

**QUEEN'S COLLEGE, LONDON**



**Anti-Bullying**

*POLICY DOCUMENT*

## **Anti-Bullying Policy** *Staff Handbook Ref: 6.*

### **QUEEN'S COLLEGE, LONDON POLICY AGAINST BULLYING and staff procedures for dealing with any incidents reported**

'We measure our success by the development of each individual. We value personal integrity and the discernment to deal responsibly with the wider world.'

#### **AIMS OF THE POLICY**

This policy is designed to be clear, practicable and sensible; hence, it is not exclusive, cannot cater for every eventuality and does not lay down rigid rules. It enshrines a central tenet of the philosophy of Queen's College: that the spiritual and moral welfare of the pupil is crucial for the development of happy, confident and courteous individuals who integrate successfully with their peers and contribute thoughtfully to life in the community. In order to achieve this, the college aims to prevent bullying and to deal effectively with bullying if it does occur. We shall do this by:

- maintaining an environment characterised by warmth, positive regard and mutual respect, so that bullying will be less likely;
- raising awareness of bullying through the curriculum and other activities;
- having a clear Code of Conduct;
- developing effective strategies for recognising and supporting victims of bullying, including victims of homophobic bullying, cyberbullying and bullying related to race, religion, sex and culture, and for recognising and dealing with bullies;
- ensuring that all staff know what to do if they come across bullying, that they treat incidents seriously and that they are consistent in their approach;
- assuring parents and pupils that all reports of bullying will be treated seriously.

## What constitutes bullying

Bullying can mean different things to different people and takes different forms, but two major elements are that:

- a) bullying is persistent behaviour which intimidates individuals or groups through verbal, emotional or physical aggression.
- b) bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else.

Bullying can be:

- short-term or can continue over many years, sometimes starting in a previous school
- physical - kicking, punching, slapping, pushing, pulling hair
- verbal - name-calling, personal, family or racial insults
- written - passing notes, use of email, MSN, internet/cyber bullying (see separate policy on use/abuse of the computer network)
- references to clothing or other possessions which cast aspersions on another girl's choices or financial means
- exclusion from an activity, inside or outside school
- psychological - a look, whispering, shunning, laughing at someone
- overt, but is more usually covert, and can be subtle intimidation
- taking or defacing property
- belittling achievements and undermining self-esteem

## RECOGNISING LIKELY VICTIMS

Bullies usually pick on vulnerable girls. Vulnerability is not always visible to adults and the victim may look and behave like any other girl. Recognition is made more difficult as some victims are 'passive' whilst others are 'active'. Even though it is not always easy, teachers should try to identify those who might be seen as vulnerable.

Victims may be girls who:

- are new to the class or college
- are different in appearance, speech or background from other girls
- suffer from low self-esteem, whether as cause or effect of bullying
- are nervous, anxious, insecure - tend to be sensitive and quiet
- are younger and weaker than the rest of the peer group - less likely to retaliate
- are isolated, lonely or 'loners' - sometimes only girls with minimal experience of socialising and who are close to their parents
- appear or have in the past been powerful, aggressive, provocative and disturbed: these are 'active' victims
- are evidently more academically able than others

Victims react in different ways:

- crying, withdrawal, spending undue time with the Nurse or in the library, reluctance to come to college, reluctance to socialise outside school, lack of involvement in college activities such as sports teams, absence through minor ailments

#### RECOGNISING LIKELY BULLIES

Identification of the 'typical' bully is difficult as the background, nature, motivation and actions of bullies can vary considerably. Those who act aggressively and overtly are obviously easier to identify as bullies than those who are more subtle and covert in their actions and teachers will have to use their experience, training and professional judgement in recognising bullies, who may exhibit the following characteristics:

- is aggressive to peers, teachers, parents and siblings
- likes to dominate, calls out, shows off
- has a positive attitude to violence and exhibits anti-social behaviour
- uses abusive or inappropriate language

Teachers should understand that such behaviour often masks academic or other inadequacies, insecurity, humiliation, the effects of being bullied themselves and other emotional and family problems. Alternatively, such girls may be academically clever, confident, arrogant, undisciplined at home and spoilt.

#### WHAT TO DO IF BULLYING OCCURS

Initial steps:

- always treat the incident seriously. Listen to parents or girls and assure them that you will investigate the matter, take action and inform them of the outcome. Assure parents that reporting any incident will not aggravate the situation and that no significant action can be taken unless the perpetrator is named
- parents, staff and girls should report any incident to the relevant Form Tutor who must immediately inform the School and Junior Mistress, the Head of the Senior College, the Senior Mistress, the Senior Tutor or the Principal and, in consultation with him/her, investigate and log the reported incident(s), and take other necessary action as soon as possible
- reassure the victim and offer support and advice
- make the College's strong disapproval plain to the bully/bullies
- decide and institute punishment as appropriate and oversee an apology.

The Principal, or another member of staff, will inform both sets of parents if necessary. She will report back to any parent(s) who may have raised the matter in the first place. If appropriate, she will suggest a review date.

Relevant staff (Form Tutor, pastoral staff, Senior Tutor) will be told what has happened and will not perpetuate the incident by continued references to it, unless it should re-occur.

SANCTIONS – if it is a small, local matter within one Form, the Form Tutor will agree sanctions with the Senior Tutor or Principal. Otherwise she will discuss with the Principal who will then mete out punishment which will be swift and appropriate.

Sanctions might include:

- forfeiture of outings or privileges
- lunchtime chores
- spending break/lunch time being supervised by a member of staff
- suspension (automatic for serious abuse of email or internet)
- permanent exclusion, although more usually parents will agree to withdraw their daughter

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## HOW TO HELP THE VICTIM AND THE BULLY

**The victim:** all girls must feel that the College is concerned about them and that they can trust the responsible adults within the community. The Principal and staff should give additional pastoral support and help the victims by:

- encouraging them to talk openly, if necessary to another member of staff of their choice with whom they feel at ease;
- giving them the opportunity to write about their feelings;
- conveying to them (and all other girls) that 'it's ok to tell';
- helping them to be more assertive: by teaching them both to tease and be teased, by acting out ways to cope, by learning to say 'no' firmly, by developing a more confident manner;
- eliminating, with the support of parents, obvious causes of bullying, e.g. smell, hair infestation;
- helping the victim to work together with the victim after the problem has been resolved;
- contacting parents to discuss ways in which they can encourage the building of confidence at home, help with assertiveness training and help overcome any obvious external problems, e.g. in appearance. NB: it is unhelpful if we appear to criticise home attitudes, or those prescribed by religious belief – this should be handled by the Principal.

**The bully:** the bully needs additional support, care and counselling if further bullying is to be prevented. It is important that the member of staff most concerned should:

- investigate the incident fully with the bully and let her tell her story, remembering that two versions of the same incident will rarely tally;
- help her to understand what it is like to be bullied, appeal to her better nature, try to develop both empathy and sympathy for victims;
- ensure that there is atonement by overseeing a full apology to the victim, followed by a letter if appropriate;
- set clear expectations about future behaviour;
- state the consequences of failure to meet these expectations;
- praise/reward good behaviour – but beware patronizing/humiliating the bully in front of other girls, otherwise the improvement will be very short-lived;
- the member of staff and the Principal may decide to speak to the parents to ascertain if there is any explanation to be found at home and to discuss future tactics.

## RAISING AWARENESS

**Pupils:** Girls need to be made aware that the College disapproves of bullying and will not tolerate it, that victims will be supported and that bullies will be punished.

Initial form groupings will take into account the recommendation of previous schools, so that girls are placed in groups which are likely to prove supportive. Form Tutors should be alert to the formation of cliques of girls, which are exclusive and designed to keep other girls out. If form groups are rearranged, due weight will be given to the preferences of girls and the recommendation of staff in establishing compatible groups.

The PSHEE programme, the curriculum and other activities will be used to raise awareness. This will include:

- Drama, e.g. role-play about bullying, acting out scenarios written by girls.
- Literature, e.g. reading books which highlight bullying problems.
- Form Prefects will spend time with their Form and use their own experience to identify instances of bullying. From time to time Seniors may offer a listening service for younger girls, and will receive appropriate training to do so.
- The PSHEE programme in Class 3, Class 2 and Class 1 sessions with Form mistresses includes session on friendship and managing conflict, appropriate for each year group. Within those sessions, or in Form Periods, girls should be encouraged to discuss what actions count as bullying and should be helped to understand that it is right to tell a teacher if a girl is being bullied.

- The College Parliament will act as a forum in which such issues can be discussed and the appropriateness of procedures evaluated.
- RS and Assemblies, eg specific lessons from the Bible, such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, Christ's exhortation to 'love thy neighbour as thyself'. Sections of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6) can be used to emphasise the unimportance of material possessions. Examples of 'right living' from other religions should be included.
- Physical activities, e.g. the need for teamwork, sharing apparatus, the importance of skilful, disciplined play rather than rough, aggressive tactics, the ability to lose gracefully and be generous in victory.
- Talks from external agencies, appropriate to various age groups e.g. the Police, Samaritans.

**Staff:** Staff should be especially vigilant when supervising break times, lunch, changing, walking to and from activities and on external visits. Staff should visit their own and other form rooms regularly during times when lessons are not occurring there. The staff at Queen's College will also be actively encouraged to increase their awareness and expertise through:

- Staff meetings where bullying in general and certain specific incidents will be thoroughly discussed and a comprehensive, consistent approach agreed.
- Staff will be reminded periodically that girls should not always choose teams, or seating or work partners, and that they should vary seating plans to ensure that certain girls are not isolated. This applies particularly when a class contains an odd number of girls.
- Form tutors, particularly of the incoming Class 3, will be asked to engage their class in a charity event or form assembly to encourage strategies for working together.
- Staff should be aware of the need for special vigilance when supervising girls on an outing, whether for the day or overnight, ensuring that rooming plans chosen by girls are not used to isolate individuals. Staff who do not normally teach the group they are supervising should consult form or pastoral staff to establish any likely victims.
- Staff training. This will include 'in-house' sessions run by professionals from time to time, attendance at professional meetings and conferences
- Advice taken by the Principal from professional bodies such as ASCL, ATL, DCSF.

**Parents:** The management of the college, the atmosphere prevailing in the school and the degree of co-operation and communication between home and school must be such that parents do not worry about their daughters being bullied in school. Parents must feel confident that the college will listen, take their concerns seriously and act against aggressive, bullying girls; they must feel confident that any victims will be supported and that effective strategies are in place to try to prevent and to deal with instances of bullying.

Parental awareness will be raised through:

- Informing them of the existence of the anti-bullying policy and making it available to them
- Talking to the parents of new Class 3 girls at their Induction meeting about lines of communication and assuring them that any concerns will be taken seriously
- Reminding parents that bullying is not acceptable at Queen's College
- Telling parents when staff training on the subject has taken place
- Liaising with the Queen's College Parents' Association, as appropriate
- Communication and co-operation with parents of both bullies and victims, discussing what they can do at home to prompt new behaviour in the bully and to build self-confidence in the victim.

**This policy is reviewed each year by the Council of Queen's College at its AGM.**