy, along with the use of obscenities, use of illegal substances and use of mobile or digital transmission to belittle or denigrate others. In seeking admission to Priory School and by attendance at Priory School, both pupils and their parents/guardians are understood to agree with this policy without condition, and to adhere to it.

This is implemented in the following manner:

- we aim to create an atmosphere in which every student has a clear sense of his or her own innate dignity and worth, and their involvement in the wider community of which the school community is a microcosm, within which he/she can develop as a young person of integrity, independence of thought and conscience, with a sense of justice and of kindness, and the confidence and courage to express and uphold those values
- The School strives to be a community in which everybody feels valued and safe and in which the concept of the rule of law, applicable to all and accessible to all without fear or favour, is paramount. Many school activities, for example the Christmas lunch where the pupils are served by the staff and parents to show the nature of authority, as residing in the

- office not the person, are designed to illustrate and reinforce this vital concept of the impartial rule of law (law itself being understood as an expression of higher authority whose alteration and development is strictly bound by its own procedures, so not open to personal sway or influence).
- within that clear understanding, and indeed because of it, individuality, difference and variety may and does flourish, as the certainty of ultimate worth and its protection by the ethos of the school and its system of rules underpins this
 - by a system of formal checks and communication procedures that ensure the swift flow of information particularly where pupils' welfare is concerned, the ability to report bullying and the communication of the importance of doing so is enhanced (see para 3A & 3B of the school's Child Protection Policy for details)
 - we also maintain every student has the right to enjoy school and come to complete his or her "studies of good learning" in safety, free from anxiety of any kind, consequently:
 - everybody has these distinct **rights**:
 - to be valued
 - to feel safe
 - to learn
 - to be respected
 - and these **responsibilities**:
 - to respect yourself
 - to respect others
 - to use common sense
 - to be supportive towards others
 - to keep the rules

It is your right and your responsibility to take a stand on bullying, whether the victim is yourself or somebody else. It is never necessary to "suffer in silence"; indeed there is a duty to report and every support and where appropriate confidentiality will be given to any person who reports bullying, whether as a victim or an onlooker or an observer.

Priory School in establishing the facts in any case of disputed behaviour will always seek to find and obtain at least two separate witness statements, in order that any disciplinary sanction has a basis in evidence and can be sustained in the face of any enquiry or examination of its procedures. This also protects all those who report incidents in that they need never fear it is "their word against another's" alone. Priory School respects the confidence of any report given and will not reveal its source except with the consent of the person reporting.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour intended to hurt, injure, threaten or frighten. However, bullying can be a difficult concept to define and takes many forms. Most people would agree that a definition of bullying would usually include the following elements:

- It is generally persistent.
- It involves manipulation and the abuse of power.
- It causes distress to another.
- It is usually premeditated and calculated rather than thoughtless or accidental.
- It can involve an individual or become part of a group activity.
- It can vary in intensity from horseplay to serious physical assault.

Bullying may include any or all of the following behaviours

- Physical: pushing, pinching, hitting, kicking, punching or any acts of physical aggression or threats of violence.
- Verbal: name calling, spreading malicious rumours – either spoken or written, cruel teasing, sarcasm, mimicking
- Non-verbal: body language which may be subtle but nevertheless may be threatening and expressing distaste or rejection.
- Emotional: socially isolating, ignoring or ‘sending to Coventry’, being openly unfriendly, tormenting, threatening, making rude gestures, or giving other subtle but hostile unspoken message.
- Racist, sexist, or derogatory language or behaviour, directed at an aspect of personality or nature

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. It is completely antithetical to the school’s ethos and is never acceptable.

Objectives of this Policy

- All teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- ▲ is frightened of walking to or from school
- ▲ doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
- ▲ begs to be driven to school
- ▲ changes their usual routine
- ▲ is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- ▲ begins to truant
- ▲ becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- ▲ sudden, prolonged periods of quietness
- ▲ unwillingness to socialise, tendency towards being a 'loner'
- ▲ starts stammering
- ▲ anonymous telephone calls
- ▲ attempts or threatens suicide, or speaks of it
- ▲ runs away or "bolts"
- ▲ cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- ▲ feels ill in the morning
- ▲ begins to do poorly in school work
- ▲ comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- ▲ has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- ▲ asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- ▲ has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- ▲ has unexplained cuts or bruises
- ▲ comes home starving (money/lunch has been stolen)
- ▲ becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- ▲ is bullying other children or siblings
- ▲ stops eating
- ▲ is frightened to say what's wrong
- ▲ gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- ▲ is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- ▲ is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

What can you do yourself if you are being bullied?

1. **Tell the bully to stop.** Make it clear that the behaviour is unwelcome and hurtful.
2. **Seek help.** Talk to somebody whom you trust.

3. **Report it.** Priory School views bullying as a very serious offence and supports all those who report it and has specific procedures on both confidentiality and evidence
4. **Use the ‘Drop-in points’.** If you do not know who to turn to, and feel unsure of speaking to anyone, write your name and the issue down on a piece of paper and hand it to the School Administrator or put it in the Principal’s tray in the office or put it in the housepoint box.
5. **Send an email to mail@prioryschool.org.uk.** This will ensure it is read by both the School Administrator and the Principal separately. All reports and discussions are in confidence and use of any reports is never made without the consent of the person reporting unless the report identifies an issue of possible criminal behaviour or alerts to a serious issue of Child Protection (see Child Protection Policy) where the person reporting will be consulted before any use is made of a report. Please note that it is the normal policy of the school to rely on two or more witness statements before the disciplinary procedure is enacted. The second statement corroborating can of course be that of a perpetrator as well as a second witness but is always sought independently of the first.

What should you do if you know someone is being bullied?

- Care enough to take action, whether you are personally involved or not.
- Intervene at an early stage so that the problem is dealt with before it gets out of hand. In school we are “our brother’s keeper”. Always remember: “Evil flourishes when the good do not act”.
- Have the courage to report it. You will be supported.
- Never be afraid in the face of bullying. The bully is often unhappy him or herself and needs help as well, but that can never excuse his or her actions.

What can you do to prevent bullying?

- Respect yourself and others.
- Try to create a relaxed atmosphere in school for everybody.
- Do not follow friends when you disagree with what they are doing.
- Learn to be tolerant and broad-minded about differences of opinion or personality. Never join in the “crowd” when they are taunting or cold-shouldering someone. Have the courage to stand alone and hold fast to your instincts of fairness and decency. Events will always vindicate you. Bullies usually lie, and are found out by the use of thorough investigative measures that the bully may not be aware of.
- Be aware of the school’s anti-bullying policy and give it your full support.
- Sometimes bullies exclude people. If you are popular and have a positive peer-group, include the victim in your activities.

Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to staff, usually form tutor.
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff in pupils' records. A note is always kept of any report in the Principal's Disciplinary file which is kept off site, so inaccessible to any pupil, or to staff without permission
3. In serious* cases parents are usually informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will also be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour, and sanctions often have that double role, to punish but also to help to amend.

*A serious case could include: physical injury, bullying that is sustained over a long period and/or involving several people, bullying that has caused significant emotional distress and where previous interventions have proved unsuccessful, bullying where there is potentially a sustained fixed purpose eg to try and "drive" another pupil out of the school. The latter is viewed with the utmost seriousness.

Strategies

Priory School will use a range of strategies to deal with incidents of bullying. These could include:

- a. Talking to the children involved – sometimes pupils do not recognise that their behaviour is bullying. This also establishes from all witnesses the facts of any case.
- b. Putting the pupils involved together, if appropriate, which can be the case if it is in the same year class, discussing the situation and agree or lay down the steps forward. This can have the advantage of allowing the person who is being bullied to confront the perpetrator, but that is not invariably appropriate. Each case will be handled according to its own merits and for the swiftest resolution ie the bullying stops and permanently. As far as possible this is always done on the basis of "two witnesses" to allow proper evidence to be presented
- c. Where relevant, putting support in place for the person being bullied or the perpetrator.
- d. Involving parents.
- e. Signing anti-bullying contracts if necessary and if considered to be effective
- f. Use school sanctions: - detention, formal notification, suspension (see Behaviour & Disciplinary Policy for standard procedures in all areas of discipline)
- g. If appropriate involve outside agencies, e.g. Police, Social Services, EWOs.
- h. Work with the bullies.
- i. In very serious, persistent cases, where other interventions have failed the school will not hesitate to use the sanction of exclusion where it is clear all other procedures have not effected a cessation or bullying and/or a change in conduct

by any bullies. In cases where there is the potential for actual physical harm, especially if it involves external factors ie friends or relatives of the bully being involved and the continuance of the bullying outside school though still linked to school, the police will be drawn in and a strategy of protection devised. The school will always advise and press for charges to be brought by the police against those threatening pupils, where the bullying and threats are of such a kind to merit that step. Parents and families need to know they will receive whole-hearted and dedicated support from the school in this and close working between school and home is vital in this if the problem is to be properly dealt with.

It is important that issues of bullying are dealt with swiftly, and the appropriate sanctions applied with clarity and consistency. There is always a danger of a “victim” feeling he or she is unsupported, and staff and pupils need to be aware of the vulnerability involved in this, especially if the bullying has happened over a period of time, or has only just come to light having been sustained for some time.

What Can Parents Do?

1. Ensure that you encourage anti-bullying behaviour.
2. Ensure that your child understands it is unacceptable to use language that offends a person.
e.g. About a person’s appearance
About a person’s family
About a person’s personality, nature, character or behaviour
3. Ensure that your child understands that it is a criminal offence to use racist language
4. If there is an incident of bullying refer it to the school, do not take matters into your own hands. Please do not approach other pupils. Be assured the school takes bullying extremely seriously and will never tolerate it.
5. It may take time to establish clear facts, though speed is always essential once the issue has been raised, as it will involve an investigation and the school is extremely thorough about collecting witness statements, and often will do so without the bully realising so that once established the facts are incontrovertible and give a sound and irrefutable basis for sanctions if necessary. However, speed of investigation is a crucial factor in ensuring the victim feels supported. See note above in “**Strategies**”.
6. Understand that bullying is a very serious matter.
7. Parents need to recognise that the school must look at all sides.
8. Parents need to support the school’s anti-bullying policy.

DO NOT TELL YOUR CHILD THAT BULLYING IS PART OF GROWING UP OR IMPLY THAT IT IS IN ANY WAY ACCEPTABLE.

9. Encourage your child to take action on bullying, but do not tell him/her to retaliate either physically or with name-calling. Reinforce the school’s policy

- above on “**What can you do to prevent bullying**”.
10. Show an example by being firm but positive and not aggressive in your approach to discipline.
 11. Confront the possibility that your child may be a bully.
 12. If your child is being bullied, please **REPORT IT** – the school will take action.

MONITORING

Priory School monitors its Anti-Bullying policy regularly and renews it along with its Child Protection Policy in January of each year in order to ensure its effectiveness.

Authorised by E J Matyjaszek Principal
Date effective January 1st 2010

This policy is designed to give expression to the relevant legislation and draws from the DCSF Guidance "Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools" that can be found at this weblink:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/tacklingbullying/safetolearn/>

Also, A copy of the related DCSF Guidance "Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education" can be found at this weblink:

<http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/resources-and-practice/IG00175/>

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Protection Policy and its Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy, to be found on the school's website www.prioryschool.org.uk.