

## METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### AIMS

- To enable pupils, parents and staff to work together to prevent bullying
- To foster an ethos of responsibility and caring among all staff and pupils, in particular a positive expectation that everyone should be treated with respect, irrespective of race, creed, age, sexual orientation or disability, and the rejection of behaviour which is deemed inappropriate, abusive, malicious, offensive or violent
- To emphasise the issue for all staff, and remind them of their roles in preventing bullying and to encourage vigilance at all times
- To re-emphasise to pupils the College's standards and values
- To outline the College's broad interpretation of what constitutes bullying and the sanctions that will be put into effect if bullying occurs
- To ensure that pupils and parents know how to raise a concern about bullying, in the confidence that the issue will be dealt with in a professional way
- To provide support for pupils who are bullied
- To enable those pupils who engage in bullying to adopt positive attitudes and behaviour

### ANTI-BULLYING STATEMENT

The College is completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. It is entirely contrary to the values and principles we live by and the ethos of the school. All pupils have a right to be taught (and staff have a right to work) in a secure, caring environment, free from the threat of psychological and physical abuse. Everyone in the College has a responsibility to contribute in whatever way they can to the protection and maintenance of such an environment. If bullying does occur, it will be dealt with promptly, effectively and appropriately.

“Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence (physical and mental). They must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by looking after them.” Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

### DEFINITION OF BULLYING

**“Deliberate hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him/herself”**

Child Protection: Pastoral Care in Schools (DENI 1999)

Pastoral Care in Schools – Promoting Positive Behaviour, June 2001

## **TYPES OF BULLYING**

Bullying may involve an individual or a group of people

### **Cyber Bullying**

- **Text message bullying** involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
- **Picture/video clip bullying via mobile phone cameras** is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy Slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.
- **Phone call bullying via mobile phone** uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
- **E-mail bullying** uses e-mail to send menacing or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them.
- **Chat room bullying** involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
- **Bullying through instant messaging (IM)** is an Internet-based form of bullying where children or young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online.
- **Bullying via websites** includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for cyber bullying.

### **Emotional Bullying**

- Emotional blackmail, being unfriendly, excluding others,
- Forcing someone to do something against his/her will

### **Physical Bullying**

- Pushing, poking, scuffling, barging, hitting, blocking, tripping, throwing objects at someone, unwanted touching, unacceptable gestures or any use of violence
- Hiding or mistreating personal belongings, defacing work, demanding money

### **Verbal Bullying**

- Taunting, teasing, name-calling, mocking physical or racial characteristics or a person's beliefs or sexual orientation or achievements, shouting insults, sarcasm, starting or spreading malicious rumours, graffiti
- Issuing threats
- Writing offensive notes or sending offensive texts, chat room messages or e-mails (see cyber bullying above)

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF**

Our staff will

- Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils
- Address bullying through our Personal Development programme and other parts of the curriculum
- Be alert to signs of distress and other indications of bullying both inside and outside the classroom
- Listen to children that have been bullied. Take what they say seriously and act to protect them
- Report suspected cases of bullying to the Head of Form or Head of Pastoral Care
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying and report back promptly and fully on the action that has been taken
- Deal with observed cases of bullying promptly and effectively in accordance with agreed procedures
- Make a continuing and concerted effort to eradicate bullying from the school community

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PUPILS**

We expect our pupils

- To behave in a caring manner towards other members of the school community
- To help create a climate where bullying is not accepted
- To refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying
- To offer support, where appropriate, to any pupil who is being bullied,
- To report to a member of staff or a prefect any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying involving themselves or others. Not telling means the victims may continue to suffer. We all have a responsibility to make sure that bullying is not allowed to occur in our school

**Note:** The College operates a system of peer support through the Prefect system. Prefects/mentors must report any concerns about bullying to the appropriate Head of Form or Head of Pastoral Care.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

We ask our parents to support their children and the College by

- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying
- Advising their children to report any bullying to their Tutor/ Head of Form/ Head of Pastoral Care
- Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying
- Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken
- Informing the school of any instances of bullying even if their child is not involved
- Co-operating with the College if their child is accused of bullying, by trying to ascertain the truth and pointing out the implications of bullying for the pupil who is bullied and the bully
- Monitoring their children's use of the internet and mobile phones

## **ACTION IN THE EVENT OF BULLYING**

- Pupils should report instances of bullying to any member of staff, who will then inform the relevant Head of Form. An appropriate strategy will be agreed between the member of staff and the Head of Form. The Head of Pastoral Care will also be advised of the situation by the Head of Form.
- The report of bullying will be investigated. Written statements will be taken.
- The Head of Form will ensure that a record is kept of all significant aspects of the incident(s), unless the matter is passed on to a more senior member of staff, who will ensure that records are kept.
- Parents/guardians of the pupil who is bullied and the bully will be contacted.
- The pupil bullied will be given practical help, advice and support to restore his/her self-esteem and confidence, and to feel secure in the school community.
- The bully (bullies) will be told clearly that this behaviour is unacceptable. Disapproval of the anti-social behaviour will be expressed not disapproval of the person. Action will be taken to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour. If necessary and appropriate, referrals to outside agencies will be made.
- Appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. The range of sanctions includes a warning, withdrawing privileges, detention, suspension or exclusion for severe or persistent misdemeanours.
- The Head of Pastoral Care should monitor the effectiveness of the intervention and offer appropriate support.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

*It is the responsibility of the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) to conduct a formal review of the policy at least once every year. This will be done in consultation with the Principal, the Head of Pastoral Care and the Heads of Section. To inform this review the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will seek the views of a selection of pupils, parents and staff. The revised policy will be discussed with the Senior Leadership Team before being presented to the Board of Governors for approval.*

*The views of pupils and parents are welcome at any time and should be directed to the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) or the Head of Pastoral Care.*

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

**Childline** (08001111) ([www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)) provides confidential advice for young people

**Kidscape** ([www.kidscape.org.uk/childrenteens/cyberbullying.shtml](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/childrenteens/cyberbullying.shtml)) provides advice for young people on how to respond to cyber bullying

**Thinkuknow** ([www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)) provides practical information and advice about many aspects of the internet

The **Anti-bullying Network**, ([www.antibullying.net/](http://www.antibullying.net/)) provides information for teachers and other professionals who work with young people

**Chat Danger** ([www.chatdanger.com/](http://www.chatdanger.com/)) is a website about the potential dangers of interactive online services like chat, instant messaging, email and mobiles.

**Stop Text Bully** [www.stoptextbully.co.uk](http://www.stoptextbully.co.uk) includes resources such as a Top 10 Tips poster for young people and a school resource pack 'Putting U in the Picture'.

**Kidsmart**([www.kidsmart.org.uk/](http://www.kidsmart.org.uk/)) is a website, dealing with Internet safety programmes for schools, young people and parents.

**The Parents Centre** (<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/index.htm>) provides advice on bullying.

The **Centre for Exploitation and Online Protection** ([www.ceop.gov.uk/](http://www.ceop.gov.uk/)) also provides a facility for reporting abuse on the Internet. If online content is potentially illegal, then it should be reported to the Internet Watch Foundation ([www.iwf.org.uk/](http://www.iwf.org.uk/))

The **urzone website**, ([www.urzone.com/](http://www.urzone.com/)) is sponsored by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and provides advice and help on a range of issues affecting young people

In the event of continued concerns by parents/guardians, issues can be raised with the College using “**Parental Contacts with the School about Concerns or Problems Policy**”

