



## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (including Anti-Cyber bullying)**

**Policy Custodian:** *Deputy Head (Pastoral)*

**Approving Body:** *MTS Senior Leadership Team*

**Approved:** *July 2024*

### **Statement of Intent**

Merchant Taylors' School respects and upholds the right of every pupil to enjoy all aspects of their education free from interference by other pupils. Every pupil has a responsibility to help create a happy atmosphere and a well-ordered way of life at School for all to enjoy. All pupils are expected to base their behaviour on respect for others regardless of differences in age, status, race, religion or gender. Bullying, whether mental or physical, has no place in the School and all members of the School must do all in their power to prevent it; when bullying occurs it must be reported to a member of the teaching staff or an appropriate member of the support staff e.g. the School Nurse, Teaching Assistants (MTP) or the Masters Office Secretaries (MTS). Staff must record any such reports on CPOMS. Allegations of bullying will always be investigated thoroughly. Everyone in the School is expected to work together to create an atmosphere in which bullying is seen as weak and despicable, and in which any boy who suffers from such behaviour can feel safe in reporting it, without feelings of guilt or inadequacy.

### **Policy aims**

- To ensure that the School's measures designed to prevent bullying have regard to the DfE document "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" (July 2017) and the DCSF document "Guidance Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools" (2007);
- To emphasise the seriousness of bullying whether physical or emotional and to recognize that bullying may result in serious psychological harm;
- To maintain and drive a positive, supportive and caring culture among all pupils and staff throughout the School;
- To deter bullying behaviour, to detect it when it occurs, and to deal with it by counselling and/or disciplinary sanctions. If necessary, this will mean the permanent exclusion (expulsion) of those found guilty of bullying others.
- To enhance awareness of cyber-bullying and how to deal with it amongst pupils, staff and parents.
- To safeguard pupils by putting procedures in place to prevent cyber bullying and deal with it should it occur.

### **Definition of bullying**

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over a period of time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, or because a child is adopted or is a carer. Bullying can take a number of forms:

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Emotional     | being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, making threatening gestures |
| Physical      | pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence           |
| Racist/racial | racial taunts, graffiti, gestures                                    |
| Sexist/sexual | sexual harassment in any form is bullying                            |
| Homophobic    | reference to, or focusing on, the issue of sexual orientation        |
| Verbal        | name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, 'banter'          |
| Disability    | reference to, or focusing on, the issue of disability                |
| Cultural      | Bullying behaviour centred on racism, religion and culture           |

## **Cyber Bullying**

Bullying may occur directly or through cyber-technology. Cyber bullying occurs when an individual or group uses a variety of internet strategies (eg social websites, mobile 'phones, text messages, photographs and email); to cause distress or harm others through repeated and hostile behaviour. These include, but are not restricted to: humiliation, threats and intimidation; harassment; cyber stalking; vilification/defamation; exclusion; and rejection. Merchant Taylors' School treats cyber bullying, like all bullying, very seriously; this policy serves to bring into sharper relief issues specific to cyber-bullying that already covered synoptically in the school's Acceptable Use of Devices Policy (AUP), the E-safety Policy, the Data Protection Policy, the School's Privacy Policy and its Anti-Bullying Policy; the Anti-cyber Bullying Policy should be read in conjunction with those policies.

## **Signs and symptoms**

A boy may indicate by signs or behaviour that he is being bullied. Staff should be alerted to the possibility of bullying if a boy:

- is frightened of other pupils, or of staff
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to come to school (school phobic)
- begins to miss commitments
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- is having problems sleeping
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- has clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or 'go missing'
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has money continually 'lost'
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- cuts meal times or is reluctant to sit with peers at meals
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- bullies others
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong

- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- begs staff members to do nothing about what they have seen or been told
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when a text or email message is received

These behaviours and signs might indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## Procedures

1. All incidents of bullying must be taken seriously. They should be investigated by the member(s) of staff who first become aware of an incident and all reported incidents and investigations must be recorded on CPOMS. Pupils and parents should report any suspected incidents of bullying to the appropriate tutor or Head of School. Cases of bullying will be handled sensitively and it is recognised that these are difficult and complex situations which need to be dealt with in a thoughtful manner. In all cases the details of the incident and any action taken by a member of staff should be reported to the Head of School, usually via CPOMS.
2. Guidelines for staff on how to investigate suspected incidents of bullying are to be found in the Staff Handbook.
3. The Heads of School will, in more serious bullying cases, investigate the matter themselves in consultation with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) at MTS and Deputy Head at MTP. Deputy Head (Pastoral) (MTS), Assistant Deputy Head and Head of Pre-Prep (MTP) who is/are the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, will carry out any investigation that relates to suspected, alleged or actual child abuse. A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, from significant harm'. In such circumstances the Deputy Head (Pastoral) at MTS and Deputy Head at MTP will follow the usual processes of consultation and, if necessary, referral to the relevant external agencies.
4. Any reports to staff of bullying must be followed up, and with care. Staff receiving such a report should immediately establish the facts: What sort of bullying is alleged? When did it take place? Where? Who is involved? What happened? Were there witnesses?
5. Where appropriate, statements should be taken from everyone involved in or who witnessed the bullying. Boys may be asked to make written statements – in this case steps should be taken to prevent collusion in the writing of these statements.
6. Independent witnesses must be afforded protection. The information in their statements must be treated confidentially and steps should always be taken to prevent evidence being traced back to the independent witness.
7. Victim(s) of bullying should be given support and made safe from further bullying.
8. When investigating incidents of bullying which have a cyber element the School's investigation will comply with the broader framework of UK law (see Appendix 2). Where deemed necessary, the DSL will use (or provide information on) external reporting routes: mobile phone company, internet service provider, Childline or the Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP). If images are concerned, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will consult to determine whether they might be illegal or raise child protection concerns. If so, s/he will contact The **Defence Cyber Protection Partnership (DCPP)**, which may then involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the local police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content, or CEOP.

9. All teachers and pupils are aware of these procedures and that in these situations the School reserves the right to search drives, confiscate mobile devices, and obtain access to online storage and accounts. Pupils, parents and staff should be aware of the need to preserve evidence and records of abuse (e.g. Saving screenshots of messages or web-pages, retention of emails, recording dates and times etc...)
10. All instances of bullying, or observations relating to potential bullying, must be entered into CPOMS as an incident under the category 'child-on-child abuse', 'bullying'. The incident should be linked to all potential perpetrators and victims.
11. The victim(s) may benefit from counselling - referral to the School Counsellor should be considered.
12. The bully needs help to change his behaviour and to understand the victim's point of view. Referral to the School Counsellor, if not already involved, should be considered. At MTS pastoral staff are trained in restorative justice and a restorative approach may be used alongside or instead of sanctions, where deemed appropriate by the Head of School and/or Deputy Head (Pastoral).

### **Advice for pupils at MTS**

Pupils are issued with the following advice (based on the DCSF anti-bullying pack - *Don't Suffer in Silence*)

#### **Bullying - information for pupils**

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

- *try to stay calm* and look as confident as you can
- *get away* from the situation as quickly as possible
- *tell your tutor or a teacher* what has happened straight away

##### **After you have been bullied**

- *tell your tutor, a teacher or another adult* in the school
- *tell your family*
- *if you are scared* to tell an adult by yourself, ask a friend to come with you
- *keep speaking up* until someone listens and does something to stop the bullying
- *don't blame yourself* for what has happened

##### **When you are talking to an adult about bullying, be clear about**

- *what* has happened to you
- *how often* it has happened
- *who* was involved
- *who* saw what was happening
- *where* it happened
- *what* you have done about it already

It is best if you can talk to someone at school or home but, if not, then you can ring **ChildLine**, Freephone 0800 1111, or go to the website [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk), or write, Freepost 1111, London N1 0BR. The phone call or letter is *free*. It is a *confidential* helpline.

MTS uses a Student Voice app which pupils can use to report bullying, either for themselves or on behalf of a peer. The report may be made anonymously or giving the pupil's name. The Student Voice

app is monitored by the Pastoral team and all reports made on the app are recorded on CPOMS and investigated by the appropriate staff.

Pupils at MTS are given age-appropriate advice through forums such as PSHE lessons, tutorial lessons, ICT Lessons and Assemblies

## **Prevention**

A number of strategies are used at Merchant Taylors' School including:

- Effective supervision of pupils.
- Engendering a culture in which bullying is seen to be unacceptable.
- Tutors and members of SLT at MTP remind boys at the start of each academic year that they all have a responsibility to create a community in which they all feel free to live happily and to express themselves, without fear of being bullied.
- Tutors should remind boys that any boy who becomes aware of bullying, or suspects that it is happening, has a duty to speak to someone in authority (or report concerns via the Student Voice app). To withhold such information is to aid and abet bullying, and may be treated as such.
- Bullying is covered through the School's PSHE programme.
- The level of bullying is monitored through the keeping of records of incidents and alleged incidents, and through confidential questionnaires to parents and pupils
- Bullying is an item on the agenda of Senior Leadership Team Meetings and Pastoral Committee Meetings when issues arise. It is also discussed at School Council Meetings.
- Periodically Whole School Assemblies and Year Group Assemblies focus on the problem of bullying to raise awareness of the issue.
- Childline and Student Voice posters are on display at various points around the school (MTS).
- Counselling is available through the School Counsellor.
- Staff receive regular training on the school's Anti-Bullying procedures and it is a regular item for discussion in staff meetings and various pastoral committees.
- The school recognises that LGBT+ pupils and SEN pupils may require specific and extra support. This is available through the usual pastoral channels, but also through LGBT+ House reps at MTS and the Learning Support department (MTS) and Intervention Department (MTP).
- All pupils, parents, and staff sign the Acceptable Use Policy before they are allowed to use school connectivity or devices. Parents are kept up to date about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders. This is through the use of resources on the School Intranet about the consequences of cyber-bullying which also includes information on how to report on-line abuse. From time to time the School holds evenings for parents on how to combat bullying and how best to act in partnership with the School.
- Through the use of resources on the School Intranet about the consequences of cyber-bullying and how to report on-line abuse, parents are kept up to date about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders. From time to time the School holds evenings for parents on how to combat bullying and how best to act in partnership with the School.
- All MTS and MTP teachers and staff receive training appropriate to their responsibility to develop e-safety practices and identify and deal with cyber bullying. They can recognise non-verbal signs and indications of cyber bullying and receive regular Safeguarding update training.
- Pupils are involved in developing our response to cyber bullying via the School Council. They receive age appropriate e-safety education through lectures and talks and through the PSHE programme (reinforced in Computing); this programme is reinforced by section assemblies,

initiatives like Anti-bullying Week, E-safety days involving both pupils and parents, Safer Internet Day and through the wider curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to be ambassadors of best E-safety practice and to support each other in matters of cyber bullying, particularly those that extend outside the confines beyond the School setting. Anti-cyber bullying resources are available on the School Intranet.

In addition, the School has in place specific procedures to tackle cyber bullying:

- At MTS the IT department uses secure connections, Sophos UTM filtering, firewall, management, anti-spyware software, Impero network monitoring software (Senso), anti-virus software, and corporate incident reporting procedures to safeguard the pupils.
- At MTP the IT department uses secure connections, EXA Surf Protect Internet filtering, firewall, management, anti-spyware software, NetSupport network monitoring software, anti-virus software, and corporate incident reporting procedures to safeguard the pupils.
- The school blocks/filters access to social networking sites or newsgroups unless there is a specific approved educational purpose; this extends to our obligations with regard to the Prevent Duty Guidance issued under section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act, 2015. Following Home Office guidance about tackling radicalisation, MTS does not allow pupils independent access to Facebook, Twitter, YouTube (MTS only), Ask.FM, Tumblr, Instagram, and Private messaging services, not limited to but including Whatsapp, Kik, Sureport and Viber, all of which are considered be potential sources of terrorist and extremist material.
- Staff are made aware of the risks posed by online activity of extremist and terrorist groups. All staff undertake annual training which incorporates relevant, up-to-date guidance on identifying and reporting such behaviours. This is supported by circulation of the Home Office briefing notes for schools such as *How Social Media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq*.
- The AUP and anti-bullying policy are reviewed annually; interim changes due to the emergence of a new technology are communicated to pupils, staff and parents via email or the weekly mailshot, *Scissorum* at MTS, and *Crescunda* at MTP.
- During their period of induction all pupils (MTS), staff and parents are educated on the importance of password security, internet safety and safe working practices. MTP pupils are educated on these points in an age appropriate way.
- As outlined in the School's e-safety policy, pupils involved in educational activity should only be using personal Internet connective technology on the School site or beyond with the permission of supervising staff and only for a specified and purpose agreed beforehand by all participating parties. Where supervising staff take video footage of pupils engaged in relevant education activities on the School site or beyond, School owned devices must be used and the footage transferred to the School network and deleted from the device at the earliest opportunity.
- Where visitors to the School require access to Internet connective technology in cases where the purpose of their visit brings them into direct contact with pupils, the School must have been notified about this requirement in advance. Where the use of Internet connective technology has the potential to be a violation of individual privacy, consent from the individual(s) or their parents if the individual is under 12 years old need to be sought prior to the activity taking place.
- At MTS full records are kept of all cyber bullying incidents in CPOMS. At MTP the iSAMS bullying log is used.
- All pupils, teachers, and parents are aware that they may contact the School at any time over any internet issue that concerns them.

## Sanctions

Bullying is a serious offence and as such is likely to lead to either a Saturday Detention (MTS) or an Exclusion; in cases of severe and persistent bullying the Exclusion may be permanent. Incidents of bullying will be dealt with seriously. The guiding principle behind the school's response will be to bring the bullying to a halt and to help the bully understand the inappropriate nature of his actions.

### **References:**

Safe to Learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF, 2007)

Preventing and tackling bullying - Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE July 2017)

Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and Senior Staff (DfE, 2014)

### **Other useful sources of information about bullying:**

anti-bullying alliance  
Kidscape  
Childnet International  
CEOP  
BullyingUK

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/)  
[www.kidscape.org.uk/](http://www.kidscape.org.uk/)  
[childnet-int.org/](http://childnet-int.org/)  
[www.ceop.gov.uk/](http://www.ceop.gov.uk/)  
[www.bullying.co.uk/](http://www.bullying.co.uk/)

Deputy Head (Pastoral)

## Appendix 1 - Cyber Bullying: Legal powers and responsibilities

- Although cyber bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment as well as threatening and menacing communications. The School will contact the police if there is evidence to suggest the law has been broken. There are a number of offences that may be committed in the course of cyber bullying, some may be covered by more than one piece of legislation and the age of the perpetrator is not necessarily relevant although the general age of criminal responsibility (10 years) applies and prosecutions are unlikely for children under 14 years old.
- Pupils are entitled to their freedom of expression and respect for their private lives but they must not infringe the rights of others. Infringement includes, among other things, libel and slander, bullying, harassment and victimisation, inciting hatred on racial, religious and homophobic grounds, breach of confidentiality and breach of copyright.
- The following legislation may have a bearing in any of the above examples: Obscene Publications Act 1959, Protection of Children Act 1978, The Contempt of Court Act 1981, the Public Order Act 1986, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and the Communications Act 2003. All legislation concurs that the touchstone of a malicious communication is that it cause distress.
- UK law recognises that there is no clear boundary between behaviour within a school and the external behaviour of its pupils. The School has statutory powers to investigate incidents of bullying which occur outside of school hours and may apply appropriate sanctions.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) outlines the power of Head teachers to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site and provides defence in relation to the confiscation of mobile phones and other items. Head teachers have the power “to such an extent as is reasonable” to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff.
- Schoolteachers have the right to confiscate mobile phones as a disciplinary penalty and have a legal defence in respect of this in the EIA, 2006. Merchant Taylors’ teachers are aware that they cannot search the contents of a pupil’s mobile phone without the consent of that pupil. Should a pupil or member of staff refuse to allow the contents of his/her phone to be searched, the matter may be referred to the police, who have more extensive search powers, should the School deem it sufficiently serious.
- Whilst the School is obliged to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment, Leah Bradford-Smart v West Sussex County Council, 2002 establishes that, “the school does not have the charge of its pupils all the time and so cannot directly protect them from harm all the time. At a day school that charge will usually end at the school gates... the school cannot owe a general duty to its pupils, or anyone else, to police their (the pupils) activities once they have left its charge. That is principally the duty of parents and, where criminal offences are involved, the police”.