



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

School update	
Responsible for review of policy	Deputy Head Pastoral
Last school update	April 2025
Governor Sub-Committee approval	
Sub Committee to review and approve	Pastoral
Review Period	Annual
Last Sub- Committee review date	8 May 2024
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Approved by Sub Committee (Meeting date)	8 May 2024
Next Sub-Committee Review	May 2025
Related policies	Behaviour and Discipline Policy Safeguarding Policy Policies on Internet Safety and Acceptable Use Sharing of nudes and semi-nude imagery Rewards and Sanctions Anti-bullying Policy: Appendix on Cyber-Bullyinmg

Uploaded to Staff Shared	April 2025
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1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The RMS community is based upon the School's six shared values: Inclusivity, Courage, Ambition, Kindness, Perseverance and Integrity.

1.2 The School is committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that each pupil can develop to their full potential.

1.3 Pupils are expected to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a calm and purposeful atmosphere.

1.4 The School treats all pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the School. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions. This policy pays due regard to the DFE Guidance Preventing and Tackling Bullying (October 2017).

1.5 The School prides itself on its ethos and parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and home have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together.

1.6 Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated and any kind of bullying is unacceptable. The School recognises that bullying causes psychological damage and even suicide. Although bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

1.7 If staff feel that an offence may have been committed they will seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

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1.8 Where bullying involves pupils from other schools, clubs or external groups, the school will liaise as necessary with appropriate staff from these organisations. The Head will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify Herts Early Help services or, in more serious cases, the police.

1.9 The Heads of School are always informed of incidents involving bullying and delegates responsibility for anti-bullying work to the Deputy Head Pastoral and Heads of Year in the Senior School. The Pastoral Team is alert to the signs of bullying and trained to handle bullying behaviour. RMS embeds the training of The Girls on Board strategy with staff and pupils. The Heads of Ruspini, Cadogan & Sixth Form are responsible for dealing with incidents in these areas of RMS.

2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

2.1 Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally or a single act of great significance

2.1.1 Bullying can take many forms, for instance, cyber-bullying via social media/ internet, physical - kicking, hitting, verbal - unpleasant comments or noises or non-verbal - looks, ignoring. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or culture or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities.

2.1.2 It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences, such as differences in intellectual ability or special educational needs or physical disability.

2.1.3 The School recognises there are a number of different roles which can be involved in bullying e.g. perpetrator, victim, bystanders and reinforcers.

2.1.4 The school recognises that emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical and that this may be perpetrated directly or indirectly through cyber-technology. (See policy on Cyber-bullying)

2.1.5 A bullying incident is treated as a safeguarding concern when there is “reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm”.

2.1.6 The school uses the Herts guidance on bullying (Appendix 1) to determine if an incident constitutes bullying.

2.1.7 The school recognises that boarders cannot ‘escape’ in person bullying as easily as day pupils as they go home less frequently.

3. AIMS

RMS:

- provides an environment where all feel respected, secure and valued
- fosters an ethos that builds pupil self-esteem
- fosters an ethos which encourages pupils to come forward if they see or hear of bullying
- enforces a zero tolerance approach to bullying
- ensure a swift, proportionate and consistent response to reported incidents, safeguarding the victim and triggering sources of support
- ensures staff act as positive role models in terms of communication and respect for each other
- minimises opportunities for bullying e.g. through appropriate supervision and vigilance of staff on duty at break and lunchtimes
- implements a structured Lifeskills programme that develops strong personal and inter-personal skills and deals specifically with the issue of bullying
- provides internet security, monitoring and filtering
- ensures pupils are aware of all the support available eg Wellbeing Prefects, Chaplain, Counsellors, Heads of Year, Deputy Head or any member of staff
- ensures pupils have easily accessible and feely advertised contact details for external agencies e.g. Childline and that boarders have access to an Independent Listener
- ensures staff are trained to recognise pupil on pupil abuse and to be particularly aware of the potential risks to boarders eg of initiation ceremonies
- applies sanctions to the bully and ensures behaviour modification strategies are in place and that lessons are learnt
- embed principles of Girls on Board. Parents, pupils and staff have access to the Wellbeing Hub which has a wealth of information and advice
- ensures pupils can report bullying via the worry form
- Anti-Bullying Ambassadors have a weekly drop-in session.

4. SIGNS OF BULLYING

4.1 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 spoilt 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)
- diminished levels of self-confidence
- frequent visits to the Health Centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- 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 of nightmares
- talking of suicide or running away
- negative responses on Smoothwall Pulse check-ins

4.1.2 Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying will be investigated by parents and teachers.

4.1.3 Certain groups of pupils may be more vulnerable to bullying such as disabled children or those with Special Educational Needs or learning differences; those from homes in challenging circumstances; ethnic/ faith minority groups; LGBTQ young people. EAL pupils and boarders.

5. SCHOOL RESPONSE IF BULLYING IS SUSPECTED

5.1 The Herts criteria list (Appendix 1), will be used to ascertain that bullying has taken place.

5.1.2 A child alleging bullying will be offered appropriate support, recognising that it may have been hard to come forward. The pupil will be made aware of the limits of confidentiality and will be listened to with respect.

5.1.3 All the facts will be recorded in response to open-ended questions and then reported to the relevant Head of Year or Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head of School so that there is an agreed plan of action. The Head is always informed of any bullying incident

5.1.4 Interviews will be conducted where possible in the presence of more than one member of staff and dated and signed witness statements will be taken.

5.1.5 Parents will be informed as appropriate during the course of the investigation

5.1.6 Once all the facts have been ascertained, senior staff will agree a way forward and this may involve a meeting with parents of both the bully and the victim. It is important to understand the motivation behind the bullying because there may be underlying issues affecting the bully that need addressing via early help. Every effort will be made to resolve the issues by discussion, so that the bully understands that their behaviour has caused distress and is unacceptable

5.1.7 An appropriate sanction will be imposed in a fair and proportionate manner and could involve an exclusion. The sanction is designed to underline to the perpetrator the unacceptability of their behaviour; deter others and send a signal to the wider community that bullying at RMS will not be tolerated. The sanction will be followed up to explore the moral dimension of the behaviour and how to make better choices in the future.

5.1.8 If appropriate, counselling will be offered to both the bully and the victim. It is important that the bully learns the need for behaviour modification.

5.1.9 The situation will be monitored to ensure that the interventions have been successful

5.1.10 The incident will be recorded on CPOMS and attention paid to any emerging patterns of behaviour. The sanction will be recorded on iSAMS.

6. INVOLVEMENT OF PARENTS

6.1 The School seeks to support parents of children who are either bullying or being bullied. Problems are discussed and help and advice are offered.

6.1.2 Parents are invited to meetings where the motivations behind their child's behaviour are explored and appropriate professional support for the family will be discussed.

6.1.3 Parents of the bullied pupil will be supported and helped to promote the confidence and self-esteem of their child and professional support will be made available as appropriate, e.g. through the Counsellors and external courses such as Triple P or Wellbeing Hub.

7. RAISING AWARENESS

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7.1 The School adopts the following measures to prevent bullying.

7.1.1 Assemblies are used to explore issues around bullying and communicate the RMS Six Core Values. National Anti-bullying Week is always given a high profile

7.1.2 The Lifeskills programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as members of a community, including that of never being a passive bystander or enforcer. Pupils are encouraged to develop the social skills to enable them to act assertively in the presence of behaviour that undermines RMS Values and they are made aware of confidential helplines and external agencies to which they may turn, in addition to the RMS Pastoral Team

7.1.3 The curriculum, particularly RS, History, English and Drama, highlights the issue of bullying and reinforces this message that bullying is unacceptable

7.1.4 Pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they suspect that bullying, including cyber-bullying, may be taking place. Pupil can also use the online Worry Form.

7.1.5 The pastoral team gives support and guidance to staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies. Staff awareness of bullying and how to reduce bullying is raised through ongoing staff training. Staff are made aware of their responsibilities to be vigilant and to take action promptly to resolve and prevent problems. Staff awareness is raised regarding particularly vulnerable groups of pupils including those with SEND and LGBTQ pupils.

7.1.6 The School Counsellors have an important role to play. The Counsellors are available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves confidentially when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns.

7.1.7 In boarding houses, there are strong staff teams who support the Housemistresses who act in loco parentis. The informal house environment is important in reinforcing a pupil's standards and values, providing the opportunity for friendly, informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil.

7.1.8 Older pupils are trained as Wellbeing Prefects and encouraged to offer advice and support to younger pupils.

7.1.9 Leadership training for Sixth Formers and the team of prefects/Heads of Boarding Houses specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils and being vigilant regarding potential bullying behaviours.

7.1.10 RMS pupils, parents and staff have access to the Wellbeing Hub which offers advice for dealing with bullying both as victims and perpetrators.

7.1.11 Pupils and Heads of Year in Y7-9 have undertaken Girls on Board training to help them deal with friendship issues.

7.1.12 Pupils have been trained as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.

7.1.13 Parents, pupils and staff have access to the Wellbeing Hub which offers advice and strategies.

Procedures for Ruspini House and Cadogan House reference this whole school Anti-bullying Policy.

Factors to help determine if incident constitutes bullying:

- Incident was bullying:
 1. Hurt has been deliberately/knowingly caused (physically or emotionally).
 2. It is a repeated incident or experience e.g. multiple incidents, cyberbullying or the involvement of a group.
 3. Involves an imbalance of power:
 - a. Target feels they cannot defend themselves, or
 - b. Perpetrator/s exploiting their power (size, age, popularity, coolness, abusive language, labelling/name calling, etc)
- Incident was not bullying* on this occasion because it was:
 1. The first hurtful incident between these children
 2. Teasing/banter between friends without intention to cause hurt (should not happen again)
 3. Falling out between friends after a quarrel, disagreement or misunderstanding
 4. Conflict that got out of hand (should not happen again)
 5. Activities that all parties have consented to and enjoyed (check for subtle coercion)
 - a. Got out of hand
 - b. Parental concern
 6. Other

* Knowing repetition of these behaviours would be indicative of bullying behaviour.

How To Stop Bullying

Encouragement to Tell

Tell someone in school as soon as possible – you will be listened to.

You can talk to any member of staff, an older pupil or the Counsellor or use the Worry Form

Not telling protects the bully or bullies and allows them to continue, perhaps bullying others too.

If you see anyone else being made unhappy by the behaviour or words of another pupil, tell the bully to stop and tell an adult or Sixth Former; don't be a passive bystander.

Do not reinforce bullies' behaviour through actions such as laughing.

Most difficulties can be sorted out quickly if they are reported promptly.

It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that RMS is a no-go zone for bullies

Look at the Wellbeing Hub for advice

To Parents

If you think your child may be being bullied, or tells you that they are, please let us know right away

Please reassure them that we will deal with the information sensitively but firmly.

Our approach to working with bullies is based on the belief that it is possible to counter bullying by treating the bully in such a way that they understand the unhappiness of the victim.

The aim is to involve the bully in a constructive solution. Sanctions will be enforced as appropriate that hold the bully to account and make clear distress they have caused.

Look at the Wellbeing Hub for advice on how to support

Please appreciate that informing us but asking us not to take any action will not resolve bullying behaviours.