

# **Shrewsbury House School Anti-Bullying Policy**

We have a strong anti-bullying culture at Shrewsbury House School. Nevertheless, in any situation where people interact, bullying, or what can be construed to be bullying, can occur.

Bullying in any form is not acceptable in the School and it affects young people's confidence, self esteem, attendance and attainment.

We recognise that we owe a duty of care to all of the boys who attend Shrewsbury House both as part of our responsibility for child protection and to enable boys to gain full benefit from their education.

Pupils will learn best in a safe and calm environment that is free from disruption and in which education is the primary focus. The provision of a safe and happy place to learn is essential to achieving school improvement, raising achievement and attendance, promoting equality and diversity, and ensuring the safety and well-being of all members of the school community.

Shrewsbury House School takes an active approach to promoting good behaviour and respect for others, seeking to ensure that bullying in any form does not occur in the first place and we promote an anti-bullying culture. We aim to educate the pupils about people's differences and show them how we are all different and yet equal as a way to help prevent bullying occurring, using such methods as both formal and informal discussions in tutor periods, assemblies and lessons. We also focus on values of respect for one another and considering how our actions affect others.

However, when bullying does occur, we respond promptly and firmly. We also seek to ensure that all school staff and pupils have the tools and confidence they need to prevent and tackle bullying whenever and wherever it occurs.

## **The aims**

We aim to stimulate an "anti-bullying culture" between pupils, between staff and pupils, and, equally important, between staff themselves as well as the wider school community including parents. Any incidence of bullying is reported immediately through the appropriate channels (see below) and will be addressed as a matter of urgency. We aim to create a culture where all feel assured that they are listened to and incidents are acted upon, making it easier for all to report bullying.

To assist us in doing our utmost to avoid the occurrence of bullying at Shrewsbury House School, we rely on the vigilance of staff, the good sense of boys and the support of parents. Although there must be a distinction between what can happen intentionally and what can happen unintentionally, neither is acceptable at Shrewsbury House School.

It is essential that the school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they cooperate closely together. Acceptance of this Anti-bullying Policy forms part of our standard Terms and Conditions, which are issued to parents as part of the admissions procedure.

## **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, cyber-bullying via text messages, e-mail or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs, disability, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, deliberate exclusion, or complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory. Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time.

## **Cyber-Bullying**

Cyber-bullying can be defined as: 'the deliberate use of Information Communications Technology (ICT) - particularly mobile phones and the internet, including photographs, email and social networking sites to upset someone else.'

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying which can happen at any time, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. We are aware of the ease by which boys have access to ICT and also the potential for great harm (and great good) that such access allows, so we seek to educate pupils, staff and parents/carers to the possibilities and dangers of cyber-bullying and to show that it will be treated as seriously as any other form of bullying.

## **Safeguarding Children and Young People**

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.

Where this is the case, the School Staff should report their concerns to the Child Protection Officer, Mr. Jon Akhurst, or in his absence, the Acting Child Protection Officer, Mrs. Jan Hand, or the Headmaster, who may in turn refer this to the local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, the School may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child committing the act of bullying.

## **Criminal Law**

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it can cause great psychological damage, so it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. Where it is felt that such an offence may have been committed, the Headmaster would seek assistance from the Police.

## **Equality Act 2010**

At Shrewsbury House School we seek to eradicate discrimination and to comply with The Equality Act 2010 by:

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

## **Signs of bullying**

Staff take a pro-active approach to the care and safeguarding of the pupils and it is their responsibility to raise any concerns that they have that a pupil may be being bullied, be it at school or outside school. Possible signs of bullying may include, but is not exclusive to, the following:

- Unwillingness to return to school;
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged;
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
- Diminished levels of self confidence;
- Frequent visits to the School Matron;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults;
- Repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiencing nightmares;
- Talking of suicide or running away.

It must be emphasised that these are guidelines to possible symptoms, although there may be other causes for some of them, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents/carers and teachers. We would differentiate between what is intentional and unintentional. Other unintentional behaviour can hurt a victim, either physically or psychologically. This is not acceptable and requires guidance, but we would not include it in our definition of bullying which we would emphasise is something that is intentional.

## **If you are being bullied:**

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be, and that it is WRONG!
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is difficult to do this but a bully can thrive on someone's fear.
- For a while, you might choose to stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.

- Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff where you will get support and be listened to.
- Fighting back is not the appropriate response.

### **If you know someone is being bullied:**

Take action! Watching and doing nothing may look as if you are on the side of the bully. We all have a responsibility to report a situation where we see others suffering. It is important that you do nothing to promote the behaviour of the bully.

Report all problems to a member of staff.

### **Dealing with bullying**

We always treat it very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the School's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

Any alleged or perceived bullying is investigated as a matter of priority and dealt with appropriately. Proven bullying is regarded as a very serious matter. The distress that can be caused to victims through the act or acts of bullying can be very significant and any proven instances of bullying will be dealt with due regard to the importance of fully implementing the School's Anti-bullying Policy and the seriousness with which the school takes this matter.

School staff are best placed to decide how best to respond to the particular issues that affect their pupils.

- When an alleged incident of bullying is drawn to a member of staff's attention, they must act as a matter of urgency. Advice may be sought from a member of the Executive Management Team. In all situations, the Headmaster, the Director of Pastoral Care, The Head of Year and the Tutor must be copied in and informed.
- The person investigating will take an account from the victim and seek to ascertain whether or not bullying has taken place. The member of staff will then advise as to whether in his/her opinion bullying has taken place. If it does seem to be bullying the member of staff will investigate by talking to the victim, the alleged bully, and any other relevant parties.
- The problem will be explained to those involved individually so that the distress of the victim is understood.
- The alleged bully and/or group will be made to understand that they are responsible for putting things right and are asked to suggest ways in which this can be done by them. He/they will be offered guidance on modifying his/their behaviour and reminded that this behaviour must not be continued or repeated.
- He/they will be talked through any sanctions and disciplinary measures will be applied to show clearly that this behaviour is wrong. (Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the pupils 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 victim is told that the matter has been dealt with and there should be no re-occurrence. He must report to the relevant member of staff if the bullying continues. It will be made clear to him that revenge is inappropriate. He will be offered support to develop a strategy to help himself.
- A few days later all involved should be seen to ascertain how things are progressing. Ongoing support will be provided for both the victim and the bully where necessary.

All of this must be recorded, on the Pastoral Record and copied to the Headmaster's Personal Assistant who will add it to relevant boy (s)' files, and reported to the Headmaster is who will inform the rest of the staff. If the matter is of particular urgency an immediate staff meeting will be convened.

Parents of the victim and/or alleged bully will be involved if it is deemed necessary to help solve a problem or to provide more information. Otherwise, parents of the victim and bully will be informed immediately of what is alleged and they will be kept informed of what has happened with the investigation and what action has been taken (although no parent of another boy may be told what a punishment of a boy who is not their son is and staff must be careful not to mention to a parent names of other boys involved or who are witnesses.)

It is hoped that there will not be the need to consider suspension or permanent exclusion but if an incident is sufficiently serious then either of these courses may be considered by the Headmaster.

## **Bullying Outside School Premises**

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Headmaster should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the Police or Anti-social Behaviour Coordinator in their Local Authority of the actions taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the Police should always be informed.

## **Preventative Measures**

We take the following preventative measures:

- Staff awareness of areas and times of risk. Bullying is likely to take place at times when an adult is not immediately present or close enough. Staff members are particularly aware that potentially the most likely occasions and places at Shrewsbury House School are: between lessons; when there is queuing; the lavatories; on minibuses; the field; the dining hall and sports hall, all of which give opportunity to exclude a boy.
- We use Assemblies to raise the issue of bullying and its supreme undesirability.
- Our Personal, Social and Health Education and Tutor Programme is designed to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school.

The Programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other.

- Other lessons or activities, particularly Religious Studies, English and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated as a matter of urgency by an appropriate member of staff. Even if the incident is not dealt with personally by the Headmaster or Director of Pastoral Care, they are made aware of all alleged incidents of bullying. He retains a record of these to enable the school to be aware of any emerging patterns to develop pro-active strategies to avoid bullying. We always monitor reported incidents.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Tutors and Heads of Year who support the Executive Management Team and are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying.
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies.
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the School site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour. We raise staff awareness of any proven bullying incidents through our weekly staff meetings.
- Our Library/Sick Bay displays advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the School, involving our pupils.
- Staff training in implementing the School's Anti-Bullying policy is undertaken through the weekly full teaching staff meetings, participation in assemblies, house meetings and tutor groups. In addition support and feedback meetings can be undertaken with individual staff members seeking guidance or advice. The Headmaster and/or Director of Pastoral Care undertakes anti-bullying training annually with all teaching staff members and other relevant members of staff.
- Regular pastoral meetings are held where individual pupils and issues can be raised.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

This policy was updated January 2011

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headmaster and the Director of Pastoral Care