

RATHMORE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Value Statement

This Anti-Bullying Policy has been created by the Board of Governors of the school following consultation with pupils, parents and staff. Through it the school seeks to foster a safe and caring environment for all pupils and staff. The school recognises that every pupil has the right to be educated in an atmosphere which is free from fear and intimidation. It appreciates that bullying of its very nature is contrary to the values upheld in its Mission Statement and is determined that it will not be tolerated in any form.

In the policy singular forms such as 'pupil', 'incident of bullying' are used but also cover more than one pupil or incident; the 'Vice Principal' refers to the Vice Principal responsible for Pastoral Care and Discipline who is the school's designated teacher for child protection. In the event that she is not available, the incident should be reported to the school's SENCO who is the school's deputy designated teacher.

Aims of the Policy

The aims of the policy are:

- to ensure understanding of what constitutes bullying behaviour;
- to stop bullying;
- to ensure that pupils, staff and parents are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy;
- to create an environment where pupils feel safe to report incidents of bullying;
- to ensure a suitable and consistent response to all reported incidents of bullying;
- to ensure parents know how to raise a concern about bullying;
- to ensure an appropriate and consistent response to all reported instances of bullying;
- to provide support for students who are bullied;
- to support those students who display bullying behaviour to adopt positive attitudes and behaviour;
- to promote self-respect, confidence and self-esteem among all students;
- to develop assertiveness, self-protection skills and resilience.

Links to Other School Policies

The policy is linked to the school's Pastoral Care, Learning and Teaching, Child Protection, Health and Safety and Positive Behaviour policies and, like them, seeks to create a safe and caring environment in which effective learning and teaching can take place and all pupils are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Agreed Code of Conduct for the School Community

Pupils

Pupils have the right to be educated in an environment which is safe, caring and respectful of their individual needs. They have a responsibility to treat other pupils, teachers and support staff with respect, to refrain from engaging in bullying behaviour and to report it if they are aware of it occurring.

Parents

Parents have the right to expect that their child will be educated in an environment which is safe, caring and respectful of their individual needs. They have a responsibility to ensure that their child co-operates with other pupils, teachers and support staff and to inform the school of any incidents of bullying of which they are aware.

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff have the right to work in an environment which is characterised by respect and caring for all. They have a responsibility to contribute to the creation of such an environment and to work for the well-being of all pupils. They must listen to and take seriously any report of bullying. They must deal with any bullying incident in an appropriate manner or refer the matter to the relevant tutor or Head of Year.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour either physical or emotional, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend himself/herself.

Bullying can be:

- emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures);
- physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or using violence of any kind;
- racist - using racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;
- sexual - engaging in unwanted physical contact or making sexually abusive comments;

- homophobic - focusing on the issue of sexuality;
- verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, belittling of others' abilities and achievements;
- social - making offensive comments about background, social class, where someone lives;
- cyber bullying - using texts, emails, internet chat-rooms, Whatsapp or social media sites to cause hurt to someone.

Action to Prevent Bullying

Pastoral Care

In line with its Mission Statement the school will continue to develop its Pastoral Care programme and strategies which exemplify fairness, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness, while setting high standards of respect, self-discipline, commitment and generosity.

Classroom Management

In line with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy teachers will continue to provide suitable role models by:

- creating a positive, well ordered environment within which each pupil feels valued and respected;
- promoting pupil confidence and self-esteem;
- encouraging pupils to value one another;
- promoting self-discipline and a healthy respect for authority among pupils.

Curriculum

The school will continue to provide opportunities through the curriculum to raise awareness of bullying in a variety of subjects and programmes, including:

- the Pastoral Care Programme which is delivered through tutor groups and assemblies;
- Religious Education;
- Learning for Life and Work;
- English and Drama;
- Outside Agencies.

Supervision

The school will strive to ensure effective supervision of locations where bullying is likely to occur.

The Responsibilities of Pupils

We expect our pupils to:

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
- report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and to help prevent further instances.

Anyone who has become the target of bullies should not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets. They should report incidents of bullying to a trusted member of staff or avail of the 'It's Okay to Say' link on the school website.

The Responsibilities of Parents

We ask our parents to support their children and the school 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 or Year Head and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to go unchecked for themselves and for other pupils;
- advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying;
- keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying;
- informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- co-operating with the school, and if their children are accused of bullying, trying to ascertain the truth;
- pointing out the implications of bullying, both to the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Bullying and cyber-bullying incidents that occur outside school hours are primarily the responsibility of parents. However, the school will endeavour to keep all students safe and offer support where appropriate.

Principles for Dealing with Bullying

- A pupil who reports an incident of bullying or a pupil who is being bullied must be listened to, taken seriously and assured that the matter will be dealt with.
- It is desirable that a pupil who reports he/she has been bullied should not have to tell his/her side of the 'story' more than once. The teacher (or member of support staff) to whom the bullied pupil speaks first is, therefore, responsible for reporting the facts to any other teacher to whom he/she may need to refer the matter. However, depending on the circumstances, the pupil may have to repeat his/her account in the course of the investigation.
- A member of the school's support staff who is informed of or who witnesses an incident of bullying must take immediate action to stop the bullying if necessary and report the matter to his/her line manager or a teacher.
- A teacher who is informed of or who witnesses an incident of bullying must decide whether the matter can be dealt with by himself/herself or whether it needs to be reported to someone else. This will depend on the seriousness/frequency of the bullying.
- Consistency of approach when dealing with bullying is important. All teachers should, therefore, follow the steps outlined below.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

All staff must be positive when responding to bullying incidents.

'All staff should be prepared with options for how to respond to incidents of bullying in a planned, deliberate and positive way. Confronting pupils who have bullied requires a high amount of self control as well as preparation to know what to say and do.'

The following are important factors when managing a bullying situation:

- **Be Calm:** It is important to be clear-thinking and emotionally in control.
- **Be Positive:** Have in mind the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the pupil. A pupil is more likely to modify his/her behaviour if he/she perceives that a teacher cares.
- **Be assertive:** Express your thoughts, feelings and expectations clearly, conveying to the pupil not only to stop the bullying but to make restitution.
- **Be Confident:** Believe that you can be successful in implementing practices that can have an impact on the pupil's future behaviour. Focus on behaviour not the pupil.

Training for Staff/Governors

- Training – to support staff and governors in responding to allegations of bullying and creating an awareness of the 'Anti-Bullying Policy' is provided regularly on Staff Development Days or when deemed necessary.

Outline of Levels

When a bullying concern has been observed/reported staff should assess the situation and its severity level and determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.

Response levels range from **Level 1** (Low severity incident) to **Level 4** (most severe incident)

To estimate the level of severity, staff should take into account the following:

- the **nature** of the bullying behaviour eg teasing, excluding, hitting, text, Facebook;
- the **frequency** of the bullying behaviour: daily, weekly or less often;
- the **duration** of the bullying behaviour: short or over a long period of time.

LEVEL 1: Low Severity Incidents

Procedures

Staff should NEVER ignore low severity incidents.

When speaking to the pupil who is displaying bullying behaviour:

- point out to the pupil level of distress experienced by the other pupil;
- explain how behaviour goes against the values and ethos of Rathmore;
- identify consequences if bullying behaviour continues;
- help pupil identify ways in which he/she may be able to deal with the situation and access support;
- speak to the other pupil to discover if he/she had provoked the bullying behaviour;
- monitor the situation;
- be prepared to intervene with a higher response level if the situation deteriorates.

When speaking to the pupil who has been bullied:

- listen to the pupil reporting bullying/the pupil who is being bullied and assure him/her that the matter will be dealt with;
- assure the pupil being bullied that he/she is being taken seriously, is not being blamed for the situation and will be kept involved in the solution;
- record the bullied pupil's "story", including details of incidents (Appendix 1);
- investigate the incident by talking to relevant pupils, including the bully;
- endeavour to ensure that the bullying stops and that the pupils are reconciled;
- keep the parties involved informed of any subsequent action;
- inform the tutor/Year Head if necessary and give him/her your record of the incident;
- monitor and evaluate over time.

LEVEL 2: Intermediate Severity Incidents

Procedures

Bullying incident is reported to the Year Head, who in addition to the steps outlined above:

- reads any notes given to him/her and ensures that confidentiality is respected in relation to them;
- interviews all pupils involved with the bullying incident;
- completes Bullying Concern Assessment Form (Appendix 2);
- reassures the pupil being bullied that the problem is being addressed;
- decides on the seriousness of the offence and the necessary steps to be taken;

- if necessary, informs the Vice Principal and the parents of both the pupil being bullied and the pupil displaying bullying behaviour and invites parents to come up to the school.

Support for pupil being bullied may include:

- reassurance from tutor and Year Head;
- counselling to help build self confidence and provide coping strategies;
- Year Head, if appropriate, advising parents on how they can support their child;
- a conclusion meeting with the pupil after a period of four weeks.

Support for pupil displaying bullying behaviour

The Year Head will support the pupil with obvious bullying behaviour and if appropriate a sanction will be used. This may include parental contact, detention and/or withdrawal of break and lunchtime privileges.

It is important to separate the individual from their behaviour; the bullying behaviour needs to be challenged, however the individual needs to be supported. The support may include:

- counselling;
- using the 'No Blame Approach' with the pupils involved;
- follow-up meetings with the pupil, keeping a record and ensuring that confidentiality is respected in relation to it;
- monitoring and evaluating, with the support of tutors, over time.

Support for Parents

The Year Head will notify the parents of the pupil being bullied and the pupil displaying bullying behaviour. The Year Head will invite parents to separate meetings to explore the issue(s) and agree intervention strategies. When strategies have been agreed with parents the pupil will be invited into the interview and strategies explained and agreed with him/her. Parents will be kept informed by Year Head over the next four weeks concerning pupil's progress.

Additional Procedures

The Year Head will:

- inform class teachers and make them aware of the situation;
- keep initial report prepared by the tutor on pupil's file;

- keep the Bullying Concern Assessment Form;
- retain records of all interventions and follow up discussions.

LEVEL 3: High Severity Incidents

In these incidents the pupil displaying bullying behaviour is resistant to change and/or the reaction of the pupil being bullied is severe.

Procedures

The Vice Principal and the Year Head will work together to support the pupil being bullied, the pupil displaying bullying behaviour and the parents.

Support for pupil being bullied may include:

- The Year Head may refer the pupil to the school counsellor.
- The Year Head may explore ways in which pupil can have greater participation in school events.
- The Year Head will have a conclusion meeting with the pupil after a period of four weeks.

Support for pupil displaying bullying behaviour:

- The pupil will normally receive a sanction: withdrawal of lunchtime privileges, withholding right to participate in school events (e.g. sports), parental interview, suspension.
- The pupil will be placed on report to the Year Head.
- The Year Head will meet with the SENCO to develop an Individual Behaviour Plan for the pupil. Plan may have a combination of internal and external support.
- The tutor and class teachers will be informed of the behaviour plan.
- The pupil may be asked to participate in an Emotional Health Programme: e.g. Conflict Resolution, Anger Management.
- There will be regular meetings with the Year Head, tutor and SENCO to monitor and evaluate the pupil's progress.

- In the case of a pupil who has been suspended, parents and pupil will be informed of the support given to the pupil on his/her return to school.

Support for Parents

- The Year Head will invite parents of the pupil who has been bullied to a meeting to explore the issue(s).
- The Year Head will invite parents of the pupil displaying bullying behaviour to a meeting to explain the sanction given and to explain the support being offered within the Individual Behaviour Plan.
- The Year Head will provide parents with regular updates.

Additional Procedures

Year Head will:

- inform class teachers and ask them to be aware of the situation;
- keep initial report prepared by the tutor on pupil's file;
- keep the Bullying Concern Assessment Form;
- retain records of all interventions and follow up discussions.

LEVEL 4: Critical Incidents – leading to Suspension/Exclusion

In these incidents there are significant mental health and/or child protection 'safe guarding concerns' for the pupil involved.

In consultation with the Principal, Vice Principal, Year Head, SENCO, appropriate outside agents and parents an appropriate action plan will be put in place.

If appropriate, the recommended sanction at level 4 will be suspension and, with the approval of the Board of Governors, may include exclusion.

Support for pupil who has been bullied:

- The pupil will be supported by the Year Head and the Vice Principal (Internal and external support will be provided as appropriate).
- The Vice Principal may have regular meetings with the pupil.

- The Vice Principal may explore ways in which pupil can have greater participation in school events.
- The Vice Principal will have a conclusion meeting with the pupil at an appropriate time.

Support for pupil displaying bullying Behaviour:

- On returning from suspension there will be a meeting with the pupil and their parents so that there will be an agreed way forward.
- The Vice Principal will engage with the relevant agencies – Health and Social Care Trust, Familyworks, Gateway Teams.
- The pupil may be offered counselling and may be requested to participate in Emotional Well Being Programmes: e.g. Conflict Resolution, Anger Management. The Year Head will keep parents informed of pupil's progress.
- An individual Action Plan will be put in place. This will include ongoing support from the tutor, regular meeting with Year Head, regular contact with parents to reassure and give an update, counselling support relating to emotional well-being of the pupil.

Support for Parents

- The Vice Principal will invite parents of the pupil who has been bullied to a meeting to explore the issue(s).
- The Vice Principal will invite parents of the pupil displaying bullying behaviour to a meeting to explain the sanction given and to explain the support being offered within the Individual Behaviour Plan.
- The Year Head will provide parents with regular updates.

Additional Procedures

The Year Head will:

- inform class teachers and ask them to be aware of the situation;
- keep initial report on the pupil's file;
- keep the Bullying Concern Assessment Form;
- retain records of all interventions and follow up discussions.

Procedures for Monitoring and Evaluating this Policy

The Board of Governors will keep this policy under review and monitor its implementation by means of:

- Feedback from the Student Council;
- Student and Parental Questionnaires;
- Discussion at Pastoral Care Meetings.