

Charitable Objects of St. Catherine's School

The Objects for which the Company is established are to promote and provide for the advancement of education by providing, conducting, governing, carrying on and maintaining in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, a boarding or day school or schools for girls in which the teaching shall be in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

St Catherine's School, Bramley PREP SCHOOL POLICY ANTI-BULLYING

The Prep School refers to all staff and students in the St. Catherine's Preparatory School which includes: the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Pre-Prep School (Key Stage 1) and Prep School (Key Stage 2).

This policy was revised and updated in February 2024 in line with updated ISI regulatory requirements and previously in February 2022, September 2019, April 2018, October 2016, October 2013, November 2010 and July 2009, in line with the School's Policy Review Schedule which ensures that all policies are kept up to date, and replaces the policy of 2008. The review has also taken into account DfE guidance Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017), Cyber bullying: Advice for Headteachers and school staff (Nov 2014), Advice for Parents and carers on cyberbullying (Nov 2014), DSCF Safe to Learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools (2007-2011) and Every Child Matters with specific reference to the outcome (2003-2010), Stay Safe (2005 and 2011), The Equality Act 2010 and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE, 2023). This policy should be read in conjunction with the Prep School Behaviour (rewards and sanctions) Policy, the ICT Policy – Guidelines for the use of Digital Technology and the Child Protection Policy.

A Note of Reassurance

Bullying is a rare occurrence at school but any incident runs counter to the aims, ethos and values of St. Catherine's as published on the school website and the Wheel for Life (Appendix 1) which is included in the pupils' planners and girls' keyrings. Consequently, reported incidents will be explored very carefully.

Experience has shown that any episode dealt with quickly and in line with this policy has led to a positive outcome. Sensitive handling by staff using a restorative justice approach in the first instance is necessary, of course, as is the support of parents in the process.

We believe that all members of the school community, governors, staff and students alike are entitled to a safe and happy environment in which to work. **Our aim** is to prevent bullying by being proactive in encouraging tolerance and understanding amongst staff and pupils alike. We use opportunities such as Kindness Awards, House Points, assemblies and form times to reward and recognise good behaviour and to promote successful role models.

Should an incident of bullying occur or a concern be raised, every effort is made to deal with such concerns or incidents immediately. This will be recorded and actions/meetings noted.

We have a zero tolerance approach to child on child abuse and it should never be passed off as 'banter' or 'just having a laugh' as this can lead to unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

We define bullying (child on child abuse) as any form of persistent behaviour which is cruel or overbearing, threatens or hurts another. It is a form of abuse that comprises repeated acts over time that involve a real or perceived imbalance of power and in circumstances where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can be **physical** which includes such actions as hitting, pushing or damaging possessions, **verbal/emotional** which involves using any insulting form of behaviour, such as comments relating to discrimination (eg on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities) or incessant teasing, **hostile gestures** which include such actions as ignoring or rejecting another person. Child on child abuse can occur in intimate personal relationships between peers. This may include sexual violence and sexual harassment or causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent. Being a bystander and doing nothing is an example of **passive bullying**. **Indirect verbal bullying** includes spreading rumours, malicious notes or **cyber bullying** such as mobile phone text messages, photographs, emails or via social networking websites or other social media including consensual and non consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. For specific guidance on responsible use of new technologies, please see the ICT Policy – Guidelines for the use of Digital Technology. We recognise that such behaviour could in extreme circumstances lead to psychological damage and even suicide.

Bullying Experienced Outside School

There are rare occasions when the school may impose a sanction due a pupil's behaviour outside the school premises, including online. For example, bullying which occurs off the school premises or online and which is witnessed by a staff member or reported to the school would be fully investigated and may result in a sanction.

Other examples include:

- when pupils are taking part in any school-organised or school-related activity
- when travelling to or from school on our coaches or by public transport
- when wearing school uniform
- when in some other way identifiable as a pupil at the school

or when a pupil's behaviour could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

Pupils at St Catherine's are encouraged to take pride in themselves and in their school community. There is a strong emphasis on girls developing self-belief, achieving and enjoying rounded success. This is encapsulated in our branding Believe, Achieve, Succeed.

As part of our Life Matters (PSED/PSHE and RSE) Curriculum we ensure that girls are given advice on how to deal with **any** experiences they have of bullying outside School perpetrated by those inside or outside the St.Catherine's community. This includes talking to the local Police

about problems in the locality or offering guidance on how to handle situations they may encounter and who to talk to.

Countering Bullying in School – Our Strategies

We follow a restorative justice approach. It moves away from the idea of bully/ies and victim/s to the individual/s, and replaces punishment with conciliatory parties to find a solution. The philosophy behind this is that the victim would rather the bullying stopped than someone be punished. It also develops mutual understanding and empathy between the parties. We recognise that in extreme cases a restorative justice approach may not be the most appropriate method for dealing with severe persistent bullying. In the event of an unsuccessful outcome and with regard to the severity and persistence the school would consider imposing sanctions and in the most extreme of circumstances would consider exclusion.

In the Prep School we interpret the restorative justice approach as follows:

- We listen sincerely and with patience to every child and take their concerns seriously.
- When incidents or concerns emerge which indicate a pattern of behaviour which may be interpreted as bullying (ie persistent and targeted at a specific individual) we will record each child's account, wherever possible in their own words.
- We do not consider punishment as necessarily the most appropriate way of dealing with any such incident as 'victims' can often then be more reluctant to share their concerns.
- We aim for open and understanding communication between all parties.
- We aim to facilitate a reconciliation and greater understanding between the pupils involved and we do not expect the behaviour to be repeated.
- We recognise that at this young age pupils need guidance and reassurance. They also need to build an understanding of the possible consequences of their actions and words.
- The process of bringing girls together to resolve issues is normally conducted by the Form Teacher/s of the girls involved but it may also be appropriate to involve a member of the Prep SMT.
- Parents will be kept informed should concerns be raised or bullying behaviour identified.
- Incidents or concerns will be raised and discussed at Prep Staff Meetings under 'Girls of Concern' and the Prep Headmistress will be kept informed at each stage.
- Records of bullying will be held in a confidential record maintained by the Prep Headmistress or Head of Pre-Prep and relevant notes filed within individual pupil files.

Staff Awareness

It is essential that teaching and non-teaching staff should be aware of what to look for, and staff and girls should be familiar with the procedure to follow when incidents of bullying occur. The school endeavours to reduce the instances of bullying in likely places by using 'buddy pairs' which change weekly, ensuring staff patrols during lunchbreaks on the playing fields and in changing rooms and by providing a wide range of supervised extra curricular activities both at lunchtime and after school.

Regular INSET training for staff addresses a broad range of pastoral topics including bullying and mental health. There are opportunities for staff to discuss their concerns under the item 'Girls of Concern,' at weekly staff meetings or to talk through strategies with a member of the Prep SMT. Regular discussion ensures that the principles of the school policy are understood, legal responsibilities are known, action is defined to resolve and prevent problems and sources of support are available. Where needed, specialised skills will be sought to understand the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils. Staff recognise that even if there are no reported cases of peer-on-peer abuse, such abuse may still be taking place but not reported.

Pupil Awareness

At the start of each term Form Teachers discuss the guidance for girls: Staying Safe poster (see appendix 2) with their classes. This poster is also included in the girls' Student Planner (FI-LIII). Form Teachers should also explain the 'procedure for girls' detailed below. This outlines what girls should do if they feel that they or others are the victims of bullying. Pupils are expected to show respect and understanding of others and encouraged to share their concerns with a member of staff.

The girls are taught to express how they feel to each other using the TAG (Talk to each other, Ask what you need, Get help from an adult) system to enable them to resolve minor conflict.

The topic, bullying, is addressed through 'Life Matters' (PSED/PSHE and RSE), Tutor Group sessions, form times, Assemblies and Drama. Expectations of behaviour are made clear and pupils are made aware of the part that they can play to prevent bullying, including when they may find themselves as bystanders. Pupils are introduced to a 'Thought Box,' at the beginning of each academic year which enables them to share their concerns in confidence. Thought Boxes are placed in every form room in Pre-Prep III upwards and are checked regularly by Form Teachers. This approach is adapted for younger pupils in Pre Prep.

SIGNS OF BULLYING.

It is essential that teaching and non-teaching staff should be aware of what to look for, and staff and girls should be familiar with the procedure to follow when incidents of bullying occur.

Signs that a girl is being bullied may include:-

- change of behaviour
- reluctance to attend school
- a pattern of minor illnesses
- missing property
- withdrawn behaviour
- signs of distress
- excuses for work not done
- excuses for poor/strange behaviour
- exclusion from groups

Common characteristics of bullies (but beware of stereotyping)

They may:

- feel inadequate and lack self-esteem
- lack social skills and make demands in a non-aggressive way
- lack ability to empathise with victim
- feel insecure
- be victims of bullying themselves
- be victims of abuse
- be affected by issues at home

Bullying incidents are minimised when:-

- everyone is aware that bullying is a potential problem
- there is a climate of mutual respect for all
- there is a positive climate through all areas of school life including relations with parents

- there are opportunities at school to practise social skills
- pupils are encouraged to 'tell' and that it is acceptable and responsible to do so
- staff are encouraged to treat bullying as a priority
- there is adequate supervision of the children
- pupils follow school guidelines on safe use of the Internet

Procedure for Staff following a complaint of bullying

Investigations should be carried out in line with the following procedure which follows a restorative justice approach. The following stages may or may not be followed consecutively dependent on the severity of the situation.

After receiving an initial complaint of bullying or having observed concerning behaviour:

1. Refer immediately to the Form Teacher who should then inform the Deputy Head, Pre-Prep or Deputy Head, Staff (depending on the age of the pupil) and /or Headmistress.
2. The Form Teacher should speak to the girls concerned. Any investigations should take into account pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. Written records of these interviews should be kept and a copy given to the Headmistress and Deputy Head(Pre-Prep) for EYFS pupils. Whenever possible the girls' own words should be used in any such reports. It can be useful to ask each the girl involved to write a statement about the incident(s). They should be given enough time to write the statement fully and carefully and be guided through the process. Each case will be addressed according to the individual circumstances and Form teacher will liaise with the parents concerned where appropriate.
3. Reassurance and continuing support must be given to the victim/s and the bully/ies without, for the latter, condoning the action.
4. Bring situation to the attention of other staff during staff meetings under item: Girls of Concern.

Should matters not be resolved:

6. Notes of relevant observations from all staff who come into contact with all of the girls concerned should be kept and collated by the Form Teacher.
7. Parents of all of the girls concerned should be contacted by the Form Teacher and seen separately to discuss the situation.

Should concerns regarding the bullying persist or the severity of a situation warrant:

8. The Headmistress / Deputy Head (Pre-Prep) for EYFS pupils, will interview the bully/ies and victim/s once she has been presented with all of the relevant file notes by the Form teacher/s.
10. The Headmistress / Deputy Head (Pre-Prep) for EYFS pupils, will invite both the parents of the bully/ies and victim/s to a meeting where the matter will be discussed with all parties present. The case will be recorded as a formal case of bullying in the Headmistress' Record of Bullying/ Deputy Head (Pre-Prep) Record of Bullying for EYFS pupils.

In very extreme situations the Headmistress may decide it is necessary to suspend a pupil. In which case the pupil's parents would meet with the Headmistress and the reasons for, and the length of the suspension would be explained plus the support to be put in place when the pupil returns to School. (to date no such action has been needed in the Prep School.) In the event of an unsuccessful outcome and with regard to the severity under/or level of persistence the school would also consider exclusion in the most extreme circumstances (to date no such action has been needed in the Prep School.)

Procedure for girls either observing or being bullied

A girl who feels that she is being bullied should report it to her Form Teacher, Tutor Group teacher, support staff or any member of staff they feel comfortable to talk with. If that person is unavailable she should speak to any teacher she feels she can approach. A pupil observing an incident should report the matter to her Form Teacher or the Deputy Head, Pre Prep or Deputy Head, Staff (if at break or lunch time the member of staff on duty) who will then take the appropriate action. Every form room contains a Thought Box where girls may wish to post any comments and concerns they may have for themselves or others. Girls should also refer to the **Guidance for Girls: Staying Safe** poster which is displayed in every classroom. (See Appendix 2) This is included in the Key Stage 2 girls' Student Planner – discussed at the start of term in every form.

Procedure for parents who feel their daughter is being bullied

Parents are informed in the Parents' Handbook that they can access the School's Anti-Bullying Policy via the school website . They or their daughters are asked to notify school immediately if they are concerned that she is being bullied. They should report the incident to their daughter's Form Teacher. The appropriate measures will then be taken.

Bullying incidents are treated as a child protection concern where the school has reason to believe that the child is, or may be, at risk of significant harm.

The guiding principles of all the adults involved must be to resolve conflict or misunderstanding, amend behaviour patterns appropriately, and help the girls involved to move on successfully.

Miss Naomi Bartholomew
Preparatory School Headmistress

February 2024

Appendix 1 : Wheel for Life Poster
Appendix 2 : Guidance for girls, Staying Safe Poster