

ANTI - BULLYING POLICY

Aims and Objectives.

At the RGS, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our students can fully realise his potential. We expect our students to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed; but purposeful, atmosphere.

All students should care for and support each other. The RGS prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents / guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and home has consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions.

Bullying can cause immense psychological and emotional damage and even suicide. Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our students and their parents fairly, with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the School. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.

Definition of bullying

Bullying may be defined as the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual), verbal (including chat rooms and SMS messages), and emotional means (by excluding, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours, in person or online). 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. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

Cyber bullying is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) deliberately to upset someone else. It can encompass all areas of the internet and social media, such as email and internet chat room misuse, personal web spaces such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and X, threats made by text messaging and calls and the misuse of associated technology, i.e., camera, video facilities or Artificial Intelligence software.

Disability - Bullying which may involve a focus on *disabilities or other physical attributes* (such as hair colour or body shape) that makes the person feel unwelcome, marginalised and excluded, powerless or worthless.

Homophobic bullying may involve actions or comments that are homophobic, transphobic, based on gender bias or sexual orientation that makes the person feel unwelcome, marginalised and excluded, powerless or worthless.

Racist bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes the person feel unwelcome, marginalised and excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith community, national origin or national status.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. We always treat it very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

Behaviours

Bullying can include the following behaviours:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, taking or damaging belongings.
- **Verbal:** name calling, taunting, mocking, insulting, making offensive remarks e.g. racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic remarks, repeated teasing, threats, sarcasm.
- **Indirect:** spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups, leaving notes, inappropriate text messaging and emailing, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or the internet, producing offensive graffiti.

Different roles in bullying

Bullying is often not an isolated event. Research has indicated that peers are present in 85% of bullying episodes and therefore bullying frequently occurs within a social context. The School will therefore explore the role of all parties involved in any instance of bullying at the RGS, including “followers” and “bystanders”.

Signs of bullying

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming shy and nervous, showing uncharacteristic signs of aggression, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration, or truancy.

Procedures for reporting and responding to bullying

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.

Staff should inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible, usually the Head of Section, Head of Year, Assistant Head (Pastoral & DSL) and Senior Deputy Head.

All students directly involved will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events.

The relevant member of the pastoral team will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved including restorative conversations where appropriate.

Tutors should be informed. In very serious incidents, the Headmaster should be informed.

The Head of Section, Head of Year or Form Tutor will determine, in consultation with the Assistant Head (Pastoral & DSL) or Senior Deputy Head, an appropriate strategy and plan of action to combat the bullying.

The victim will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him or herself.

The Head of Year, in consultation with the Form Tutor will oversee the implementation of the strategy, including monitoring the situation to ensure that the bullying does not recur.

Parents should be informed by the Form Tutor, Head of Year, Head of Section, Assistant Head (Pastoral & DSL) or Senior Deputy Head.

Appropriate sanctions will be determined by the Senior Deputy Head in consultation with the Assistant Head (Pastoral & DSL), Head of Section or Head of Year. This may involve referring the incident to the Headmaster.

Any instance of bullying will be recorded by the Head of Section, Head of Year, Assistant Head (Pastoral & DSL) or Senior Deputy Head so that any patterns of bullying can be identified. All documentation relating to student files will be administered by the Senior Deputy Head.

Sanctions

Bullying will not be tolerated at the RGS. Those who engage in bullying can expect stern sanctions. Parents of a student involved in bullying may be asked to come into School to discuss the issue. Any student who continues to bully can expect to have his membership of the School community reviewed by the Headmaster.

In very serious cases, and only after the Headmaster 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 the RGS 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.

A key facet of the School's disciplinary procedures is to hold students to account for their behaviour and to help them face up to the harm they have caused. It is important that students develop their emotional skills and knowledge by learning to behave in ways which do not cause hurt in the future. Moreover, students need to learn how they can take steps to repair the harm they have caused.

Strategies for the prevention and reduction of bullying

Changing the attitude and behaviour of students involved in bullying is a key objective of the positive procedures used by the School and therefore building the self-confidence and self-esteem of all individuals is the key preventative measure.

The School stands to educate all members of its community to appreciate the importance of mutual understanding and respect in their dealings with each other. This objective may be achieved through any of the following means:

- Raising awareness through assembly talks.
- Consistent and immediate response to incidents.
- Raising awareness through staff training, with regard to the signs of bullying and how to reduce the risk of bullying at times and places when it is most likely.
- Discussion in tutor groups: the care of form tutors, form prefects and mentors.
- Meetings between senior pupils and members of staff.
- Good lines of communication with parents.
- The use of appropriate teaching materials in PSHME and other curriculum areas.
- 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.

The School's anti-bullying policy will be displayed:

- In the School Calendar.
- On the School website.
- In the Medical Room where details of various help organisations are also displayed.
- An abbreviated form will be displayed in every classroom and the School Calendar.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the RGS. This means that any member of the School community who suspects that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff, a prefect or a class mentor.

Reviewed by: Senior Deputy Head

Date of last review: 26 June 2024

Date of next review: Trinity 2025