

# DOWNSIDE

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# SCHOOL

*“In the first place, to love the Lord God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole strength, then our neighbours as ourselves” – Rule of St Benedict, Ch 4*

## Anti-Bullying Policy

### **Aims**

The Rule of St. Benedict sets out our standards for the life of a community. *'They try to be the first to show respect to one another with the greatest patience in tolerating weaknesses in body or character... No one aims at personal advantage but is rather concerned for the good of others.'* Bullying, whether verbal or behavioural, is about intimidation, persecution and abuse of power directed towards the vulnerable in any community. The Rule of St. Benedict, by contrast, speaks of a community of tolerance, wholeness, service and respect for others; a place where a person can grow as God intended. A community living by the Rule of St. Benedict must offer a stable and peaceful home to people of every temperament and ability, background and outlook. All will be helped to reflect on the ways in which they can contribute to and live up to this ideal. Bullying is the antithesis of a community of faith and virtue, and so must be confronted firmly and with compassion. It is an injustice which must be challenged.

Downside School supports the right of all members of the school community to be free from all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination. We wish to create and maintain a caring and supportive school environment by making clear that bullying will not be tolerated and that positive steps will be taken to eradicate it. We aim to create an atmosphere in which staff, parents and pupils are encouraged to bring out into the open any incident of bullying, knowing that measures to deal with it will have the support of the whole school community.

### **Assumptions**

- All forms of bullying as described in this document are unacceptable.
- Every person in Downside has the right to live his or her life and pursue a career without the threat or the occurrence of being bullied.
- Bullying, and in some cases being the object of bullying, is a pattern of behaviour acquired either consciously or by habit and can be unlearned.

## Definitions

At Downside we define bullying as any behaviour which the recipient finds unwanted, hurtful, embarrassing, frightening, dominating, threatening or a cause for anxiety. It is behaviour which is meant to be deliberately hurtful to another person. Such behaviour is likely to be persistent, and difficult for the victims to defend themselves against. It can take the form of physical, verbal or emotional abuse, but it can also involve marginalisation and exclusion of individuals from specific groups. It can happen in houses and in the wider school setting.

We regard bullying as not only a children's transaction, but something which may be inflicted or suffered by an adult.

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour and bullying can cause serious psychological damage and even suicide.

### Some examples of behaviour which could count as bullying include:

- Actual physical violence such as kicking, hitting, pushing, jostling, tying or confining, pretend fighting, or the threat of violence
- interfering with, damaging, hiding or stealing someone else's property
- extorting money
- sexual molestation
- name calling and hurtful remarks, including those relating to race (or regarding someone's religion or culture), sexual orientation (homophobic), gender or disability, physical characteristics, academic success or failure, home circumstances or any remark said with the intention of undermining someone's self-esteem
- repetitive distraction of another from their work
- open and repetitive 'teasing' in a classroom or group situation; the difference between 'banter' and 'bullying' is one we must be careful to monitor
- inappropriate use of digital media (including prank calls, offensive text messages, comments made on social networking web-sites such as Facebook, Bebo and Twitter, and via e-mail) see **Cyberbullying** below.
- attempting to humiliate or isolate someone by exclusion from a social or sporting group

**Cyberbullying:** The School has a separate policy which deals with "cyberbullying" (see "Acceptable ICT Use Policy" and guidance for pupils in the School's Child Protection Policy). Cyberbullying is the use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. (See *Cyberbullying: safe to learn: embedding anti-bullying work in schools* (DCSF 00658-2007)

**Intention:** Not all bullying is deliberate or intended to hurt. Some individuals may see their hurtful conduct as "teasing" or "a game" or "for the good of" the other person. These forms of bullying are equally unacceptable but may not be malicious and can often be corrected quickly with advice and without disciplinary sanctions. A bully who

does not respond appropriately to advice or sanctions would ultimately have to leave the School.

**Responsibility:** It is everyone's responsibility to ensure, whatever the circumstances, that no one becomes a victim of bullying. A person may be vulnerable to bullying because of his/her age, physical appearance, nationality, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture or disability, or because s/he is new in the School, appears to be uncertain or has no friends. S/he may also become a target because of an irrational decision by a bully.

**Legal aspects:** A person who makes a physical or sexual assault on another, or who steals or causes damage to the property of another, commits a criminal offence and also may additionally be liable for damages in a civil action for any actual loss suffered. Bullying behaviour may also be regarded as threatening behaviour or harassment which can again be a criminal offence and/or a civil wrong.

### **What will be done to prevent bullying at Downside**

1. We will take active steps to create an anti-bullying culture and an expectation of all members of the School community to uphold the principles of Living at Downside contained in the School's Behaviour Policy:
2. We (staff and pupils) will do all we can to create a climate in which bullying is not tolerated, and in which pupils can report bullying incidents without feeling that they are 'telling tales'. Staff, pupils and parents will be involved in this process of creating and supporting a whole school anti-bullying culture.
3. We will encourage pupils to talk openly and regularly about the issue within tutorial groups, in their houses, in the school council, or in conversations with other appropriate members of staff or chaplains. We will also seek to ensure that the school and house prefects are fully supportive of this policy and play an important role in its successful implementation.
4. We will ensure that the school curriculum addresses issues of bullying and encourages pupils and staff to share ideas on preventing it. There will be a strong Anti-Bullying presence within the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum.
5. We will ensure that all members of staff are aware of their responsibility to watch out for and respond appropriately to any possible bullying behaviour. They should refrain from any words or actions in the classroom which might be seen as an encouragement to bullying or as bullying behaviour in itself.
6. We will do all we can to resolve issues of bullying through mediation, discussion and making bullies aware of the effects of their actions, but we will use sanctions against them when this is deemed necessary. These sanctions will be in line with school policy. We will often use pupils to encourage other boys and girls not to continue with their behaviour.
7. We will encourage bullies willingly to seek help themselves in changing their behaviour. This will be catalysed by educating pupils as to why they and their peers may find themselves bullying others.
8. We will give protection and support to any victims of bullying and to anyone who brings such issues to our attention.
9. We will give pupils the opportunity to see the School counsellor or contact the Independent Listeners. All houses have a notice which gives pupils guidance if they have any worries or complaints and lists of organisations outside school who can be contacted if victims of bullies prefer to talk to someone who is independent. This guidance is also published in the termly diary and the 'Blue Book'.

10. We will make pupils aware that incidents of racism, sexism and homophobia will not be tolerated.
11. We will educate pupils on the use of the internet so as to try to prevent the occurrence of Cyberbullying. Our approach will be to educate rather than restrict access but restrictions which are deemed necessary will be enforced in the use of social networking sites. Pupils and staff will be made aware of the School's Acceptable Use Policy on the use of digital media.

**Equal opportunities:** In School and in every year group:

- discriminatory words and behaviour are treated as unacceptable;
- positive attitudes are fostered towards people who are disabled and towards ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups within and outside the School; and
- positive attitudes are fostered towards both sexes through the curriculum and tutorials.

**Staff:** Through their training and experience, members of staff are expected to promote an anti-bullying culture by:

- celebrating achievement;
- anticipating problems and providing support;
- disciplining sensibly and fairly;
- making opportunities to listen to students; and
- acting as advocates of students.

**Pupils:** Through our pastoral care systems, students are informed and taught that bullying will not be tolerated in the School. They are encouraged:

- to celebrate the effort and achievements of others;
- to hold and promote positive attitudes;
- to feel able to share problems with staff;
- to turn to someone they trust, if they have a problem;
- not to feel guilty about airing complaints;
- to treat meals as pleasant social occasions.

### **Anti-bullying systems**

**Approach:** Our systems for detecting and dealing with bullying are designed to operate:

- vertically, through all year groups and houses; and
- horizontally, within year groups and in the classroom and other activities.

Our anti-bullying systems are implemented and driven in the way described below.

**Vigilance:** Members of staff are vigilant at all times but particularly:

- before lessons; in the queue at the Refectories and in the Refectories themselves;
- in Houses; and
- on school transport.

**Meetings:** Bullying is regularly discussed in meetings between:

- members of the School Student Council and House Councils;
- the Director of Pastoral Care and School Prefects;
- House Masters and House Mistresses;

- tutors and students in their tutor group; and
- Pastoral house teams.

The result of these meetings is to feed back information about friendship patterns, particular incidents, any student who seems to be isolated, any growing "power base" and any known conflict between a member of staff and a student, or between students.

**Education:** Measures are taken throughout each year to educate students about bullying and this policy. These measures include:

The PSHE and Citizenship curriculum includes courses on bullying for each year group covering:

- What is bullying?
- What defines a victim?
- Forms of bullying – physical, emotional, psychological, mental, cyber
- Who bullies whom?
- Defining the anti-bullying policy
- Human rights – everyone has the right not to be bullied

Bullying – what to do?

- What to do if you feel you are being bullied
- What to do if you witness another being bullied
- No-one deserves it – ever
- To whom can you turn?
- Victim and bully both need help

Anti-Bullying messages are given in assemblies.

**Staff training:** Appropriate training in all aspects of care is arranged to ensure that House Masters and House Mistresses and other staff involved in the pastoral management of students have the necessary professional skills, especially:

- awareness of the risk and indications of child abuse and bullying, and how to deal with cases;

And in houses, ensuring that:

- there is an adequate presence of staff;
- staff are actively involved with students in all areas and year groups when they are on duty;
- measures are taken to avoid boredom and lack of purpose among pupils;
- there is space available for pupils' quiet withdrawal;
- there is no crowding in bedrooms or common rooms; and
- good behaviour and discipline is maintained.

**Pupils' responsibilities:** We emphasise with senior students the role which is expected of them in setting a good example and being helpful to younger students and each other. Older boarders are encouraged to keep an eye on younger boarders and offer support, where it is needed, and in particular:

- all senior students have the opportunity for house duties but senior students who do not wish to have extended pastoral responsibilities are not coerced;
- the responsibilities of senior students are appropriately limited;

- members of staff expect School Prefects and House Prefects to offer supervisory support; and
- School and House Prefects receive training at the beginning of the academic year on how to control younger students sensitively.

**Record Keeping and monitoring:** House Masters and House Mistresses maintain records of the welfare and development of individual students. Every complaint or report of bullying must be entered in the Incident Book. This is maintained centrally by the Deputy Head Master. The Deputy Head Master monitors the Incident Book at the end of each term and reports any incidents to the Governor with responsibility for Child Protection.

### **Why incidents might not be reported**

**Victim:** There are many reasons why a student who has suffered bullying may be reluctant to report it. S/he may become demoralised and may say, for example:

- it is telling tales. They won't believe me because the person I am complaining about is popular and I am not, and I will become even more unpopular;
- the things they are saying and doing are too embarrassing to discuss with an adult;
- it is all my fault anyway for being overweight/too studious etc;
- there are too many of them - there is nothing the staff can do;
- it will get back to my parents and they will think less of me;
- I will just try and toughen up and grow a thicker skin; or
- I will lie low and not audition for a part in the school play etc.

**Witnesses:** There are also reasons why a student who has witnessed or learned of bullying behaviour may not want to make a report. S/he may say:

- it is "grassing" and I will become unpopular;
- it is not my concern anyway; or
- I don't like the victim and I would find it embarrassing to be associated with him/her.

**Culture:** Any of these responses would be contrary to our culture at the School. When we

drive and implement this policy we encourage every student to understand that:

- every complaint of bullying will be taken seriously;
- members of staff will deal with a complaint correctly and effectively in accordance with their experience and the training they have received;
- there is a solution to nearly every problem of bullying;
- a student who complains will receive support and advice and in many cases the problem can be dealt with on a no-names basis; and
- the primary aim will be for the bullying to cease, not the punishment of the bully unless this is necessary.

### **Procedures**

Guidelines: The following procedures are a guideline except where expressed in the terms

"should" or "must". The best guide is the experience and training of the staff.

### **Reporting bullying complaints**

**Pupils:** A student who is being bullied, or who is worried about another student being bullied, should complain without delay and can do so in several ways. S/he can:

- tell his/her parents, his/her House Master/House Mistress, Assistant House Master/House Mistressess, Housemother, Chaplain or a responsible older student; alternatively;
- leave a note for their House Master/House Mistress;
- contact one of the Independent Listeners whose details are published on house notice boards and in the termly diary and blue book, for advice;
- contact a School doctor or a nurse in the Health Centre;
- contact Childline (0800 1111); or
- contact the Designated Child Protection Person or his Assistant; or
- Somerset Direct (telephone: 0845 345 9122)

**Parents:** Parents who are concerned that their child is being bullied should inform their child's House Master or House Mistress without delay.

**Staff:** This policy focuses on the bullying of students although it is recognised that staff can be the victims of bullying. Staff members who are concerned about being bullied or harassed report their concerns to the Deputy Head Master or directly to the Head Master.

**Initial complaint:** A person in authority who learns of alleged bullying behaviour should:

- firstly, respond quickly and sensitively by offering advice, support and reassurance to the alleged victim, then
- report the allegation to the Deputy Head Master as soon as possible.

The Deputy Head Master must:

- record the complaint in the Incident Book; and
- co-ordinate the School's response to the complaint.

The person in authority should reassure the student, but must not give a guarantee of absolute confidentiality.

**Assessment:** The Deputy Head will normally see the victim and (unless the case is very serious) any witnesses without delay and form an initial view of the allegation. The assessment will consider:

- the nature of the incident/s - physical? verbal? exclusionary? etc
- is it a "one-off" incident involving an individual or a group?
- is it part of a pattern of behaviour by an individual or a group?
- has physical injury been caused? Who should be informed - Parents? The School's Safeguarding Officer? Social Services? The police?
- can the alleged bully be seen on a no-names basis?
- what is the likely outcome if the complaint proves to be correct?

At this stage, the possible outcomes for an incident which is not too serious include:

- there has been a misunderstanding which can be explained sympathetically to the alleged victim with advice to the alleged bully; or
- the complaint is justified in whole or in part, and further action will be needed (see Range of Action, below).

**Serious incident:** If the Deputy Head Master believes that serious bullying behaviour has recurred after warnings have been given to the "bully" s/he must inform the Head Master and the School's Child Protection Person (CPP) (currently the Deputy Head Master.) The CPP will then:

- interview the alleged victim, bully and any witnesses separately, in order to establish the facts of the case. S/he may decide to ask the Deputy Head to be present; and
  - send a summary of his/her findings to the Head Master, relevant House Master/House Mistresses.
- The Deputy Head will interview the alleged victim and bully separately:
    - to confirm the facts of the case, if considered necessary; and
    - to decide on the action to be taken in accordance with the Range of Action set out below
  - The Head Master will notify the parents of the victim and bully, giving them details of the case and the action being taken.

**Range of action:** When a complaint is upheld the range of responses will include one or more of the following:

- advice and support for the victim and, where appropriate, establishing a course of action to help the victim;
- advice and support to the bully in trying to change his/her behaviour. This may include clear instructions and a warning or final warning, and involvement of the Chaplain;
- a supervised meeting between the bully and the victim to discuss their differences and the ways in which they may be able to avoid future conflict;
- a disciplinary sanction against the bully, in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy such as gating, loss of privileges, additional duties, written work or menial but not degrading manual work. In a very serious case or a case of persistent bullying, a student may, after a fair hearing, be required to leave the School permanently in accordance with the School's Exclusions Policy;
- action to break up a "power base";
- moving either the bully or victim to another House after consultation with the student, his/her parents and the relevant staff;
- involving Social Services or the police;
- notifying the parents of one or both students about the case and the action which has been taken;
- such other action as may appear to the Head Master to be appropriate;
- noting the outcome in the relevant Incident Book.

**Monitoring:** The position should be monitored for as long as necessary thereafter. Action may include:

- sharing information with some or all colleagues and with students in the House so that they may be alert to the need to monitor certain students closely;
- ongoing counselling and support;
- vigilance;
- mentioning the incident at meetings of staff;
- reviewing vulnerable individuals and areas of the School;
- liaison between House Masters and/or House Mistresses;

**Formal complaint:** If the victim or his/her parents are not satisfied with the action taken, they should be advised to make a formal complaint, according to the School's Complaints Procedure.

**Review:** This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Head Master every two years.

This Policy has been created with regard to DCSF 'Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools'

Policy reviewed August 2011 and confirmed as the current Policy

**Dom Leo Maidlow Davis**