



ABINGDON

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **A Statement on Bullying**

Bullying includes a wide range of hurtful behaviour: physical hurting such as hitting or kicking; psychological hurting, such as name-calling, including making racist, sexist, homophobic, cultural, disability and religious comments to other pupils, as well as referring inappropriately to their special educational needs; interfering with or hiding possessions; locking people in or out of rooms; or ostracising them. Bullying also includes the use of information and communications technologies to victimise, threaten, tease or harass others: known as cyberbullying. Mediums such as mobile phone text messages, e mail, phone calls, internet chat rooms and instant messaging and social networking websites such as Facebook and Bebo can all be misused for cyberbullying. Bullying may be criminal, as when money or property is demanded with threats.

Bullying can take place at School or on the way to and from School. Young people may also be bullied in and around their homes. Wherever it takes place, bullying is a serious matter that affects everyone.

Sometimes the bully is so insensitive to the effect he is having on others that he will not be fully aware of the impact of his actions. As a result, behaviour of the type described, which leads to people being hurt, physically or emotionally, can properly be described as bullying, even if the bully is not conscious of the effect of his behaviour. Bullying hurts and can cause serious psychological damage, even suicide. Early signs of distress may include deterioration of work, spurious illness, isolation, the desire to remain with adults, erratic attendance. Whilst this behaviour may be symptomatic of other problems, it may be the early signs of bullying and should be recorded and brought to the attention of housemasters and tutors so that any patterns in behaviour can be identified.

### **A Policy for Stopping Bullying**

We aim to develop a School ethos which encourages civilised behaviour, recognises everyone's individual strengths and deems bullying of any type to be unacceptable. We have adopted, as appropriate, the guidance given in Preventing and Tackling Bullying – Advice for School Leaders, staff and Governing Bodies, which superseded Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools as well as following further DfE guidance on Behaviour and attendance. In line with the School's behavioural policy, staff are required to arrive on time for lessons and to be alert to the signs of rough or boisterous behaviour, on the sports fields, in the lunch and tuck shop queues and houserooms. Bullying can also manifest itself in the form of cyberbullying. Every incident should be followed up. We hope that all members of the Abingdon community will be encouraging and supportive of each other rather than abusive and undermining. Being aware that pupils often find themselves in very crowded situations, the development of patience, consideration and diplomacy is crucial. Relationships must be based on respect, trust and caring for others, rather than on power and strength. Boys new to the school are not subjected to any form of 'initiation ceremony' intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.

The School will not allow bullying to prevent each individual from making the most of his talents. One of the School's key objectives is to stress the importance of good inter-personal relationships; this is highlighted in full School, house and section assemblies, and plays a prominent part in the tutorial and PSHE programmes. Pupils are expected to abide by the Acceptable Use of the School Network Policy, which details clearly the consequences for misuse and to which they have all signed up before being permitted to use the school network. As part of the School community, pupils, including those victimised, have a responsibility to discourage bullying and to report incidents of it. Our experience is that bullying does stop when it has been reported and dealt with and that the victims of the bullying do not suffer as a result of the telling. Bullying can only exist and thrive in an atmosphere of secrecy where individuals are not open enough to talk about their feelings.

The issue of bullying is reviewed regularly at all levels of the school and whole staff training takes place when necessary usually at the start of the academic year or during weekly staff meetings. Regular action is taken to identify those areas where bullying is most likely to take place and measures are taken to eradicate it.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Bullying**

1. Boys being victimised and those who see others being bullied, are encouraged to speak up about bullying, ideally before it becomes harmful. They are encouraged to speak with anyone in authority with whom they feel confident, including the Chaplain and Head. Prefects, at all levels of the School, as well as academic staff, housekeepers and health centre staff, are advised on how to react to requests for help in dealing with bullying.
2. Complaints about bullying will be followed up with vigour and sensitivity. Under some circumstances, it may not be appropriate to identify the victim to the bully but those involved will usually be interviewed and, with the victim's consent, will be brought together to help the bully appreciate the impact of his behaviour. Tutors and housemasters will work closely together to implement a plan of action designed to support the victim and reform the behaviour of the bully. Attempts will be made to defuse tensions between boys and to repair relations so that the bullying does not develop. At this stage, disciplinary measures would be the exception rather than the rule.
3. If the victim continues to feel bullied, he must continue to seek help. Written statements from both the victim and the bully may be asked for and sanctions are likely to be imposed.
4. Parents are kept informed as necessary throughout the victim support process.

### **Sanctions**

These are in accordance with those that can be found in the Behaviour Policy.

1. The bully's housemaster may wish to apply a number of sanctions and may require the bully to write a letter of apology to the victim. A record would be kept on the housemaster's file for a year. If a boy has been involved in cyberbullying this may result in temporary confiscation of certain equipment, for example a mobile phone.
2. If a bully fails to heed the warning and advice of his housemaster, more serious sanctions will be considered. Friday evening detention may be imposed and parents consulted where appropriate. In the case of cyberbullying a boy may have his access to the school network rescinded or limited to certain times whilst under close supervision.
3. If matters are still unacceptable and unresolved, the Head will interview both bully and victim. The Head may issue a formal warning which would be kept on file.
4. In exceptional cases of prolonged and persistent bullying, where the bully fails to see the consequences of his actions, the Head will issue a final warning or even use the ultimate sanctions of suspension and exclusion. It may also be the case that the Police will be contacted.

### **Conclusion**

At Abingdon, we do not accept that bullying is an inevitable part of school life. Our aim is to ensure that pupils do not identify bullying as a serious problem in the school. No one should have to suffer bullying. It is up to all of us to take action when bullying happens, to us or to others.

Deputy Head (Pastoral) – May 2012