



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

(Revised in line with latest DfE guidance - 'Preventing and tackling bullying October 2014)

***All members of our community are given equal opportunities in line with the Single Equality Duty.***

**POLICY WRITTEN:** May 2016

**ADOPTED BY FULL GOVERNING BODY:** 29.06.16

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

**St Thomas More Academy is a Catholic school, and as such we attempt to follow the example of Jesus Christ in our work, worship and relationships.**

Our aims are:

- to be a prayerful community based on Christian values, notably Love, Justice, Peace, Truth and Tolerance, and to encourage individuals in their commitment to these ideals.
- to provide a secure, welcoming and ordered environment in which individuals learn to value and respect both themselves and others.
- to give individuals the opportunities to develop their full potential as human beings, and to encourage and challenge them to do so.
- to encourage everyone to strive to do their best and to strive for the highest standards in all areas of activity.
- to help children grow into confident, open, resourceful young people with a sense of responsibility and of service.

## **Introduction**

St Thomas More R C Academy is committed to ensuring that every student is treated with respect and dignity and will take action to prevent or redress instances of bullying or discrimination. The school believes that people should not be discriminated against or bullied because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, or because they have special or additional needs. This policy should be read in line with the school's Student Behaviour and Discipline Policy which is available on the school website.

St Thomas More Academy is a Catholic learning community. As a Catholic community we have a responsibility to promote and develop in our treatment of people, those values that lie at the heart of the Gospel message. The Golden Rule of our Faith is clear and understood by our students:

*"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets"*

(Matthew 7:12)

The Gospels and the teaching of the Catholic Church set out our standards for the life of a community. Bullying, whether verbal or behavioural, is about intimidation, persecution, and abuse of power directed towards the vulnerable in any community. The Church, by contrast, teaches us to create communities of tolerance, wholeness, service, and respect for others; places where a person can grow as God intended. We aim, therefore, to offer a stable and peaceful environment to people of every temperament and ability, background and outlook. All will be helped to reflect on the ways in which they can contribute to and live up to this ideal. Christianity teaches that it is the duty of Christians to protect the weak, the vulnerable and the innocent. Bullying is the exact opposite of this as bullies attack and exploit the weak and innocent. It is an injustice which will be challenged.

## **Aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy**

Through the operation of this policy we therefore aim:

- to maintain and drive a positive and supportive culture among all students and staff;
- to deter bullying behaviour, detect it when it occurs, and deal with it on a case-by-case basis by counselling and/or disciplinary sanctions; and
- to comply with the School's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

This policy will also apply to bullying behaviour outside of the school of which the school becomes aware.

## **Context**

**Government guidance:** This policy has been drawn up with assistance from guidance issued by the Department for Education (**DfE**), *Preventing and tackling bullying* and will be reviewed against any new government guidance issued. The Independent School Standards Regulations 2010 provide that the proprietor of an Academy or other independent school is required to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented.

**Criminal law:** Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, 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. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

The school believes that its students have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. The School has a clear policy on the promotion of good citizenship through assemblies, PSE and the curriculum where it is made clear that bullying is not acceptable.

### **Definition of Bullying**

There is no legal definition of bullying. Bullying may be defined as the abuse of power by an individual or group in relation to another individual or group and it is usually defined as behaviour that is:

- repeated.
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.
- often aimed at certain groups, e.g. because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

### **Bullying Behaviour**

Bullying is behaviour which hurts or causes distress by taking unfair advantage of another person in some way, making him or her feel uncomfortable or threatened. Bullying may be:

- (a) physical - hitting, kicking, pushing people around, spitting; or taking, damaging or hiding possessions;
- (b) verbal - name-calling, taunting, teasing, insulting, or demanding money;
- (c) exclusionary behaviour - intimidating, isolating or excluding a person from a group;
- (d) general unkindness - spreading rumours or writing unkind notes, phone texts or e-mails;
- (e) cyberbullying - using the internet, mobile phones, social networking sites (such as Facebook, Snapchat and Twitter), etc to deliberately upset someone else.

Bullying may also be:

- (f) sexual - talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way;
- (g) sexist - related to a person's gender or gender reassignment;
- (h) racist, or relating to someone's religion, belief or culture;
- (i) related to a person's sexual orientation (homophobic);
- (j) related to pregnancy or maternity;
- (k) related to a person's home circumstances; or

- (l) related to a person's disability, special educational needs, learning difficulty, health or appearance.

### **Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying uses electronic communications (email, chatrooms and social networking sites, text messages and mobile phone pictures, etc.) to bully. The school will investigate cases of cyber-bullying. In doing so, it will seek the support of parents, the police and internet service providers.

Cyber-bullying cases can often be difficult to resolve because they occur out of school hours and often involve students from other schools. However, the school is committed to doing what it can, consistent with the reasonable use of its resources, to support students who are being bullied and assisting their parents to resolve the matter. Students who engage in cyber-bullying can expect disciplinary action to be taken against them.

### **Who Are The Victims?**

Any child can be a victim of bullying. There are, however, certain risk categories which make some children more prone to being bullied. This will help us to observe and take early intervention on the behalf of those children.

- They lack close friends at school;
- They are shy;
- They come from an over-protective family environment;
- They can be from a different racial or ethnic group than the majority;
- They can be different to the majority in some respect;
- They can have special educational needs;
- They can be a "provocative victim" - a child who behaves inappropriately with others, barging in on games, or perhaps being a nuisance;

### **Intention**

Not all bullying is deliberate or intended to hurt. Some individuals may see their hurtful conduct as 'teasing' or 'a game'. These forms of bullying are equally unacceptable but may not be malicious and can often be corrected quickly with advice and without disciplinary sanctions.

### **Ethos/Prevention**

St. Thomas More R C Academy is successful at tackling bullying when it occurs because the school has an ethos of good behaviour. Students treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other students, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest.

Our expectation of all members of the School community is that:

- every student will follow and uphold the school's high expectations and adhere to the school's behaviour and discipline policy;
- a student or a member of staff who witnesses or hears of an incident of bullying will report it;
- a complaint of bullying will always be taken seriously; and
- no one will tolerate unkind actions or remarks or stand by when someone else is being bullied.

### Equal Opportunities

In School and in every year group:

- discriminatory words and behaviour are unacceptable;
- positive attitudes are fostered towards people who are disabled and towards ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic groups within and outside the School; and
- positive attitudes are fostered towards gender and sexuality differences through the curriculum and PSE.

### Staff

Through their training and experience, members of staff are expected to promote and support an anti-bullying culture by:

- anticipating problems and providing support;
- celebrating achievement;
- disciplining sensibly, fairly and consistently, taking into account any special educational needs or disabilities of the student and the needs of vulnerable students;
- making opportunities to listen to pupils.

### Students

Through our pastoral care systems, students are informed and taught that bullying will not be tolerated in the School. They are encouraged:

- to celebrate the effort and achievements of others;
- to hold and promote positive attitudes;
- to feel able to share problems with staff;
- to turn to someone they trust, if they have a problem;
- not to feel guilty about airing complaints.

### Education

Measures are taken throughout each year to educate students about bullying and this policy. These measures include:

## **PSE Curriculum**

Our PSE Curriculum includes work on bullying which covers:

- Who is the 'bully'? Who is the 'victim'?
- Why are some people 'bullies' and others 'victims'?
- What should a pupil do if s/he is bullied?
- What constitutes bullying? Where are the boundaries?
- What should be done if bullying is confirmed?

## **Assemblies**

Clear Anti-Bullying messages are given in assemblies.

## **Intervention**

### **In-school Support Services**

St Thomas More R C Academy has a number of in-school support services that play a role in our Anti-Bullying Systems these include:

**Form Tutors** – provide daily support to students in their Form. Students understand the role of the Form Tutor and that they should speak with their Form Tutor immediately if anything is troubling them, particularly if they are being bullied or if they are aware of another student in the school that is being bullied.

**Heads of Year** – provide another layer of support for students and are responsible for setting and maintaining high expectations for the Year Group. They give clear Anti-Bullying messages during assemblies and communicate to students the procedures to follow if they feel they are being bullied. They will investigate any allegations of bullying reported to them and liaise with students, parents/ carers and senior pastoral staff re action to be taken.

**Senior Pastoral Staff** – will liaise and meet with students, parents/carers and Heads of Year when serious incidents are reported and/or when bullying behaviour has recurred to ensure the safeguarding of students involved.

**School Counsellor** - who is able to provide a confidential listening and advice service to students. Part of this service is designed to provide strategies and empower students.

**School Chaplain** - at times the Chaplain is able to provide a similar service to that of the School Counsellor. Although not a trained counsellor, they can provide a listening and supportive ear for any students, particularly the most vulnerable.

**Learning Mentors** - who often find themselves working with and supporting vulnerable students. Students are supported to develop key skills and strategies which allow them to make progress and enjoy their time at school.

### **What Should You Do If You Suspect That A Student Is Being Bullied? (Teachers)**

1. If being told of bullying by a student, listen carefully and believe what is being said.
2. Note down straight away what they have told you.
3. Pass on your notes, including the names of any witnesses, to the Head of Year as soon as possible. Your notes will be kept on file, so make sure that they contain facts, not subjective judgements.
4. If you witness bullying, step in to stop it.
5. Record the incident straight away with the names of the people involved and any witnesses.
6. Give the note to the Head of Year as soon as possible.
7. The Head of Year will record:
  - who was involved (or allegedly involved);
  - where and when it happened;
  - what happened;
  - what action was taken;
  - how it was followed up.
8. The Head of Year's notes and pastoral record sheets will help us monitor the bullying situation in the school.

Usually the Head of Year will deal with the problem, but may ask for your help.

### **What Should You Do If You Suspect That A Student Is Being Bullied Or You Are Being Bullied Yourself? (Students)**

1. Tell a teacher immediately.
2. Remember to say who was bullying whom and what happened.
3. It is helpful if you can describe exactly where the incident took place and when. If it has been happening for a long time, say so.
4. We hope that you have the confidence to tell your Head of Year or Form Tutor, but any teacher will listen to what you have to say. Whatever you do, **tell someone**.
5. If you are not the person being bullied, try to imagine what it must feel like to be that person. We depend on each other for help.
6. No-one will need to know that you have helped a person who is being bullied.

### **What Should You Do If You Suspect A Student Is Being Bullied? (Parents)**

1. We need to know if children are being bullied. Even if the child is not your own, please contact us if you hear of any incident which appears to be bullying.
2. If the child is your own, we will need your help to solve the problem. Please be prepared to come into school so that we can work together.
3. Please be patient. Bullying is rarely resolved overnight and may need several different attempts to address it. However, please keep in touch regularly so that we can be sure that we have the overall picture of a child's feelings about school. Sometimes, children put on a brave face for us in school, despite their discomfort. We depend upon you to tell us the whole story.

## **Record Keeping and monitoring:**

Heads of Year maintain records of the welfare and development of individual students. Every complaint or report of bullying must be entered in the Bullying Log as 'Alleged Bullying' until proven. The Senior Leadership Team monitor and review the Bullying Log at the end of each half-term and in order to enable patterns to be identified, both in relation to individual students and across the School as a whole and to evaluate the effectiveness of the School's approach.

## **Assessment**

The Head of Year will normally see the victim and any witnesses without delay and form an initial view of the allegation. The assessment will consider:

- the nature of the incident/s - physical? verbal? exclusionary? etc;
- is it a 'one-off' incident involving an individual or a group?
- is it part of a pattern of behaviour by an individual or a group?
- has physical injury been caused? Who should be informed - Parents? The School's Child Protection Teacher? The Police?
- can the alleged bully be seen without identifying the victim?
- what is the likely outcome if the complaint proves to be correct?

At this stage, the possible outcomes for an incident which is not too serious include:

- there has been a misunderstanding which can be explained sympathetically to the alleged victim with advice to the alleged bully; or
- the complaint is justified in whole or in part, and further action will be needed (see Range of Action, below).

## **Serious incident**

If the Head of Year believes that serious bullying behaviour has recurred after warnings have been given to the 'bully' s/he must inform the Assistant Head Teacher (Pastoral). The Head of Year will interview the alleged victim and bully separately to confirm the facts of the case, if considered necessary; and to decide on the action to be taken in accordance with the Range of Action set out below. The Head of Year will notify the parents of the victim and bully giving them details of the case and the action being taken.

## **Range of Action**

There is a variety of responses to incidents of bullying, depending upon the seriousness, age and relative positions of the students involved. When a complaint is upheld the range of responses will include one or more of the following:

- advice and support for the victim and, where appropriate, establishing a course of action to help the victim, including support from external services where appropriate;
- advice and support to the bully in trying to change his/her behaviour. This may include clear instructions and a warning or final warning;

- consideration of the motivation behind the bullying behaviour and whether external services should be used to tackle any underlying issues of the bully which contributed to the bullying behaviour. If these considerations lead to any concerns that the bully may be at risk of harm , the School's Child Protection procedures will be followed;
- a meeting supervised by a member of staff, between the bully and the victim to discuss their differences and the ways in which they may be able to avoid future conflict;
- a disciplinary sanction against the bully, in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
- involving Social Services or the police;
- notifying the parents of one or both students about the case and the action which has been taken; such other action as may appear to the Head Teacher to be appropriate;
- noting the outcome in the Bullying Log.

### **Monitoring**

The position should be monitored for as long as necessary thereafter. Action may include:

- sharing information with some or all staff who regularly come in to contact with those involved and with students (where applicable) so that they may be alert to the need to monitor certain students closely;
- ongoing counselling and support;
- vigilance by staff and other students (when appropriate);
- discussing the incident at pastoral meetings;
- reviewing vulnerable individuals and areas of the School.