

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy has been drawn up with reference to the DCSF Guidance, *Safe to Learn - Embedding anti-bullying work in schools*.

### **Aims & Objectives**

QM aims to provide a safe and supportive environment in which the individual is valued and difference is celebrated rather than merely tolerated. The school recognises that girls can only flourish in a community based upon mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance.

Bullying, victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. All girls are treated fairly and with consideration by the staff at QM and are expected to show the same qualities in their dealings both with each other and members of staff.

Sanctions will be applied, where necessary, in accordance with the School Rules as defined in the Red Book.

### **Definition**

We define bullying as the wilful desire to hurt, humiliate, threaten or frighten someone. Bullying is a process rather than a single act. It can take the form of racial, religious, cultural, sexist, special educational needs and disability or sexuality related bullying. It can involve physical (including sexual) intimidation, cyber bullying, verbal intimidation, threats, ostracism or the spreading of malicious rumours. Cyber bullying can be via email, mobile phone text messaging, social networking sites (e.g. facebook), e-photos etc.

A bully may well involve a third party e.g. using a friend to tease or torment her victim. The bully can often influence others to take no action to prevent the bullying of the victim, often through fear that they might in time become victims. Bullying can be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle.

Bullying can focus on race, sexuality, special educational needs and disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). It can cause serious psychological damage and even suicide. Harassment and threatening behaviour are criminal offences. QM treats bullying seriously. It is entirely unacceptable to view bullying as a part of growing up or as a means of "toughening up" young people

### **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- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet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 spoiled 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)
- Psychological damage and 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, experiencing 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 members of staff.

### **Preventative Measures**

- The issue of bullying is raised at assemblies, chapels and via PSHE lessons.
- There are specific opportunities for girls to raise matters of concern:
  - Tutorials
  - Year group meetings with the Year Head and/or the Housemistresses
  - At any time with one of their Housemistresses
  - Headmaster's lessons
  - Small discussion groups with the Chaplain
  - Prefects and House Captains at weekly House meetings
  - Sessions with members of the Peer Mentoring Group
  - PSHE lessons
  - School Council
  - The Medical Centre which is staffed at all times during term time
  - The School Counsellor who can be contacted via the intranet or at her drop-in sessions
- RS, English & Drama lessons often highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce the message that bullying is wrong and unacceptable
- All girls have access to a telephone and helpline nos. are displayed in the boarding areas.
- QM has no tradition of initiation ceremonies designed to humiliate new girls.
- There is a "buddy" system for new girls to help them settle in to QM
- The prefects receive training in Child Protection and Safeguarding which focuses on listening skills and supporting younger and vulnerable girls.
- The school rule (ii in the Red Book) relating to bullying applies at all times not just during term time.
- Potential victims are identified and mentoring or support measures put in place.
- The School Counsellor provides a ½ termly report to the Deputy Head listing the issues raised by girls, although not identities or details.

### **Procedures for dealing with Bullying**

Any suspicion of bullying should be reported to a girl's tutor or housemistress for investigation and monitoring;

- Any witnessed bullying must be challenged and dealt with immediately and the episode reported to the tutor and housemistress of the girls involved;
- Any reported episode of bullying must be reported immediately to the victim's housemistress, who will ask to see the girl and ask her for a written account of events;
- The bully & any others involved will be interviewed by the housemistress and asked to write their account of events.
- The incident will be recorded and reported WITHOUT DELAY to the Deputy Head.
- The Victim is offered support & advice by the housemistress and is asked whether she would like to see the School Counsellor;
- The alleged bully will be interviewed by the housemistress and it will be made clear why her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. She will be offered support to modify her behaviour. An appropriate sanction will be imposed and recorded;
- Parents of all girls involved will be informed of what has happened and invited to discuss the matter;
- A meeting of all girls involved in the incident maybe useful as a means of helping to close the episode and developing a strategy for avoiding such incidents in the future.
- The housemistress will monitor the situation.
- In very serious cases or when the bullying is repeated the bullying incident must be referred to the Deputy Head who will take over the handling of the episode and may decided to refer the matter to the police or social care services. However it has always been possible to resolve all such issues internally and it is the intention of QM to continue to use its own disciplinary procedures unless the matter is likely to lead to criminal prosecution.

The Deputy Head/Child Protection Officer is able to give advice to staff on tackling bullying and Karen Anderson, Head of ICT, is able to advice on tackling cyber-bullying.

See also

Boarding Policy

Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy

E safety (pupils) policy guidelines

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