

Anti-Bullying Policy

St Mary's CE Primary School



Last reviewed on September 2023

Next Review due by September 2004

Introduction and legislation

Bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to their learning and have serious consequences for their mental health. Bullying which takes place at school does not only affect an individual during childhood but can have a lasting effect on their lives well into adulthood.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures should be part of the school's behaviour policy which must be communicated to all children, school staff and parents.

The Equality Act 2010

A key provision in The Equality Act 2010 is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force on 5 April 2011 and covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

At St Mary's, we have three rules: be ready, be respectful and be safe. Bullying is a serious breach of our rules and we are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This policy is linked to our behaviour policy.

Aims and Objectives

St Mary's is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment creating a positive ethos in which pupils can learn and achieve their potential. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and bullying of any kind is not tolerated. If bullying does occur, all members of our school community should understand the school's approach and be clear about the part they play in the prevention and reporting of such incidents.

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyberbullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical.

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.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Cyber bullying

Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the Headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, should not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, they can decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

Vulnerable groups

Bullying can happen to all children and young people and it can affect their social, mental and emotional health. School staff will support all pupils who are bullied. This means being alert to the effect any form of bullying can have and being especially alert to where it may have a severe impact. There is evidence to suggest that pupils that are badly bullied in school are more likely to be bullied out of school, for instance either on their way to or from school or through cyberbullying.

Some children are more likely to be the target of bullying because of the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. For example those with special educational needs or disabilities, those who are adopted, those who are suffering from a health problem or those with caring responsibilities may be more likely to experience bullying because of difference. Children in care that are frequently on the move may also be vulnerable because they are always the newcomer. These young people are often the same young people who might need greater support to deal with the impact of bullying, for example those who are going through a personal or family crisis. In addition children with special educational needs or disabilities can often lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents so it is important that staff are alert to the potential bullying this group faces and that their mechanisms for reporting are accessible to all.

There will also be a range of other local or individual factors that result in some children being more vulnerable to bullying and its impact than others. Being aware of this will help schools to develop strategies to prevent bullying from happening. It will also help schools be alert to those children who may be severely affected when it does occur. The impact of bullying can be severe because of the nature and extent of the bullying or because it is combined with other factors such as those mentioned above that also affect the social, mental and emotional health of the child.

Signs of bullying

Staff should be vigilant in looking out for signs of bullying or other child protection issues including:

- Physical: unexplained bruised, scratches, cuts, missing belongings, damaged clothes, or schoolwork, loss of appetite, stomach aches, headaches, bedwetting.
- Emotional: losing interest in school, withdrawn, secretive, unusual shows of temper, refusal to say why unhappy, high level of anxiety, mood swings, tearfulness for no reason, and lack of confidence, headaches and stomach aches, signs of depression.
- Behavioural: asking to be taken to school, coming home for lunch, taking longer to get home, asks for more money, using different routes to school, 'losing' more items than usual, sudden changes in behaviour and mood, concentration difficulties, truancy.

Preventing bullying

Children at St Mary's are taught about issues of difference through the curriculum and assemblies as well as dedicated events or projects. Our rules (be ready, be respectful and be safe) are consistently enforced to ensure a purposeful, calm environment.

This policy is shared on our school website to ensure that parents are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied.

How the school responds to allegations of bullying

The following steps are to be taken when dealing with incidents:

- Treat each case with sympathy and understanding, listening to the pupils' concerns.
- Establish if it fits into the school's definition of bullying or is it an isolated incident.
- If a child is being bullied, talk to them about the incidents that are making them unhappy and record the information, including any names that are mentioned.
- Investigate the matter in an appropriate manner, giving a clear message that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated, reporting details to the class teacher/SLT as appropriate.
- Inform the child/children being bullied that the matter has been dealt with and what action has been taken.
- Reassure /support the child being bullied as appropriate- ensure they understand they should continue to report any concerns.
- Inform school pastoral staff/team, who, where appropriate, will attempt to help/support the child/children displaying bullying behaviour to change this type of behaviour, and continue to monitor the situation to ensure that repeated instances do not take place.

- Should the bullying persist the severity of the consequence will increase accordingly in line with School Behaviour Policy.
- Where appropriate the Head Teacher or Deputy Head will be informed at all stages and before contacting parents/carers.

Support for pupils who are bullied

This can include:

- a quiet word from a teacher that knows the pupil well,
- asking the pastoral team/SLT to provide support and
- providing formal counselling, engaging with parents.

Discipline and tackling underlying issues of bullying

Disciplinary measures will be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the children may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves. The behaviour policy sets out the sanctions that can be applied and the ultimate sanction may be permanent exclusion.

Record keeping and monitoring

All incidents of bullying are recorded and reported to the governing body at regular intervals throughout the year.

Responsibilities

This policy only works if it ensures that the whole school community understands that bullying is not tolerated and understands the steps that will be taken to both prevent and respond to bullying. This is done through our Rights Respecting School ethos which ensures pupils understand not only their right to be/feel safe but also their responsibility to respect others.

It is the responsibility of:

- School Governors to take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this policy.
- Governors, the Head Teacher's Senior Management, Teaching and Non-Teaching staff to be aware of this policy and implement it accordingly.
- Pupils to abide by the policy.