



St Alban's RC High School

Anti-Bullying Policy

ORIGIN:	Governing Body
COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE:	Wellbeing, Equality & Inclusion
LEAD MEMBER:	Assistant Head
DATE APPROVED:	21.02.2024
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS NAME:	Chris Evans
CHAIR OF GOVERNORS SIGNATURE:	<i>Chris Evans</i>
REVIEW DATE:	21.02.2025

St Alban's RC High School is a voluntary aided school and the governing body is the employer of the staff who work there. The contract of employment is between the school's governing body and the employee. The governing body has all the employment responsibilities that this entails including the appointment and dismissal of staff

INTRODUCTION

St Albans RC High School recognises there is a need to safeguard the welfare of all those within the School community and to encourage co-operation, tolerance and harmony, - as supported in the school's mission statement:

“To provide a happy and secure environment based on Gospel Values in which the whole needs of the individual pupil can be served in preparing him/her to take a place in society as a young Catholic/Christian”.

St Albans RC High School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We have high expectations of all pupils and strive to create a climate in which all children can fulfil their potential.

Preventing and responding to all forms of bullying is a critical part of meeting the wider statutory responsibility of St Albans RC High School to promote pupil well-being and also community cohesion. It also ensures that the Every Child Matters outcomes are firmly embedded in policy and practice.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at St Albans RC High School. If bullying does occur, all pupils should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. St Albans RC High School is a telling School and anyone who knows that bullying is happening should be able to inform a member of staff in safety

DEFINITION

“Behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. - Bullying can be carried out physically, verbally, emotionally or through cyberspace”.

Research confirms the destructive effects of bullying on young people’s lives. Although some can shrug it off, bullying can produce feelings of powerlessness, isolation from others, undermine self-esteem and sometimes convince the victims that they are at fault.

Children and young people’s learning and their well-being is profoundly affected by bullying and harassment. School communities now widely accept that when children do not feel safe, they are not emotionally or psychologically ready to learn or develop.

Those who bully, usually perceive an imbalance of power and aim to hurt by means of force, intimidation or ridicule in order to control others or perhaps to inspire a reaction that escalates the situation

FOCUS OF BULLYING

The focus of bullying can be more or less anything that distinguishes an individual and represents a deviation from a presumed norm, e.g. body shape, hair colour. It can focus on personal backgrounds, including parents’ jobs, houses and lifestyles and can sometimes derive from deep seated local feuding with disagreements between adults passed to children who then act them out in school.

Bullying can be related to special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. It can also be directed at young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances.

Bullying can focus on sexual attractiveness or the perceived lack of it and sexuality based on homophobia, misogyny (hatred of women) or both. Bullying can also focus on race, nationality, culture, religion or a mixture of these. St Albans RC High School strives to celebrate diversity and difference and we welcome pupils and families from ethnic minority backgrounds.

HOW BULLYING IS CONDUCTED

There are differences in how bullying is conducted. It can be a one-off or sustained and damaging either way. It can be painfully obvious, but it can also be surreptitious and subtle. It can also be one student against another or involve several students.

As technology has continued to develop, ‘Cyberbullying’ has become a term that is all too familiar within the lives of many young people. Cyberbullying can be defined as;

“The Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and internet, deliberately to upset someone else”

Cyberbullying adds an additional threat to the victim as it can occur in the home - being bullied at home can take away the place a young person feel most safe. The content is often more harsh – young people say things online that they wouldn't say in person, mainly because they can't see the other person's reaction. It also has the obvious appeal of anonymity - Cyberbullies often hide behind screen names and e-mail addresses that don't identify who they are.

St Albans RC High School identifies the following types of behaviour as possible examples of bullying and is not prescriptive or exhaustive:

- Physical – hitting, pushing, using aggressive body language etc.
- Verbal – name calling, insults, making nasty comments, starting or passing on rumours, threats to a student's face or behind his / her back.
- Non-verbal – looks, gestures, body language.
- Written – notes, email, MSN, chat rooms, text messages, social network sites, etc.
- Visual – using a mobile phone to take inappropriate pictures or videos of another student.
- Inappropriate language – racist, sexist, homophobic or reference to special educational needs or religion.

THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

The most common effects of bullying are:

- anxiety and depression, which can lead to intermittent and long-term absence from School, resulting in under-achievement
- poor self-esteem which prevents pupils from forming positive relationships and can lead to feelings of worthlessness and betrayal
- withdrawal which may lead to reduced participation in school and other activities, isolation or self-harm
- loss of identity
- guilt that the victim 'allowed' it to happen
- mental health difficulties – which can then manifest itself as physical symptoms.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BULLYING

The pupil may:

- be frightened of walking to or from School
- be unwilling to go to School
- begin to perform poorly in School
- become withdrawn
- have books, clothing or possessions that are damaged
- become distressed/stop eating
- cry easily/have nightmares
- become disruptive/aggressive
- have possessions which go missing
- begin stealing (to pay the bully)

AIMS OF OUR ANTI-BULLYING WORK

At St Albans RC High School we endeavour:

- to ensure all staff, the Governing body, pupils and parents have an understanding of bullying and its consequences
- to emphasise through all aspects of our curriculum that bullying will not be tolerated
- to ensure that there are clear procedures and systems for reporting and recording bullying, which are understood and followed by all staff
- to ensure pupils and staff learn to keep themselves and others safe
- to ensure that students learn to recognise and respect the differences between groups of people within the school community
- to help students develop self-confidence, self-esteem and to fulfil their potential within school
- to support and re-educate those pupils who are both the victims and perpetrators of bullying, providing them with a range of strategies they can use if they are at risk of bullying others or are being bullied themselves
- to create a School which all members of the community can come to without fear of violence, aggression or intimidation of any kind
- To ensure that the whole school community is clear about the anti-bullying stance St Albans RC High School takes.
- To take every opportunity to celebrate the success of anti-bullying work.
- All pupils will be clear about the roles they can take in preventing bullying, including the role of bystanders.

Pupils are taught that any kind of aggressive behaviour, either verbal or physical is unacceptable. Incidents of bullying are always treated seriously.

All staff are vigilant in school and within the grounds to identify actual or potential cases of bullying. Victims are asked not to retaliate, but to inform a member of staff immediately.

COMBATING BULLYING

St Albans RC High School is aware that bullying must be tackled on two levels, by focusing on preventative work, but also by responding appropriately when incidents do occur. We are working hard to improve behaviour and encourage children and young people to positively manage their own behaviour. We teach our students that as well as having rights, the choices they make will also bring responsibilities.

The following strategies may be used to ensure that we have a clear, consistent and effective approach to bullying:

- an agreed definition of bullying with a base line measurement, as the beginning of an awareness raising campaign
- a strong ethos in St Albans RC High School, promoting tolerance and respect for difference and diversity
- positive leadership from senior staff and governors on tackling bullying
- a designated member of staff, preferably from the Senior Management Team, who will be responsible for co-ordinating anti-bullying issues.
- a clear anti-bullying policy. The policy will be reviewed regularly by staff, governors, parents and pupils
- a planned approach in tutorial programmes and workshop days, to the issue of bullying in a context which promotes self-esteem and confidence in relationships
- Planning and promoting teaching and school routines which encourage learning and positive behaviour
- regular training for all staff to raise and maintain awareness, to alert them to indicators which may suggest bullying and to equip them with ways of responding to it
- periodic consultation with pupils to inform the school's knowledge of bullying.
- confidential and varied methods for alerting the School to current instances of bullying
- adequate supervision of the school site, especially toilets, lunch queues and distant areas, including if appropriate the school gates at the beginning and end of the day.
- Increased supervision levels and, as appropriate, safe areas for pupils who feel threatened at break times.
- Independent listeners, including older pupils and adults, other than school staff, to whom victims of bullying may turn including a regular drop in service in a confidential / quiet area of school, with the school nurse, youth worker and councillor.
- rewarding non-aggressive behaviour
- encouraging co-operative behaviour
- the use of Individual Plans for those children experiencing interpersonal and peer relationship difficulties
- close monitoring of those children with Special Educational Needs, looked after children or those who are young carers.
- sharing proven good practice with colleagues both in St Albans RC High School and in our family of schools

EDUCATION

- Pupils will be given the opportunity to increase their awareness of both the effects and consequences of bullying through some or all of the following:
- curriculum areas – for example, English, Drama, RE, workshop Days, History,
- assemblies
- class discussions on issues such as friendship, prejudice, assertiveness, coping strategies
- firm and appropriate disciplinary procedures
- Active Tutorial sessions – Tutors will be regularly provided with materials and ideas to raise awareness of the issues surrounding bullying and strategies for combating such behaviour.
- The Head Boy and Head Girl team and the general School Council will be heavily involved in facilitating the 'Student Voice' agenda.

DEALING WITH BULLYING INCIDENTS/ALLEGATIONS

Where a pupil reports / alleges a bullying incident to an adult, or an adult witnesses an incident. The following are agreed School procedures:

- a nominated member of staff, e.g. Head Teacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Head Teacher, Head of Year, is informed in writing
- staff will ensure the immediate safety of all other staff, pupils and property.
- any injured child/children or staff will receive appropriate medical attention as soon as is practicable
- both the victim(s) and bully(ies) should be interviewed separately to establish the facts without apportioning blame
- a decision should be taken regarding whether to contact the parents of both the victim(s) and bully(ies)
- in the light of the incident it may be appropriate to review the existing behaviour policy and/or procedures.
- appropriate sanctions and support will be discussed and agreed upon
- follow-up discussions will take place within 2-3 weeks
- the opportunity should be available after the incident for both the victim(s) and bully(ies) together to discuss their difficulties with a responsible and confident adult

RECORDING INCIDENTS OF BULLYING

When an allegation of bullying has been made, the following procedure and follow up actions must take place;

- Staff(s) name who is dealing with incident.
- Time and date of incident
- Location of incident, plus names of all of those students involved (where known).
- The type of incident must be recorded. For example, race or religion related.
- The facts of the incident, plus any witness statements.
- Action taken – including action taken to punish or prevent further bullying behaviour from the perpetrator and support for the victim.

- A record must also be made regarding any additional outside agency use or referral, or involvement of parents / other appropriate adults.
- Finally, details of the 'follow up' conversation / meeting to ensure the incident has been fully resolved.

This information is critical to ensure not only a thorough response to the allegation, but also to inform future developmental improvement plans for St Albans RC High School to continue to develop and progress.

INTERVIEWING THE VICTIM

The pupil will be informed that notes will be taken of the conversation and both will agree at the end that what has been written is a true record. Staff will be aware at all times of possible Child Protection issues. Confidentiality will not be promised.

- staff will listen objectively and without favour to what is being said. The pupil(s) will be encouraged to share what they are feeling
- staff will ascertain who has been involved, including bystanders
- staff will discuss with the victim(s) what they would like to see happen and arrangements for the future
- staff may offer coping/preventative strategies if appropriate
- discussions around reparation/compensation will take place if property is damaged/destroyed
- a realistic timescale for investigating and reporting back to the victim(s) will be given

INTERVIEWING THE BULLY/BYSTANDER

Research suggests that by telling the bully(ies) how the victim(s) is feeling, this raises their awareness of the pain they are causing and can cause a positive change in their behaviour. Staff will inform the student(s) that notes will be taken of the conversation and both will agree at the end that what has been written is a true record. Staff will be aware at all times of Child Protection issues. Confidentiality will not be promised. The following approaches may be used as appropriate to the incident:

- staff interviewing the bully(ies)/bystanders will not apportion blame, but rather approach the pupils in a non-confrontational manner with the emphasis on problem solving
- staff will explain they would like to talk to the student(s) as they are aware the student has been unkind to/causing problems for (name of victim). Staff will ask the student(s) if they know how (name of victim) is feeling right now
- staff will explain that the bully(ies)/bystanders are responsible for those feelings and this is not acceptable. Staff disapproval will be vigorous
- the staff member will ask for suggestions to help the victim(s) feel better and to help solve the problem
- staff will agree to meet with all the students involved again after an appropriate time to see how the situation has changed
- the nominated member of staff for bullying issues should be given a record of the interviews for the student files

- appropriate contact will be maintained with both sets of parents/carers until the situation has been resolved

If the bullying persists, this strategy may be combined with other positive interventions and targeted actions such as:

- Restorative Justice
- Peer mentoring
- Peer mediation
- Buddying
- a class/form change after discussions with all involved
- Support from external agencies, e.g., Early Intervention Team, Educational Psychology Service, NSPCC, Childline
- School Council
- Circle of Friends
- Schools within the same catchment area working jointly together
- a whole School initiative to address the issue of bullying whenever deemed to be appropriate
- the appropriate encouragement of peer disapproval

Any sanctions invoked following the incident will be in line with the school's behaviour policy.

We are aware of the need to deal with allegations or incidences of bullying sensitively. We also appreciate the importance of dealing with all the children and young people involved in a way which communicates disapproval where appropriate, but also treats them with dignity.

SUPPORT FOR PARENTS/CARERS

You may be unsure if your child is being bullied. If you suspect that he or she may be, then look out for signs that may include the following:

- Your child shows signs of stress: being moody, silent or crying, or even bullying a younger sibling or friend.
- Your child makes excuses to miss school such as stomach complaints or headaches (or your child may be skipping school all together).
- Your child is withdrawn in behaviour.
- Your child has more bruises or scrapes than usual.
- Eating habits change.
- Clothes are torn, school things are broken or missing, or money is lost.
- Your child sleeps badly.

It is important to note that there may be other reasons for these symptoms:

- Is there something else bothering your child? Have there been any changes in your family life like a new baby, or divorce or separation?
- All forms of bullying must be addressed. If you think your child is being bullied:
- Listen to your child's fears; reassure them that it is not their fault and that this is not something that they will have to face alone.

- Tell your child that any form of bullying is not acceptable behaviour and that you will do what you can to get the bullying to stop.
- Don't put too much pressure on them to talk to you.
- Give them ideas of who else they could talk to if you detect that they are struggling to confide in you. For example, a relative, a friend, a teacher, your GP, Childline (0800 1111) or other relevant organisations.
- Help them to build up their confidence; praise, encourage and support them.
- Keep a 'bullying report' in which you record details of incidents and, if known, the names of the perpetrators.
- Talk to your child's teacher and try to work with the school on tackling the problem.

WORKING WITH PARENTS/CARERS

We will work with parents/carers to minimise the likelihood of further bullying regardless of whether one is talking about the child who has bullied or the one who has been bullied.

We will endeavour to give parents every opportunity to discuss their concerns as soon as practicable. We will emphasise the importance of working together to solve problems and create realistic solutions that are acceptable to all concerned. A lack of parental support can make conflict resolution much more difficult and is regrettable, particularly if children then mirror the negativity and unhelpful attitude they have seen.

When a meeting takes place between school, families and students, the form found at the back of this document (Appendix 1), is used to log any concerns, agreed action points and a date for a review.

St Albans RC High School appreciates there will be occasions when the parents and carers of one or both sets of students involved will feel the School has not sanctioned appropriately. Parents or carers will be given the opportunity to share their concerns and if appropriate, staff will discuss the decisions to impose the particular sanction(s) with them.

Where a parent is dissatisfied with the school's handling of a situation then the head teacher will seek to resolve the situation informally. In the event of a formal complaint then the agreed complaints procedure for the school will be invoked. Should the press be contacted regarding the bullying incident then school should work with RMBC publicity office over any impending publicity.

St Albans RC High School actively encourages and welcomes comments, questions and suggestions regarding our Anti-Bullying Policy. Please contact school on 01495 765800.