

WHOLE SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy was revised in September 2011 in line with the School's Policy Review Schedule which ensures all policies are kept up to date and replaces that updated in 2010.

The Whole School refers to all staff and students at Lavant House School in the junior and senior school which includes: the Early Years/Foundation Stage (EYFS), Pre-Prep School (Key Stage 1), Prep. School (Key Stage 2); Middle School (Key Stage 3); Senior School (Key Stage 4) and the Sixth Form (Key Stage 5).

Lavant House is committed to recognising and providing opportunities for pupils to thrive under the Every Child Matters framework:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Social and economic well-being

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At Lavant House, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop to their full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed; but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other.

Lavant House prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting Lavant House in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We subscribe to and support the DCSF Guidance "Safe to learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools" and encourage any pupil who feels threatened in any way to inform a member of staff or another pupil. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To ensure that everyone in the school community understands what is meant by bullying
- To ensure that everyone in the school community knows that bullying is not tolerated
- To create a culture in which bullying is reported by pupils and is brought into the open for discussion and action
- To take all incidents of bullying seriously
- To record all incidents fully in order to recognise patterns of behaviour and inform the future school policy
- To help pupils to acquire the personal skills and techniques necessary for coping with bullying.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying may be defined as the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual), verbal (including chat room and SMS messages), cyber (social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email) and emotional means (by excluding, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours). It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racist, religious, cultural, homophobic, which focus on disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. We always treat it very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

There are very many types of bullying: (the following list is not exhaustive)

Special Educational Needs and Disability – verbal or making it impossible for disabled people to do something i.e. moving equipment

Physical: hitting, tripping up, hair pulling

Verbal: name-calling, spreading malicious rumours, making threats, prolonged teasing in a nasty way

Non-verbal: ignoring, excluding, spiteful notes or texts, destroying friendships, hiding possessions

Cyber: this covers a wide range of bullying activity using modern technology,
Unpleasant text messages/mobile phones
Photograph/video clips sent via mobile phone
Email messages, often using a pseudonym or another person's name
Chat room bullying
Bullying through instant messaging
Bullying via websites using defamatory blogs and personal websites
(also see below)

Cultural, Racist: bullying because of the colour, ethnicity, culture, faith or nationality of a person. (Not all racist incidents are racist bullying, however.)

Homophobic

Religious

Sexual

Sexist

Domestic violence – the impact on pupils in our care at school.

THE IMPACT OF BULLYING

Bullying affects all those involved.

Bullies may go on to further anti-social behaviour.

Victims feel socially excluded and have low self-esteem.

Bullying causes psychological damage and even suicide.

Onlookers are also affected in bullying situations.

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

WHERE BULLYING OCCURS

Bullying may occur on or off the school premises, but whenever a pupil of the school is involved then the school should make every effort to deal with the bullying.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING

If an incident of bullying is reported, allegations are investigated at once. The following procedures are adopted:

Who to tell and the Procedure for dealing with bullying

The procedure is in line with the school's Behaviour Policy and also applies to the Boarding element of the school. In the first instance any incidents of bullying should be reported to the Form teacher or any member of staff.

Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders and such arrangements have regard to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. (2002, updated 2010) when the House staff act as Form staff in the following stages :

Stage 1

The Deputy Headmistress & Headmistress should be informed.

The form teacher should try to get an account of the incident(s) independently from both sides. Keep written notes to enable patterns to be identified.

The form teacher should discuss their behaviour with each individual, and suggest strategies for coping/avoiding/stopping.

The form teacher should discuss bullying with the class in a general way, though they will probably be aware of the particular situation.

The form teacher should make sure all staff are aware of what has happened and the pupils involved. Discuss it in a lunchtime staff meeting.

The form teacher should speak to parents of both sides and try to ensure they understand the situation and are supporting the school's effort to resolve it.

If the bullying continues:

Stage 2

The Headmistress should see the girls involved.

Both the bully and the victim should be sympathetically supported in their efforts to resolve the problems.

The form teacher should invite the bully's parents in to school to discuss the matter with her and the Headmistress.

The bullying pupil should be given as much help and advice as possible so that she understands what is wrong with her behaviour and how to avoid future bullying.

The bully must undertake to stop behaving in such a way.

The bully must be made aware that continuing to behave in this way will lead to the imposition of serious sanctions.

When serious bullying continues beyond this stage:

Stage 3

A formal meeting should take place with Headmistress, Form Teacher, parents and pupil, and any other parties who may be relevant.

The bully may be suspended from school. Strong sanctions such as exclusion may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying.

It should be remembered that although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

A note of Reassurance

Bullying is a rare occurrence at school but any incident that runs counter to our aims published in our Prospectus and our school rules published in our Student Planner and various student and parent handbooks. Consequently, any 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 and the support of parents, of course, is necessary too.

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.

WHAT WE DO TO RAISE AWARENESS

We take the following preventative measures:

- We raise awareness of staff to bullying through staff inset training.
- We use appropriate Assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. Both form time and PSHE sessions are used to explore, reduce the risk and resolve bullying issues and to teach ways of dealing with bullying.
- Other lessons, particularly RS, English and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- The school promotes a strong culture of trust between pupils and staff in which girls are encouraged to talk about their worries and anxieties. All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Notes are kept on individual girls' files of bullying situations and their follow up.
- All staff are asked to be vigilant in spotting bullying incidents, including girls left on their own a lot, although all are aware of how difficult it is for teachers to see many types of bullying going on in the classroom
- Individual pupils are discussed in weekly staff meetings, including those involved in bullying incidents, so staff are aware and can contribute their own observations and suggestions.
- Form staff are alert for any allegations of bullying and will spend time with individuals or the whole form sorting out bullying incidents
- The school nursing staff are readily available for girls to see
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team who support the Headmistress and Deputy Headmistress and they are briefed to handle any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying
- Periodic staff training as well as the regular staff discussions keep our anti-bullying awareness levels raised
- Our trained School Counsellor is an important part of our pastoral support service, providing specialist skills of assessment and counselling. She is available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves to her when they have

social, emotional or behavioural concerns. On occasion, a member of our pastoral team may refer a pupil to her.

- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the school site. The informal boarding house environment is important in reinforcing a pupil's standards and values, providing the opportunity for friendly, informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil outside the formal classroom. We encourage close contact between the House staff and parents/guardians, and would always make contact if we were worried about a pupil's well-being.
- Our Nurse's Office and our boarding house in particular display advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline. All pupils have access to a telephone helpline, enabling them to call for support in private.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our pupils
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

SYMPTOMS OF BULLYING

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Nurse's Office with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

CYBERBULLYING – DEFINITION

Mr Bill Belsey, the creator of the web site: <http://www.cyberbullying.org/> defined this unpleasant phenomenon in the following terms:

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others."

Cyberbullying can involve Social Networking Sites, like Bebo and Myspace, emails and mobile phones, used for SMS messages and as cameras.

CYBERBULLYING – PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Lavant House:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its charter for the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHE lessons
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Mobile phones are not permitted in classrooms or inside any part of the school building. Their use is restricted to outdoors during break times for day pupils and inside under specific circumstances for boarders – see Mobile Phone Policy.

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