

21. ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Aims and objectives

At Westminster Cathedral Choir School, we base our ethos 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 his 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.

Westminster Cathedral Choir School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the School 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. This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website, and on request. It is also available and known to staff and boarders, including junior and recently-appointed staff.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. 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. This policy applies to all day and boarding pupils in the school.

Definition of bullying

'Bullying may be defined as: behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally.' (DCSF: *Preventing and Tackling Bullying*)

Bullying is the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual), verbal (including email, chat room and SMS messages), 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, sexual or sexist, homophobic, which focus on religion, cultural background, disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve everyone - pupils, other young people, staff and parents.

Cyberbullying – definition

Mr Bill Belsey, the creator of the web site: <http://www.cyberbullying.org/> defined this unpleasant and particularly intrusive 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, Facebook and Myspace, emails and mobile phones, used for SMS messages and as cameras.

The school’s response to bullying

At Westminster Cathedral Choir School (in line with the DCSF’s *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* guidance) we always treat bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school’s policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles. Bullying can be so serious that it causes psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and, whilst bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

Signs of bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- 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 Medical Centre 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.

Preventative measures

We take the following preventative measures in place in order to ensure that bullying does not become a problem which is associated with Westminster Cathedral Choir School:

- All new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. We guarantee that whistle-blowers who act in good faith will not be penalised and will be supported
 - All new members of staff are given guidance on the School's anti-bullying policy and in how to react to allegations of bullying in their first week at Westminster Cathedral Choir School. They are required to read the School's policy as part of their induction. We use appropriate assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHCE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other
 - Boys have a *Love thy Neighbour* section of their prep diary that outlines whom boys can talk to and what to do if they feel someone else is being bullied
 - Other lessons, particularly RS, English and Drama may also 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
 - All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place, in line with our policy on whistle-blowing
 - All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Records of any incidents are kept securely by the Head of Pastoral Care in order that patterns of behaviour can be identified and monitored
 - We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Tutors, who support the Head of Pastoral Care and are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying
 - Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies. Inset sessions are held regularly
 - The School Chaplains will give support and guidance to pupils of all beliefs who are able to refer themselves to them, perhaps at a time of family break-up, sickness or bereavement. The Chaplain will provide confidential advice and seek to encourage the development of tolerance, understanding and respect for others in a diverse community
- As bullying is most likely to take place on the playground, either before school, at break-time, lunch-time, after school, or during Chorister free-time, Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class (or when Choristers are "free") and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur e.g. the corners of the playground. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour
- In boarding houses, there is a strong team of tutors supporting the Head of Boarding and the Matron, all of whom act *in loco parentis*. The informal 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. A member of the boarding House staff is always on duty to supervise the pupils

- We encourage close contact between the Head of Boarding, Head of Pastoral Care, and parents/guardians
- All boarders and their parents are made aware of the contents of the school's anti-bullying policy and are aware that they can download copies from the school's web site. All boarders know how to report anxieties to their House Master or to another member of the pastoral team
- Our medical room displays advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline; this information is also displayed in the boarders' phone booth
- All pupils have access to a telephone should they wish to call a helpline
- We provide leadership training to our Head Boys and their team of prefects which specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils
- We have banned initiation ceremonies designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation
- 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

Cyberbullying – preventative measures

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Westminster Cathedral Choir School:

- 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
- Issues all pupils with their own personal school email address
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in assemblies and workshops (for boys, parents and staff), which covers blocking, removing contacts from 'buddy lists' and sharing personal data
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe
- Mobile phones are not permitted in School and must be handed in to Form Tutors. The use of cameras on mobile phones is not allowed at any time

Procedures for dealing with reported bullying

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures are adopted:

- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved
- He/she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible
- The member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved

- The victim will be interviewed on his own and may be asked to write an account of events
- The bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events
- The incident should be recorded on a school Incident Report Form and signed and dated before it is given to the Head of Pastoral Care (if he is not investigating the issue) who is responsible for keeping all records of bullying and other serious disciplinary offences, securely in a locked cabinet in his office
- The Head of Pastoral Care will inform the tutors and/ or the House Master of both the bully/bullies and the victim[s] as soon as possible. In very serious incidents, the Head Master should be informed
- The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him why revenge is inappropriate. He will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him or herself
- The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He will be offered guidance on modifying his behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions as set out in the School's Behaviour Policy; for example, detention, withdrawal of privileges or suspension. In particularly serious and/or persistent cases, the bully should expect permanent exclusion
- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and counselling, should be agreed. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy
- A meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, could be helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place
- In very serious cases, and only after the Head Master has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or to the Social Services. However, it is the policy of Westminster Cathedral Choir School to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the School's own disciplinary procedures, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely. The School may exclude a pupil, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe and persistent bullying and in the event that the support put in place for the bully does not result in the modification of behaviour to an acceptable level