

**Abbs Cross School
and Arts College**



Commitment to Opportunity and Excellence

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

WHAT IT IS

Bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour that this school considers inappropriate and unacceptable. Bullying can include any sort of physical, verbal or emotional intimidation of a person by another person or group, which causes them anxiety or harm. It is characterised by its persistent nature, and is rarely a “one off” event. Common examples of bullying include: name-calling, physical aggression and threatening behaviour, taking/damaging someone’s belongings, making fun of someone, isolating an individual, and spreading rumours about someone. A more recent but very worrying national trend is the growing number of incidents of cyber bullying which may include abusive text messages where the number of the bully is withheld; MSN messaging; harassment on the internet and “happy slapping”.

There are a number of reasons why students may be bullied. These include: how individuals look, their size, anything that is considered different e.g. wearing spectacles, colour, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, disability. Staff need to be vigilant both in and out of lessons to ensure that all the individuals who make up the school community are treated with respect and that our differences are valued rather than despised.

We aim to provide an environment where all forms of bullying are seen to be unacceptable. To this end, it is given a high profile in the personal development programme, in tutor time and in assemblies. Year Councils are encouraged to discuss bullying. A concerns box is used to encourage students to report problems, and adults within school are encouraged to model courteous and co-operative behaviour towards each other and towards students.

We will not tolerate any incidents of bullying. Teachers and non-teaching staff are encouraged to be vigilant within their classrooms and around the school building, and to report any concerns. We do not allow verbal or physical harassment or interference with others’ property to go unchecked in lessons or elsewhere, however, trivial such incidents may appear.

We are committed to student-centred and collaborative styles of learning. Classroom management has a key part to play in ensuring that students can work in an atmosphere where they do not feel threatened and where they feel valued. We encourage students to work in a variety of groupings and to engage in activities which build self-esteem and extend relationships beyond a small group of friends.

As part of our programme of self-evaluation, we carry out annual student surveys which include students’ and parents’ views on bullying, to monitor how they have been dealt with, and to inform practical strategies to reduce bullying.

Adults who work in the school can also be victims of bullying either by colleagues or by students. We encourage staff to report any incident of bullying to their line managers so that appropriate action can be taken and support given as necessary.

DEALING WITH BULLYING

Ethos

We aim to create a supportive atmosphere in which students and staff feel able to talk about their problems. They will also be listened to by an appropriate member of staff when reporting incidents of bullying, and what they say will be taken seriously.

Allegations of bullying are dealt with swiftly. For students, the tutor is normally the first point of contact and will discuss incidents of suspected bullying with the appropriate Year Co-ordinator. Where problems persist the Head of Year and Assistant Head will take the lead in tackling the situation. The Assistant Head will always be informed of incidents of physical violence or intimidation and will normally take the lead in dealing with them.

Every effort is made to resolve problems between students through the counselling of both parties; both may need support in addressing and modifying their behaviour. The Behaviour Support Service may also be involved in drawing up a behaviour action plan and may be active in counselling both victim and bully.

Incidents of a discriminatory kind will be dealt with following procedure set out in the Equal Opportunities Policy and racist incidents are reported to the LEA termly.

Allegations of bullying made by a member of staff against another member of staff will be investigated by line managers or by a member of the Leadership Team as appropriate.

Procedures

Students alleging bullying and those accused of bullying others will be interviewed separately, and in confidence, and their statements recorded. They will be given the opportunity to talk about their perceptions of the incident and their feelings. Where the accounts of events differ, witnesses will be interviewed and their statements recorded.

When the member of staff has established the facts, a judgement will be made about the best way to solve the problem. If the incident is a recurrence of a similar incident involving the same or other students, sanctions may be the appropriate course of action. Where sanctions such as exclusion from school are necessary, we will also look at strategies to support the perpetrator. If it is a 'first offence' the student causing the problem may be asked to agree a set of targets to prevent bullying in the future. The situation will be monitored carefully by the appropriate member of staff and any further incidents followed up immediately. Tutors will always be informed and whenever possible involved in the discussion. Parents will be informed of the incidents and of any action taken by the member of staff responsible for taking action.

Whilst we accept that it is impossible to eradicate all forms of bullying completely, we will do all that we can to create a learning environment which encourages positive behaviour and relationships. We will encourage an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed openly, and in which they are dealt with promptly and effectively. We will follow the principles of a 'Listening School' where all members of the community are encouraged to bring incidences of bullying to someone's attention.

PB/VMT
January 2008