

## Anti-Bullying Strategy

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Behaviour Policy
- Expulsion Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

and the following guidance:

- Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- Preventing and tackling bullying July 2017

### Aims

This strategy sets out how BMS seeks to ensure that our school environment is a safe and caring place that is free from disruption, violence and any sort of harassment so that every one of our students can develop their full potential.

### Principles

Student wellbeing will always be a priority

Safeguarding will always take precedence when dealing with cases of bullying or child on child abuse.

Both victim and perpetrator will be given support and pastoral care

Whenever possible the wishes of the victim will be taken into consideration

Parents and guardians will be involved at the earliest possible opportunity when the detail is clearest

BMS will take all allegations seriously and will always aim to find a resolution that prioritises the wellbeing of all children involved.

### Definition of Bullying

"Bullying may be defined as: *Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally*".

Bullying is the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual), verbal (including email, social media and text 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 related to age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexual orientation or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve everyone - students, staff and parents/guardians.

Bullying can be so serious that it causes psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide, and whilst bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

## Definition of Cyber-Bullying

[Helping Children Deal with Bullying & Cyberbullying | NSPCC](#)

### What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone.

Cyberbullying can include:

- Sending threatening or abusive text messages.
- Creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- Trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting images on social networks, chat rooms or online games.
- Excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups.
- Shaming someone online.
- Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child.
- Encouraging young people to self-harm.
- Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll.
- Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.
- Sending explicit messages, also known as sexting.
- Pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

### The School's Response to Bullying and Cyber-Bullying

At Bedford Modern School, we always treat bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously.

### Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a student 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
- Changes to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Nurses' Department 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/guardians and teachers.

## Preventative Measures

'Where reference is made to the Deputy Head Pastoral this should also be taken to mean Deputy Head Pastoral (Junior School) where this is clearly more relevant or appropriate'.

We take the following preventative measures in order to ensure that bullying does not become a problem which is associated with Bedford Modern School:

- All new students are briefed thoroughly on the school's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. Any student who reports bullying 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 weeks at Bedford Modern 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 PSHE programme is structured to give students 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.
- Other lessons, particularly RS, English and Drama, 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 staff are trained in the DfE Monitoring and Filtering Standards in line with KCSIE 2023
- All our students are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place online. For youngest Junior School students there are signs encouraging them to report any incidents of bullying displayed around the building.
- All reported incidents are recorded on CPOMs and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Records of any incidents are kept securely passed on to the Deputy Head Pastoral in order that patterns of behaviour can be identified and monitored.
- We have an anonymous reporting tool to ensure that students feel able to report any incidents without fear of repercussions
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Tutors, Heads of Year, Assistant Heads of Year, Senior Tutors and other Pastoral staff who will deal with any incidents as an immediate priority and are always 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 perpetrators
- Our trained School Counsellors are an important part of our pastoral support service, providing specialist skills of assessment and counselling. They are available to give confidential advice and counselling support to students who can refer themselves to them when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns. On occasion, a member of our pastoral team may refer a student to them.
- Staff are always on duty at times when students are not in class and patrol the school site, including areas where bullying might occur. They are alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- Our Nurses' Department displays advice on where students can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline.

- We provide training to our Head Boy/Girl and their team of Senior Monitors, Monitors & House Captains which specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable students.
- A group of younger students are trained to be anti-bullying ambassadors and are easily identifiable by badge
- All members of the staff are aware that some children are more vulnerable to being bullied than others
- 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 students.
- We welcome feedback from parents/guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

### **Cyber-Bullying Preventative Measures**

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Bedford Modern School:

- Expects all students 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 students' use.
- Does not allow the use of mobile phones during the school day.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Issues all students with their own personal school email address.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber-bullying in PSHE lessons, assemblies and through visiting speakers which covers: sharing personal information, sending of inappropriate pictures of oneself, legal repercussions of cyber-bullying and technical issues about traceability and logging of texts and emails.
- Allows students to connect their own devices to the BMS Wi-Fi network, which is also filtered and usage logged.
- Tells its students not to respond to abusive emails, text messages or telephone calls and advises them to keep copies of any offensive material.
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- States that the use of cameras on mobile phones is not allowed without the express permission of any and every person that might appear in the resulting 'picture/video'. They must not be used in any way that might humiliate, demean or offend anyone.
- Students and/or parents/guardians who do not wish their photograph to be published may opt out.
- Unofficial photographing or recording of student images is not permitted.
- Keeps up a dialogue with parents/guardians about emerging technologies their child might be using via letters and publications.
- Ensures parents/guardians know what steps to take if they suspect their child is being cyber-bullied or is bullying someone else.

### **Procedures for Dealing with Reported Bullying**

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

## Senior School

- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the students involved and reinforce that school take bullying very seriously.
- He/she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.
- The alleged bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and records will be made of the account of events.
- A decision will be made about appropriate next steps in order to resolve the issue. These may involve
  - resolution meetings between students;
  - further investigations which lead to more serious sanctions;
  - a discussion by the Safeguarding Team.
- Once the next step is agreed support will be offered to all involved and a monitoring review strategy put in place.
- If it is decided that the next step would be disciplinary proceedings appropriate disciplinary sanctions will be applied with reference to the following documents – the Bedford Modern School Senior School Behaviour Policy (website), the Bedford Modern School Sanctions System (website & Student Organiser), the Online Safety Policy (website), the School Code of Conduct. Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.
- Parents/guardians will be informed at an appropriate time and may be invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Head 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 Bedford Modern 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 student, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe and/or 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.
- The school will keep records of bullying so that trends can be identified and action taken if necessary.

## Junior School

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 students involved and reinforce that school take bullying very seriously.
- He/she will inform the Form Tutor as soon as possible.
- The Form Tutor will inform the Deputy Head (Pastoral) (Junior School) as soon as possible if deemed a serious incident.
- The alleged bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and records will be made of the account of events.
- A decision will be made about appropriate next steps in order to resolve the issue. These may involve
  - resolution meetings between students;
  - further investigations which lead to more serious sanctions;
  - a discussion by the Safeguarding Team.
- Once the next step is agreed support will be offered to all involved and a monitoring review strategy put in place.
- If it is decided that the next step would be disciplinary proceedings appropriate disciplinary sanctions will be applied with reference to the following documents – the Bedford Modern Junior School Behaviour Policy, the Online Safety Policy, the

School Code of Conduct, and the Junior School Behaviour Plan. Reasonable adjustments will be made where appropriate.

- Parents/guardians will be informed at an appropriate time and may be invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Head 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 Bedford Modern 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 student, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe and/or 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.
- The school will keep records of bullying so that trends can be identified and action taken if necessary.

### **Child on Child Abuse**

We recognise that 'abuse is abuse' and should never be passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up.' Bullying, victimisation, harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our students and their parents/guardians fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the wider community. All staff are expected to challenge abusive behaviour between peers, and this is included in induction training. Staff are reminded that even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse it may still be taking place and they should be alert to any possible cases. Staff are also made aware that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys will be perpetrators but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

To minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse at BMS we work hard to promote and teach tolerance and mutual respect through our PHSE Programme and RSE (Relationships and Sex Education) curriculum, anti-bullying strategy and our promotion of Fundamental British Values. The School's Aims and Values are shared on a regular basis through assemblies, co-curricular activities and our house and student leadership systems as well as visual reminders around the school. We also commissioned an external audit to review our practice and are implementing actions directly related to the feedback. These include regular communication with key groups such as the Fawcett Society, a review of our CPOMS reporting systems, a review of places which are high risk for child-on-child abuse and a review of reporting mechanisms.

Students can report abuse through their form tutor or class teacher, Head of Year or through another trusted member of staff such as the School Nurses or the Wellbeing Team. They can use email, the anonymous online reporting tool, or they can drop an anonymous note into the box in the wellbeing room. Sixth Form monitors are trained in safeguarding and support in Common Rooms during break and lunchtime. Students are also educated in how to report abuse through national organisations such as thinkuknow, NSPCC or Childline.

However, we recognise that students are capable of abusing their peers. This abuse may take the form of:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudiced based and discriminatory bullying);
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers;
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates threatens and/or encourages sexual violence);
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part a broader pattern of abuse;

- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually or to engage in sexual activity with a third party;
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as youth produced sexual imagery);
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals. (This could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Child-on-child abuse will always be considered a safeguarding matter and staff will follow the guidance on specific issues as laid out in this policy and in the anti-bullying strategy. In all responses the school will endeavour to put the students' welfare at the centre of its response. All incidents of child-on-child abuse will be recorded on CPOMs and will be actioned by the Pastoral Team under the guidance of either the Deputy Head Pastoral and Student Progress (DSL), Deputy Head of the Junior School (DSL) or Head of Junior School (Deputy DSL). When dealing with incidents the senior member of staff will decide which school policies (e.g. Senior School Behaviour Policy) and/or government guidance (e.g. Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in Schools) apply. If there is a possibility that a crime may have been committed the School will take advice from the police or Bedford Borough Integrated Front Door on the investigation of such allegations and will take all the appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of all students involved including the student or students accused of abuse.

Where allegations of abuse or assault have been made against one or more student, the School will undertake a thorough risk-assessment of the situation and risk-based decision-making will be carried out with a view to ensuring the safety of all students involved. Both the victim and perpetrator will be provided with appropriate support. When child-on-child abuse has occurred, it may be appropriate to refer the students involved to Children's Social Care or Early Help. Where this happens, the school will inform the student involved and their parents/guardians unless to do so is likely to cause the student harm.

A student (or students) against whom an allegation of abuse has been made may be suspended from the School during the investigation. A student may also be removed from certain classes or sleeping arrangements rearranged if the alleged incident occurs on a school trip.

If it is necessary for a student to be interviewed by the police in relation to allegations of abuse, the School will ensure that, subject to the advice of the Local Safeguarding Partners, the student's parents/guardians are informed as soon as possible, and that the student is supported during the interview by an appropriate adult.

Data on child-on-child abuse will be reviewed regularly by the Safeguarding Team, Senior Leaders and Governors to spot any trends and take any necessary action to address issues and concerns.

## **Parents and Guardians**

Working closely with parents and guardians is essential to the success of this strategy. Staff at BMS will always seek to work with parents and guardians to secure the wellbeing of any child who is a victim or a perpetrator of bullying.

Parents and guardians can support the schools strategy by :

Encouraging their child to talk to someone if they think they are being bullied, it might be the parent or guardian but equally the child may feel more comfortable talking to a teacher or a trusted adult or even calling childline.

As soon as possible share with school any concerns about bullying including any screenshots or details of specific incidents

Making sure that their child knows how to report any online abuse and how to block any unwanted contact

Being mindful of guidance with regards to age restrictions on online apps

Familiarising themselves with this strategy and the School Behaviour policy so that they are clear on how the school manages any incidents .

## **Dealing with racist and/or any language or misbehaviour relating to the nine protected characteristics**

### **Principles**

- It is important to note that an incident will be described as derogatory (e.g. racist/sexist/homophobic) if it is perceived to be derogatory by the victim or by any other person.
- All incidents (including online) should be reported. The Head of EDI will support staff where there is any question over the nature of a comment or incident.
- It is important to recognise that involvement in an incident does not automatically mean a person 'is a racist' for example.
- Every incident will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and relevant circumstances will always be taken into consideration when discussing a consequence.
- Sanctions for this misbehaviour will be used as a deterrent and the likely starting point for deliberate use of derogatory language or misbehaviour relating to the nine protected characteristics<sup>1</sup> will be a 2-hour detention when students will be given an opportunity to be educated on the importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Repetition of this misbehaviour or any serious offence relating to the nine protected characteristics is likely to be considered a Level 6 or Level 7 misbehaviour and could result in suspension or permanent exclusion.

### **Response of staff**

If a member of staff becomes aware of the use racist, sexist, homophobic or any derogatory language or misbehaviour which relates to the nine protected characteristics they must:

- Explain that it is unacceptable and can cause offence. Reference should always be made to the BMS School Values and Expectations Charter
- Investigate where possible and record the details of the incident on CPOMs including any screenshots or relevant pictures and alert the Head of EDI, relevant pastoral and (if relevant) academic leader, SENDCO if appropriate and DSL.
- Parents and guardians will be informed at the point where the detail is most clear and where necessary will be invited to discuss the matter further. This may include any necessary interventions or sanctions with academic or pastoral leaders.

### **Response of students**

- If a student becomes aware of the use racist, sexist, homophobic or any derogatory language or misbehaviour which relates to the nine protected characteristics they should:
- If possible explain that it is unacceptable and can cause offence. Reference should always be made to the BMS School Values and Expectations Charter.
- Report the matter to the nearest member of staff, to a Sixth Form Monitor, to a trusted adult or online via the online reporting system or email. Pass on any relevant information such as screenshots.

---

<sup>1</sup> Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation



- Seek support from trusted adults or Sixth Form monitors, tutor, teacher, wellbeing team or parents/guardians.

Students should not:

- Discuss the incidents with other students (on or offline) or share any information such as screenshots with other students.

If at any time staff or students feel that a matter is not being dealt with in line with the School Values or this policy then they should escalate this to their Head of Year, the Head of EDI or the Deputy Head Pastoral and Student Progress.

### **Complaints Procedure**

Parents/guardians and students are encouraged to use our complaints procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly.

**Mrs J Goodacre**  
**Deputy Head (Pastoral and Student Progress)**

**May 2024**  
**Review Date May 2025**