

# THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL



POLICY DOCUMENT 82 – APPROVED 22/03/2022

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

## Vision Statement

*We, the staff and governors, aspire  
to ensure that all our students,  
irrespective of ability  
and regardless of anyone's doubts,  
achieve their potential in full;  
and we aspire in this way to make Thomas Mills High School  
the best in the country.*

**Thomas Mills High School is committed to providing a safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a caring and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be confident that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.**

## **1. What is Bullying?**

1.1 Bullying is the abuse of power. It is the wilful and conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else repeatedly or over a period of time and to put that person into a state of anxiety.

1.2 Bullying can be:

- Emotional (Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting)
- Physical (Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence)
- Racist (Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures)
- Sexual (Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments)
- Homophobic (focusing on the issue of sexuality)
- Verbal (Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing)
- Cyber (All areas of the internet, such as email, social media platforms and text messaging)

1.3 Signs and symptoms of bullying are important to look out for and staff are aware of the need to investigate if a child is:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school
- Changes their usual routine for getting to or from school
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Begins to fake illness during the school day to be sent home
- Is consistently buying food or drink for other pupils
- Has unexplained cuts and bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying others
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Disclosing that another pupil is bullying them

1.4 Bullying can happen to anyone. It includes hostility or prejudice towards an individual or a group because of someone's:

- Race, religion, nationality or culture
- Special educational needs
- Intelligence or work ethic
- Appearance or health conditions
- Sexual orientation

- Circumstances such as being a carer or a looked after child
- Disability
- Gender

1.5 This policy relates to pupils but the principles relate to staff conduct too, although there are specific employment policies.

## **2. Prevention of Bullying**

2.1 At Thomas Mills High School, we are committed not only to dealing with bullying but also to doing all we can to prevent it happening in the first place. We seek to build self-esteem in pupils and to develop tolerance of others through a variety of methods:

- We use curriculum time in Lower School drama and RS lessons to explore issues round bullying and consideration of other people's points of view, including the role of friendships, feelings and self-esteem.
- Tutors play an active role in overseeing the interaction of pupils in their tutor groups so that potential problems can be spotted and dealt with at an early stage.
- Relevant issues are further covered in the school's Tutorial programme.
- Bullying is a topic that is raised in assemblies in order to highlight awareness of its potential to cause real harm and misery.
- Our Behaviour Policy uses Restorative Justice and mediation.
- Our policy is openly available to parents/carers, e.g. via the school website.
- We signpost external support agencies.
- Connect with national and local campaigns, e.g. Anti-Bullying week.

## **3. What to do if bullying takes place**

3.1 If a pupil is being bullied, they should:

- Report the bullying immediately to their tutor, Head of Year or another member of staff. Pupils can do this using the Black Box (concerns box) outside their Head of Year's office if they find it difficult to speak face-to-face about their concern.
- Pupils should not allow themselves to be intimidated by threats from the bully of what will happen if they tell. They should feel confident that they will be protected.
- Pupils are advised to report cases of bullying sooner rather than later so that the situation can be dealt with before it gets out of hand.
- Pupils need to know that all reported incidents will be taken seriously and followed up.
- If any pupil thinks another is being bullied, they should report it immediately.
- Where cyberbullying has occurred, copies of the exchange should be kept and brought into school.

3.2 If a parent or carer is worried about a pupil being bullied, they should:

- Contact the school and ask to speak to their child's form tutor.
- Not allow children to miss time from school if possible as this only defers the problem and does not help to deal with it.

3.3 If staff receive a disclosure that a pupil is being bullied, they should:

- Listen to what they say.
- Always take it seriously.
- Record what the pupil tells him/her.
- Pass the information on to the pupil's tutor.
- Make it clear that the pupil has made the right decision by telling.
- Explain to the pupil that total anonymity or confidentiality may not be possible.
- Liaise with the Learning Support Department re appropriate support and use of "The Place" if appropriate.

#### **4. Procedures for dealing with an incident of bullying**

4.1 Tutors and Heads of Year dealing with incidents of bullying should follow this procedure:

- Listen to what the victim has to say and make sure there is an accurate statement from them with all the relevant information including, location/time of incident, any potential witnesses.
- Communicate with home to confirm that an issue has been raised and that we are investigating/dealt with the issue.
- Speak to the person accused of bullying and take accurate statement.
- Speak to any witnesses that have been mentioned by the victim and perpetrator.
- In conjunction with the school's behaviour policy, decide upon appropriate sanctions and assess if restorative communication between the pupils would be fair and effective.
- Communicate with all the parents/carers involved.
- Record the incident and outcomes on pastoral records (and MyConcern if appropriate).

#### **5. Procedures for dealing with established case of bullying**

5.1 If the concern raised is established as bullying in line with the definition in 1.1 then the following sanctions can be applied:

- Formal warning given to bully
- Restorative justice and/ or mediation arranged between bully and victim if felt that this will be helpful
- Punishment such as detention
- Letter and/or phone call to parents/carers of bully
- Suspension (Exclusion) – a last resort for persistent bullying, but one that both pupils and parents/carers need to be aware of.

5.2 Bullies who have a genuine problem, often to do with self-esteem, should also be given support where this is felt to be appropriate. Tackling the root cause of the bullying may well be the best way to prevent it happening in the future. It is also important that the victim and the victim's parents/carers are kept informed of what is happening and the conclusion so that confidence is instilled in the efficacy of our systems.

## **6. Cyberbullying**

6.1 As a school community, we are committed to talking openly about cyberbullying, and encouraging pupils and parents/carers to report instances to us. Cyberbullying may constitute an offence against the Malicious Communications Act, and in appropriate cases will mean the school involving the Police or cybercrime investigation team.

6.2 The DFE's advice on cyberbullying (April 2017) acknowledges that 'The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

6.3 Being aware of the threat posed by cyberbullying, Thomas Mills High School has clear rules in place regarding the use of equipment, software and network access provided by the school for the use of staff and pupils. We also have clear rules regarding mobile phone use in school (see Mobile Phone protocol).

## **7 Bullying outside the school premises**

7.1 Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaviour outside the school premises "if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate pupils' behaviour in those circumstances" (DFE: Preventing and Tackling bullying March 2017). Therefore, as a school, we have the right to deal with bullying that goes on outside the school grounds e.g. incidents that occur on the home/school route or cyberbullying. If bullying outside the school is reported, the school should therefore do the following:

- In extreme or persistent cases, or if there are likely to be repercussions in school, advise the pupil's parents/carers to contact the Police.
- Speak to the pupils involved (and warn them where necessary) even though the incident has not taken place on school property.
- Liaise with parents/carers concerning pupils who are frightened about leaving the school premises or concerned about internet/text messaging communication.
- Talk to the bus company about problems on buses.
- Inform the Police directly in the cases of physical/verbal threats and/or threatening text/cyber communication.

**Links to other policies:**

Behaviour Policy

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Pupil Whistleblowing Policy

Online Safety Policy

Guidance for staff on the use of email

Equality and Diversity Policy

Harassment and Grievance Policy (Staff)

Code of Conduct (Staff)

## **Appendix A**

### **The School's response to bullying**

There are five stages to the school's actions in response to incidents of bullying as listed below. In the vast majority of cases, the response at Stage 1 will be sufficient to prevent further bullying. When a pupil is placed on one of the bullying response stages, this will be reviewed at the end of the academic year or after six months, whichever is the sooner. At a review, it may be considered appropriate to move a pupil to a lower stage or take them off the bullying stages completely.

#### Stage 1

If staff are made aware of an incident of bullying and it is the first time that the perpetrator has been involved in such behaviour, the following initial approach is used. In general, the actions described below will be actioned by the relevant Head of Year or a senior member of staff. In some cases the Form Tutor may carry out the action. Other members of staff who become aware of behaviour which may constitute bullying should refer the case to the relevant Head of Year who will know if there is any background to the observed or reported behaviour.

This approach works by providing an opportunity for the bully and any colluding bystanders to consider the actions and appreciate their effect. In the vast majority of cases, this causes the bully to stop their intimidating, aggressive or otherwise hurtful behaviour in which case no further action needs to be taken.

The details of this response are as follows:

- 1) The child being bullied is interviewed with an emphasis on how the bullying has made him or her feel.
- 2) The teacher takes notes and agrees with the victim that the perpetrator and any others colluding will be spoken to.
- 3) A meeting is held by the teacher with the perpetrator, any others colluding and possibly any bystanders. The meeting will seek to make clear the effects of the bullying actions and ask the individual or group for ideas as to how the problem can be resolved.
- 4) Approximately a week later, the perpetrators and the victim are seen again individually in order to find out whether the bullying has stopped.

This approach is used as, in many cases, the perpetrator of bullying may not appreciate the effect of their actions. Evidence shows that punishing such perpetrators may have a temporary effect on a particular situation but it is unlikely to permanently stop bullying behaviour whereas this approach is more likely to provide a permanent solution. Also, punishment is more likely to result in the perpetrator wishing to get their own back on the victim. Victims, fearing retribution, will therefore be discouraged from telling anyone about their plight. Clearly in those cases where this approach does not work, sanctions have to be used.

At this stage, in most cases, the parents of the victim and the perpetrator will be informed of the situation. If the parent is informed by telephone, this should be supported in writing. In some cases, the professional judgement of the staff may be that it is not appropriate although account should be taken of the way in which this might be regarded by the parents if the case progresses to Stage 2.

### Stage 2

Sometimes the bullying continues, or a perpetrator moves to another victim. In this case, the parents of the perpetrator would be asked to attend a meeting at school with the relevant Head of Year or a senior member of staff.

In parallel with a meeting with the parents of the perpetrator, a sanction such as one or more detentions is likely to be used. The sanction(s) used will be proportionate to the action of the perpetrator.

### Stage 3

If the perpetrator continues their aggressive, intimidating and hurtful behaviour, one or more fixed term exclusions will be used together with further meetings with the parents of the perpetrator.

### Stage 4

At this stage, longer fixed term exclusions will be used and it is likely that a Pastoral Support Plan for the bully should be set up.

### Stage 5

If all of the above have been used and the perpetrator continues their behaviour, precluding one or more victims from enjoying the emotionally and physically safe environment to which they are entitled, permanent exclusion from the school is likely to result.

At any stage, if the bullying actions include physical assault or otherwise cause serious harm to the victim, the school reserves the right to use the sanctions which are appropriate to the level of aggression or intimidation.

### **Monitoring**

The nature and frequency of bullying incidents are logged by an identified member of the school leadership team. This log is reviewed on a regular basis, at least annually, in order to identify any trends which may require particular consideration.