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## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

September 2021

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**BELFAST  
ROYAL  
ACADEMY**

<b>Title</b>	Anti-Bullying Policy
<b>Summary</b>	Guidance for all stakeholders regarding: definition of bullying; measures the School has in place to promote positive behaviour; the procedures for responding to instances of bullying; roles and responsibilities of staff.
<b>Purpose</b>	To ensure an effective response to bullying by the whole School community.
<b>Operational Date</b>	September 2021
<b>Next Review Date</b>	August 2022
<b>Author</b>	Vice-Principal (Pastoral)

<b>To be posted on School website</b>	Yes
<b>Date and version posted (if applicable)</b>	September 2021 v4

Belfast Royal Academy seeks to provide a safe and supportive educational environment in which pupils have the opportunity to achieve their potential. All pupils have a right to be educated in an atmosphere in which they feel valued, secure and supported by each member of the community. The values of the School emphasise respect for each individual and encourage tolerance and openness. By its nature, bullying is contrary to these values and is unacceptable.

This policy has been drawn up in line with current government guidance and legislation:

- Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools – A Guide to Schools, DENI, 2017
- Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003
- ‘Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour’, (Department of Education, 2001)

## **DEFINITION**

- Bullying includes (but is not limited to) the repeated use of:
  - any verbal, written or electronic communication,
  - any other act, (including physical or by omission\*), or
  - any combination of those,
- by a pupil or a group of pupils against another pupil or group of pupils, with the intention of causing physical or emotional harm to that pupil or group of pupils.

\*Please note that omission is not the ending of a friendship.

The School defines harm as:

- Emotional or psychological harm – distress or anxiety caused by scaring, humiliating or affecting a pupil’s self-esteem.
- Physical harm – intentionally hurting a pupil causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour, but not all unacceptable behaviour can be considered bullying.

## **AIMS**

The ethos of Belfast Royal Academy is important in helping to address the issue of bullying and in minimising its incidence. However, bullying must also be addressed in more specific ways. Preventing and countering bullying require an awareness of bullying-type behaviour and a collective vigilance on the part of all members of the school community.

This Anti-Bullying Policy aims to:

- help in the understanding of what constitutes bullying-type behaviour.
- indicate approaches to preventing bullying and to responding to bullying-type behaviour.

## **1. Identifying Bullying**

Bullying can take different forms. The following are examples of different types of bullying behaviour:

- physical aggression, for example, through hitting, kicking, pushing or tripping.
- interference with another's property, causing deliberate damage to that property, or theft.
- verbal, for example, through racist, homophobic, transphobic or sectarian remarks, threats, name calling or demeaning comments.
- emotional hurt, for example, through isolating or excluding an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his/her peer group or spreading rumours.
- intimidation and harassment, for example, through pressure from members of a group against an individual so that he/she feels uneasy or frightened.
- using Information and Communications Technology to deliberately upset someone else, for example through mobile phone calls, text messages, postings on social media, sending picture/video clips via mobile phones, emails, chatrooms, instant messaging and websites. This is called cyberbullying and is the subject of a separate policy, the school's Anti-Cyberbullying Policy.

Staff receive training regarding identifying bullying, including signs of distress, poor attendance and other possible indications.

## **2. Repetition**

While repetition is internationally recognised as an important element in establishing bullying behaviour, there may be certain situations which arise in which the School does not require repetition for behaviours to be defined as bullying, for example, when bullying occurs through the medium of electronic communications, repetition can take place through the repeated viewing and sharing of a post, when the post has been posted once.

If hurtful behaviour has been seen, only once, this does not necessarily mean that the element of repetition is not present, and therefore that a single incident cannot be an instance of bullying. Different people may be aware of single incidents which together add up to a pattern. For this reason, it is crucial that all members of the school community report even single or low-level concerns.

Bullying is often based on “difference.” This means that the pupil who displays bullying behaviour notices someone is different and turns them into a target because they are vulnerable. Pupils are particularly vulnerable to bullying because they are new to the school, or because of:

- race
- gender
- physical difference
- sexual orientation
- special educational need
- disability
- a different economic background or unusual family situation
- any of those factors which other pupils *perceive* to be true, whether or not that is actually the case

All incident decisions are evidence-based and only made after a fair and balanced consideration of all the facts which are available, including the severity of the incident, imbalance of power, or the use of electronic communications.

### **3. Preventing Bullying**

Each member of the school community has a role to play in helping to prevent bullying and in creating an atmosphere in which it is not allowed to develop. In Belfast Royal Academy, action will be taken to seek to prevent bullying in the following ways:

- By promoting and maintaining an ethos which encourages consideration and respect for others and which is firmly based on the values of Belfast Royal Academy.
- By educating pupils about the boundaries of appropriate behaviour towards others and addressing bullying and related issues through Tutorials, Assemblies and the Learning for Life and Work Personal Development programme.
- By ensuring effective supervision of locations within School where bullying is likely to occur and highlighting to pupils, with the support of parents, the importance of appropriate behaviour when travelling to and from school.
- By ensuring that pupils and parents are aware of school policy on the use of mobile phones within School and on the use of the internet within School (through the eSafety Policy and the Acceptable Use Policy).
- By utilising Prefects and senior pupils as Mentors.
- By liaising with other agencies as appropriate, eg the Education Authority, Social Services, Translink and PSNI.
- By encouraging a strong sense of belonging to School through participation in extra-curricular activities.
- By having clear procedures for responding to bullying, which are kept under regular review

#### **4. Procedures for dealing with Bullying**

Bullying is unacceptable and a culture of openness is the best way to counter such behaviour. It is the responsibility of each member of the community – pupils, staff and parents - to report instances of bullying or suspicions of bullying, in the understanding that all such reports will be listened to and taken seriously.

In each instance, the priority should be that the bullied pupil feels supported and that the individuals responsible for bullying are made aware that their behaviour is unacceptable and the bullying stops.

It is accepted that the precise action taken will vary from incident to incident. However, the broad guidelines below apply:

- Instances of bullying or suspicion of bullying (whether in school, at a school event or on a bus/train to/from school) should be reported by pupils, parents or other members of staff to the Head of Year in the first instance. However, it is recognised that on occasion, the report may be made to a Key Stage Leader, Vice-Principal or Principal.
- The Head of Year will investigate, in liaison with the Key Stage Leader, Senior Teacher and the Vice-Principal (Pastoral).
- Pupils directly involved may be asked to give a written account of the incident.
- Parents of all pupils involved will be contacted promptly.
- If necessary, referrals to outside agencies will be made.
- The pupil bullied will be given practical advice and support; pastoral support, including counselling by the School Counsellor, will be offered.
- The situation will be monitored by the Head of Year to ensure the welfare of all pupils involved has been maintained.
- Teachers of the pupils involved will be informed so that they can contribute to monitoring the situation.

## 5. Recording Procedures

All alleged incidents of bullying behaviour will be carefully recorded by pastoral staff.

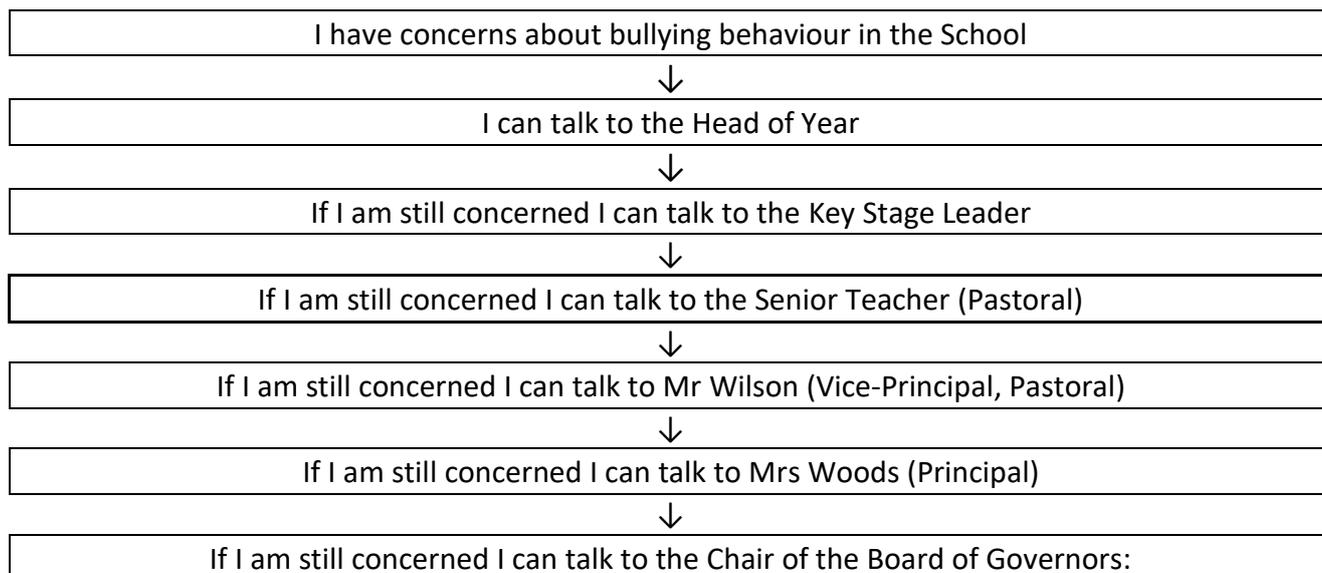
The report should include:

- The nature of the incident(s), alleged incident(s).
- Assessment of the concern i.e. is it bullying behaviour or socially unacceptable behaviour?  
– The Positive Behaviour Policy outlines procedures for socially unacceptable behaviour.
- Where/when the incident(s) occurred.
- Who was targeted by the behaviour and in what way did the bullying behaviour present?
- The motivating factors/underlying themes.
- The methods i.e. verbal, written or electronic or any combination of these.
- Information about how the incident was addressed i.e. the support and interventions for both the pupil(s) experiencing bullying behaviour, and the pupil(s) displaying bullying behaviour – see point 6.
- A review of bullying concerns and actions.

All alleged incidents of bullying behaviour are forwarded to the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) who will keep an overview, track incidents of bullying behaviour, and look for patterns of bullying behaviour.

The full report will be stored in the pupil file. Pastoral staff will complete the additional overview document saved within private 9.

## REPORTING A CONCERN



Pupils and/or their parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the School directly if they have a concern about bullying behaviour. Any person listed above may be contacted by telephoning the main School switchboard on (028) 9074 0423.

### 6. Responses to Bullying

The welfare needs of all children and young people are paramount and pupils' needs, whether the pupil(s) experiencing bullying behaviour, or the pupil(s) displaying bullying behaviour, need to be separated from their behaviour. A range of responses may be used in dealing with instances of bullying. The response(s) to be used will depend upon the severity and persistence of the bullying.

When bullying concerns are identified our school will work in a restorative way to achieve the necessary change i.e. it is intended that the person responsible will learn from what has happened and will change his/her behaviour. Education and awareness-raising are effective ways of challenging bullying behaviour and encouraging individual pupils to take responsibility for their own actions. These may include: a programme of mentoring, calming strategies, restorative conversations (scripted), the use of the Learning Support Suite, counselling, community service, or referral to an outside agency. Class activities and Assemblies may also be used more generally for this purpose.

In addition, sanctions, in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy, to be considered are:

- (a) Verbal reprimand from Head of Year/Head of School/Vice-Principal/Principal
- (b) Verbal or written apology
- (c) Friday detention
- (d) Saturday detention
- (e) Removed from circulation during Break and/or Lunchtime for a period of time
- (f) Suspension
- (g) Expulsion

Parents will be made aware of our school's practice to prevent and to respond to concerns through parent information events, consultation processes and where necessary, their active participation in partnership with the school to resolve concerns involving their child.

This Anti-Bullying Policy has been drawn up in consultation with pupils through the Pupil Council, Heads of Year and School, the Vice-Principal (Pastoral), the Principal, parents and members of the Board of Governors. Data in relation to behaviour is analysed in relation to other associated data, such as attendance, performance, SEN and Child Protection in order to promote and sustain a safe, effective learning and teaching environment for all. The Anti-Bullying Policy is kept under review.

## **Appendix 1 RELATED POLICIES**

- Anti-Cyberbullying Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- eSafety and Acceptable Use Policies

## **Appendix 2 SIGNS and SYMPTOMS**

The following signs MAY suggest that a pupil has been bullied and that the situation warrants investigation:

- Unwillingness to attend School/truancy
- Anxiety about travelling to and from School/avoiding regular travelling times
- Underachievement
- Loss of concentration/enthusiasm/interest in School/changed behaviour
- Repeated non-specific reasons for Surgery visits – headache/stomach ache
- Unexplained changes in mood especially before returning to School after holidays/weekends
- Physical signs of anxiety – stammering/nightmares/sleep difficulty/loss of appetite/nausea/withdrawal
- Physical bruising/torn clothes
- Loss of self-esteem/confidence/mood swings
- Books torn or destroyed/missing possessions
- Reluctance to say what is wrong

### **Appendix 3   ADVICE FOR PUPILS**

School encourages pupils to:

- Say NO to BULLYING
- Know and understand what bullying means and the consequences of bullying-type behaviour
- Be active not passive - speak out/tell about/report incidents of bullying
- Listen to, support and help bullied pupils
- Develop a range of assertiveness strategies to use in the event of a bullying situation
- Take personal responsibility
- Take collective responsibility
- Develop loyalty to School and pupils within it
- Know who to talk to in School:
  - Prefect
  - Class Tutor
  - The Matron
  - The School Counsellor
  - Any Teacher
  - Head of Year
  - Key Stage Leader
  - Senior Teacher (Pastoral)
  - The Vice-Principal (Pastoral)
- Know that if they are being bullied, it is not their fault
- Be aware of support services out of School:
  - Childline 0800 1111
  - Lifeline 0808 808 8000

### **Appendix 4   OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES**

Pupils and parents can contact the following organisations for information and support:

- The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum, 63 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast BT15 2GB  
Helpline: 028 9087 5006
- National Bullying Helpline: 0845 2255787 or 07734 701 221
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Helpline: 0808 800 5000
- Parenting NI, 42 Dublin Road, Belfast BT2 7HN. Telephone: 028 90 310 891, Helpline: 0808 8010 722