



St Mary's School
Waverley
Founded 1888

Anti-bullying policy

St Mary's School aims to provide a safe and secure environment where:

- Individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted
- Individuals empathise with one another, and offer one another support
- Bullying is reported and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate such behaviour

St Mary's School does not tolerate bullying in any form, and all members of the school staff are committed to promoting a safe and caring environment for the girls. Staff, girls and parents will work together to address issues of bullying when these arise.

Committee for Interventions Regarding Peer Abuse (CIPA)

This committee is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to and should provide the required support to any victims or perpetrators of bullying. This committee is made up of the headmistress, the school psychologist, the head of Pastoral Care, the Form tutors, the head girls and three peer counsellors.

Definition

Bullying is aggressive behaviour or harassment by an individual or a group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can be physical or non-physical in nature.

Physical bullying

Physical bullying includes punching, kicking, tripping, pushing, taking and/or the damaging of possessions, threatening someone, extortion and preventing someone from leaving an area or room.

Non-physical bullying

- *Provocative behaviour* includes making rude gestures and pulling faces, producing offensive graffiti and the wearing of racist badges or insignia
- *Verbal bullying* includes name-calling, making fun of another person, being repeatedly critical, prolonged unkind teasing, making threats and making racist, sexist or homophobic comments
- *Relational bullying* includes spreading rumours and gossiping, the breaking of confidences, and the deliberate splitting of a friendship and stealing of a best friend to isolate and hurt a person
- *Sexual harassment* includes the spread of sexual gossip, making sexual innuendos and jokes, and making derogatory comments about someone's appearance
- *Cyber-bullying* includes the sending of cruel or threatening text, email or instant messages, posting nasty pictures or messages about others in blogs or on websites, making unkind comments about another person in text or instant messages, in emails or chat rooms, taking explicit photographs and sending them on to others and "stealing" someone's identity to spread rumours or lies about another person

Preventative measures

- During Life Orientation lessons and at assemblies, staff members and peer counsellors will educate the girls about the signs and dangers of bullying
- Girls will be taught how to recognise bullying, how to respond when made a victim of bullying, and how to handle bullying incidents which they may observe
- Girls are encouraged to report any incident or suspected incident of bullying
- They will learn to identify and correct bullying behaviours that they themselves may exhibit
- Staff will be made aware of the symptoms of a victim of bullying, and will be alerted to the importance of noticing and acting on incidents of bullying
- Staff will be educated regarding the understanding of the courage required by a victim to report incidents of bullying, and the importance of confidentiality
- Parent talks will be scheduled to equip parents with the skills required to assist their daughter if she is being bullied
- Anonymous questionnaires will be sent out to pupils to ascertain whether the anti-bullying policy is being correctly implemented, and if it is effectively curbing bullying incidents

Reporting of bullying

There are a number of ways in which bullying may be reported:

- Girls may complete a Bullying Report Form and submit it to a member of CIPA, or leave it in the management committee secretary's office
- Any evidence of bullying should be kept (text messages, emails, and witness accounts)
- Girls may report bullying to a peer counsellor. Their contact details are displayed in the chill room
- Girls may speak to any member of staff

All reports of bullying will be taken seriously, will be investigated thoroughly and feedback will be given.

The reporting of bullying will be encouraged as the right and courageous thing to do.

Confidentiality will be upheld.

Procedures to deal with bullying

When an incident of bullying or suspected bullying is reported, the school will respond in a manner that is appropriate to the incident. Depending on the circumstances and nature of the incident, the following steps will usually be taken:

- A suitable member of staff will meet with the victim to establish what has been taking place, to ensure that the victim understands and is comfortable with the action that the school will take in dealing with the matter, and to ensure that the victim will not be placed at further risk
- The victim's parents will be contacted and informed of the situation, and kept apprised of the school's actions and approach. If it is felt that the victim is in need of further support or coaching, this will be arranged in conjunction with her parents and the school's pastoral care systems
- Two adult members of CIPA will then meet with the perpetrator of the bullying incident to hear her side of the situation, and to ensure that the bullying behaviour stops immediately. If there is negative comeback from the perpetrator to the victim following this, parents will be called in. If it is felt that the perpetrator needs some sort of intervention, this should be arranged in conjunction with her parents and the school's pastoral care systems
- In the event that the accounts given by the victim and the perpetrator are substantially different, investigating staff will usually bring both girls into an interview together for mediation, or will investigate further by interviewing other girls who witnessed the incidents
- The Form tutors of the victim and perpetrator, and key members of CIPA, should be kept informed of each step of the process
- The incidents will be recorded in the pupil records
- If the perpetrator repeats her behaviour, the school will be obliged to take more stringent steps to curb this. In the event of repeated bullying behaviour that is felt to endanger one or more girls in the school, the perpetrator may be asked to leave St Mary's
- In incidents which involve cyber-bullying, whether these occur on or off the school property, the school reserves the right to take the same action as for other incidents of bullying behaviour

Role of the parent or guardian

Parents or guardians are advised to:

- Be alert to signs of unhappiness in their daughter's life. Any change in attitude, drop in school marks, avoiding school or social activities and other unusual behaviours may indicate bullying

- Be aware, in a respectful manner, of the content of social behaviours and content posted on electronic sites, via SMS or MMS. A girl may take the role of a perpetrator or a victim
- Be supportive when an incident of bullying in any form and, in particular, of cyber-bullying, is reported as this can be extremely damaging and have lasting effects. Encourage their daughter to retain any possible evidence
- Inform their daughter's Form tutor or a member of CIPA if there is any suspicion that their daughter is being bullied
- Not take matters into their own hands in confronting the perpetrator or her parents
- Refrain from telling their daughter to retaliate
- Help their daughter to learn positive behaviours that will help her not to become a victim
- Clearly address the situation if their daughter is found to have abused another girl