

POLICY

THE KING'S SCHOOL

Bullying - Fostering Healthy Relationships

Introduction

- The school seeks to promote an environment in which all students feel valued and accepted as unique individuals, in the family of the School Community.
- Intrinsic to our values is a belief that every individual is unique and of inherent value, made in the image of God. Our behaviour towards one another should reflect these values.
- The school recognises that conflicts in relationships can arise; for the most part such conflicts can be dealt with easily and redemptively by staff.
- Two contexts where more serious problems can arise are:
 - The arrival of a new student into a year group
 - Where an individual comes to feel deliberately ostracised from the year group.
- The school, therefore sets out to promote acceptance of one another through:
 - Everyday relational and devotional life of the school, where staff look to be proactive in fostering acceptance.
 - The SCHWEPS programme, and through teaching in assemblies and RE lessons.
 - Following a proactive programme when a new student joins a year group.
 - Promoting a climate in which bullying or the deliberate exclusion of others are held to be unacceptable practices.
- There is an expectation that all staff will operate proactively in order to cultivate a climate of acceptance, and thereby minimise occurrences of ostracising or bullying.
- Bullying is when a person uses strength or power to hurt or coerce others by intimidation (this may be physical or verbal intimidation)
- Where a pupil experiences distress as a result of the treatment of others (including instances of bullying), the school treats such cases with due seriousness.
- In the case of bullying arising,
 - Pupils are to have been made aware of the routes whereby their distress can be

communicated.

- Procedures, as set in accompanying pages, are to be followed to seek to bring redemption to the situation.

1) The underlying ethos of The King's School seeks to be consistent with the teaching of scripture

The School community therefore, ought to be a place in which:

- every child is unique with individual gifts and needs (Value 9)
- a relational atmosphere of love, acceptance and forgiveness is fostered alongside firm guidelines or boundaries (Value 7)

These values will require consistent attention and proactive action on the part of staff. Selfishness is bound up in all of us, including our pupils. That attitude will need challenging regularly in order to promote acceptance and security for every child.

There are two areas where, historically, these values have been undermined.

- i) The arrival of a new student into the group
- ii) Individuals, who are struggling to belong, (for a variety of reasons) finding their struggles reinforced by their peer group. The experiences of children in this situation can amount to being bullied.

2) Promoting Acceptance

Promoting the acceptance of one another is an ongoing part of our role as teachers in The King's School. Refereeing in disputes between pupils, bringing peace and restoration of relationships is often a daily occurrence. In bringing peace we will be encouraging pupils to forgive one another, respect one another and learn to accept one another. Underlying this is a desire to see the child develop covenantal love (agape) for one another.

Part of our training of the students will therefore call them to ask what would Jesus do in a situation, what does he ask of us in the situation - provoking a faith response in their hearts.

The challenge of accepting one another is raised every time a new student joins the group. Historically our girls have struggled more to embrace the new stranger in their midst.

The following steps should be considered whenever a new student joins the group. Discussion needs to be appropriate to the age and maturity of the group.

Before the Student Joins:

- i. Inform the group it is happening
- ii. Ask two or three pupils to take particular responsibility for caring for the new pupil over the first few weeks.
- iii. Ask the group to individually consider how they feel (threat to friendships, spoils the group dynamic, take away my best friend, be more clever than us etc).
"How should they deal with their fears and insecurities?"
"Can they pray about them?"

- iv. Reinforce your own expectations. Call the group to respond in faith.

Once the Student has Started

- i. Review individually with student how he/she is progressing. Establish your desire to be kept informed of any difficulty - communicate availability; do not communicate fear that you expect things to go wrong.
- ii. Try to find out from trusted pupils how things are progressing.
- iii. Meet with groups of students, including new student, either to help foster the acceptance (getting to know you sessions), or as means of having 'no blame' discussions where any 'misunderstandings', can be shared and talked out without looking to apportion blame.

When the student expresses concern about 'fitting in'

- i. While showing you are taking the pupils' concerns seriously, look to treat matters in as low key a way as possible. (Quite chat - positive suggestions etc).
- ii. Praying about the matter is a given. However a 'Seelsorger' counselling approach may be appropriate, to ask God for clear insight and a way forward. (see separate notes available of Seelsorger approach)
- iii. Other staff and pupils can be drawn into this approach.

3) Bullying

a) *What Constitutes Bullying?*

- The wilful conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else. (Bullying therefore involves exercise of power and/or control over the victim)
- Bullying is as often verbal or psychological as it is physical
- Bullying is any behaviour which is the illegitimate use of power in order to hurt others.
- While the issue of intent is linked to the definition of bullying, an individual who feels bullied may be the victim of continual actions of others which could be seen as inconsiderate rather than deliberate.

Any such behaviour operates contrary to the values of the school. As such it cannot be tolerated. The School's stance is to be clearly promoted to parents and pupils alike, communicating that we wish to tackle any occurrence redemptively, not punitively.

b) *Preventing Bullying*

Bullying may be prevented from arising through fostering a proper attitude of mutual acceptance. Promoting mutual respect and acceptance through:

- the way we promote and model relationships during everyday life at school.

- the use of different seating arrangements in different subjects, remaining sensitive to the needs of particular subjects.
- specific teaching on relevant areas (friendship, acceptance, 'one another' commands of Scripture) through SCHWEPS and RS.
- team game activities (e.g. PE)
- Providing opportunities to foster relationships, and to minimise opportunities for bullying.
e.g. Activities at break times where pupils can be constructively occupied

Designated areas where pupils can gather safely under some level of adult supervision.

Supervised lunchtime sessions where pupils learn to communicate openly and honestly with one another. (Tutor having lunch with groups of pupils)

- Extra curriculum activities (Y10/11 - Residential Weekends, Y9-Y11 Overseas Trips etc). Activities need to be chosen so that they offer consistent, appropriate challenges throughout school.

Identify potential problems by:

- Getting pupils to write from time to time about the school, how they feel about bullying and where bullying might occur.
- Identify areas in school premises where bullying could more readily occur, (such as action to be carried out every three years). Arrange for such areas to be supervised more regularly.

Promote a climate where speaking ill of each other is discouraged.

- Deal firmly and swiftly where you overhear pupils speaking ill of each other.
- Use such occasions to reinforce publicly our positive values.

Ensure pupils understand that school does not accept bullying. Promote a climate of safe reporting.

Establish safe channels of communication - e.g. through trusted friend, parent, senior student, or direct to teacher. (Role of Y11 pupils as students counsellors, could be considered; training would be necessary)

Develop parent-teacher communications further. In particular, provide information of policy to parents, ensuring all new parents and pupils understand school's policy on bullying.

Provide training for staff, whereby they are better equipped to ask the 'right questions'.

4) Dealing with Instances of Bullying

A) *If you come across bullying what can you do?*

First steps: do-

- remain calm; you are in charge. Reacting emotionally may add to the bully's fun and give the bully control of the situation
- take the incident or report seriously
- take action as quickly as possible.
- think hard about whether your action needs to be private or public; who are the pupils involved?
- reassure the victim(s), don't make them feel inadequate or foolish
- offer concrete help, advice and support to the victim(s)
- make it plain to the bully that you disapprove
- encourage the bully to see the victim's point of view
- punish the bully if you have to, but be very careful how you do this. Reacting aggressively or punitively gives the message that it's all right to bully if you have the power.
- explain clearly the punishment and why it is being given.

1. **Involving Others: do -**

- Inform school management and/or other appropriate persons.
- Inform colleagues if the incident arose out of a situation where everyone should be vigilant, e.g. unsupervised toilets.
- Inform/ask your Headteacher to inform both sets of parents calmly, clearly and concisely; reassure both sets of parents that the incident will not linger on or be held against anyone.

First Steps: do -

- make sure the incident doesn't live on through reminders from you.
- try to think ahead to prevent a recurrence of the incident, if you uncover the trigger factor.

If you have to deal with bullying, what should you avoid?

Don't -

- Be overprotective and refuse to allow the victim to help him/herself
- assume that the bully is bad through and through; try to look objectively at the behaviour, with the bully
- Keep the whole incident a secret because you have dealt with it
- try to hide the incident from the parents of the victim or of the bully
- call in the parents without having a constructive plan to offer either side.

B) Where Nature of Bullying is Less Clear

When a pupil shows sign of being a victim of bullying, but there is no clear evidence of bullying taking place, the following procedure is recommended. It can be referred to as 'no blame' approach.

- The 'victim' needs to be made to feel that the complaints/concerns are being heard. Establish clearly how the pupil is feeling and why. Get him/her permission to share these "feelings" with others in the group. Get the pupil to understand that we are not seeing to blame anyone, but we are looking for everyone, including the 'victim', to take responsibility for their own future actions.
- Talk to other members of the group either individually or corporately about how the 'victim' is feeling.
 - 'Were they aware of this?'
 - 'Why does he/she feel like this?'
 - 'What can be done to help him/her?'
- Make them aware of the power of their words, - explain the 'hearing' process whereby what we say gets filtered by the hearers' feelings and emotions - often to mean something we never intended to say.
 - 'Are there things they have said that could have been misinterpreted?'
 - 'How can they communicate differently?'
- Avoid use of terms bullied, victim, bully etc in these discussions
- Ideally, work towards getting the 'victim' to agree to sit with the 'bullies', so that open sharing of one another's feelings can be expressed, forgiveness spoken out, and new intentions verbalised - in front of a third party witness (e.g. form tutor)
- An alternative to 'no blame' approach when working with a year group, the 'victim' may prefer to be helped by being supported by older students (members of Y11) and also by trusted members of their own year group, where possible. It may be possible for the older students to achieve the same end result, as a staff member, through a more informal approach, speaking on behalf of the 'victim'.
- At an appropriate point - soon rather than later - all parents concerned in the incident are informed of the situation, the action taken by the school, and the expectations that have been set in place for the future.