

Policy A8: Countering Bullying

Regulatory Framework

This policy has been written to set out the process by which Queen Margaret's complies with paragraph 10 of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2014 (as in force at the date of this policy) which provides, under Part 3 of those Regulations relating to Welfare, health and safety of pupils;

"The standard in this paragraph is met if the proprietor ensures that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of an effective anti-bullying strategy".

This policy is part of the system by which the School complies with Standard 12 (Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships) of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding Schools (April 2015) (extract set out below). This policy covers, in particular, measures in place to combat bullying and to promote positive behaviour in that regard.

This policy has been drawn up with reference to the advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies issued by the Department for Education entitled "Behaviour and discipline in Schools" (February 2014) and should be read in conjunction with the following QM policies and documents that provide further for the School's compliance with Standard 12 in all its aspects:

- Policy B2: Safeguarding
- Policy B3: Discipline (girls)
- Policy B4: Discipline (staff)
- Policy B11: Equality
- Policy C4: E-Communications

NMS Standard 12: Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships

- 12.1. The school has and consistently implements a written policy to promote good behaviour amongst pupils. This policy includes:
- Measures to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and to promote positive behaviour;
 - School rules;
 - Disciplinary sanctions;
 - When restraint, including reasonable force, is to be used and how this will be recorded and managed; and
 - Arrangements for searching pupils and their possessions
- 12.2. The policy complies with relevant legislation and has regard to guidance and is understood by staff and pupils. [Reference: 'Behaviour and discipline in schools' (Department for Education)]

1.1. Aims & Objectives

QM aims to provide a safe and supportive environment in which the individual is valued and difference is celebrated rather than merely tolerated. The school recognises that girls can only flourish in a community based upon mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance.

Bullying, victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. All girls are treated fairly and with consideration by the staff at QM and are expected to show the same qualities in their dealings both with each other and members of staff.

Sanctions will be applied, where necessary, in accordance with Policy B3: Discipline (girls).

1.2. Definition

We define bullying as the desire to intentionally hurt, humiliate, threaten or frighten someone. Bullying is a process repeated over time rather than a single act. It can take the form of racial, religious, cultural, sexist, special educational needs and disability or sexuality related harassment. It can involve physical (including sexual) and emotional intimidation, cyber bullying, verbal intimidation, threats, ostracism or the spreading of malicious rumours. Cyber bullying can be via email, text messaging, social networking sites (e.g.

Facebook), e-photos etc. The Schools approach to the prevention of cyberbullying is set out in Appendix 1 to this policy.

A bully may well involve a third party e.g. using a friend to tease or torment her victim. The bully can often influence others to take no action to prevent the bullying of the victim, often through fear that they might in time become victims. Bullying can be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle.

Bullying can focus on race, sexuality, special educational needs and disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). It can cause serious psychological damage and even suicide. Harassment and threatening behaviour are criminal offences. QM treats bullying seriously. It is entirely unacceptable to view bullying as a part of growing up or as a means of "toughening up" young people.

1.3. Signs of Bullying

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 spoiled 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)
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Centre for Health and Wellbeing 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, experiencing 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 and members of staff.

1.4. Preventative Measures

The issue of bullying is raised in assemblies, chapel services and via PSHE courses delivered through the Academic Extension programme.

- There are specific opportunities for girls to raise matters of concern:
 - Tutorials
 - Year group meetings with the Senior Tutor / Director of Pastoral Care
 - At any time with one of their Housemasters/mistresses
 - Small discussion groups with the Chaplain
 - Prefects, Monitors and Heads of House at weekly House meetings
 - Academic Extension lessons
 - School Council
 - The Centre for Health and Wellbeing which is staffed at all times during term time
 - The Emotional Wellbeing Practitioner who can be contacted via the intranet or at her drop-in sessions
- RS, English & Drama lessons often highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce the message that bullying is wrong and unacceptable.
- All girls have access to a telephone and helpline numbers are displayed in the Boarding Houses.
- QM has no tradition of initiation ceremonies designed to humiliate new girls.
- There is a "guardian angel" system for new girls to help them settle in to life at QM.
- All members of staff receive regular guidance on the School's anti-bullying policy and on how to react to allegations or observations of bullying and training takes place to ensure that the principles of the school policy are understood, legal responsibilities are known, action is defined to resolve and prevent problems, and sources of support are available. If necessary the School will invest in specialised skills to understand the needs of girls, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils.

- The Prefects receive training in Child Protection and Safeguarding which focuses on listening skills and supporting younger and vulnerable girls.
 - The school rule relating to bullying applies at all times not just during term time.
 - Potential victims are identified and mentoring or support measures put in place.
 - The Emotional Wellbeing Practitioner provides a ½ termly report to the Deputy Head, listing the issues raised by girls, although not identities or details.
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1.5. Procedures for dealing with Bullying

Any suspicion of bullying should be reported to a girl's Tutor or Housemaster/mistress for investigation and monitoring.

- Any witnessed bullying must be challenged and dealt with immediately;
- Any witnessed bullying must be reported to the Deputy Head or the Director of Boarding and Pastoral Care on the form contained at Appendix 2 (hard copies of which are available in the Staff Room)
- The Deputy Head or the Director of Boarding and Pastoral Care will, as soon as practicable after that report is received discuss the allegations with the alleged victim's Housemistress/Housemaster, Tutor and Senior Tutor;
- A written account of her version of events will be obtained from the alleged victim by her Housemistress/Housemaster
- The alleged bully will be interviewed by the Director of Boarding and Pastoral Care in the presence of her Housemistress/Housemaster and asked to write her account of events.
- If it is the view of the Director of Boarding and Pastoral Care that bullying has taken place, the bully will be interviewed by the Director of Boarding and Pastoral Care and the Deputy Head; it will be made clear why her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. She will be offered support to modify her behaviour. An appropriate sanction will be imposed and recorded (see Policy B3)
- The victim will be offered support & advice.
- Parents of the girl believed to have acted as a bully and parents of such other girls involved in the incident as it is thought appropriate to contact, will be informed of what has happened and invited to discuss the matter;
- A meeting of all girls involved in the incident may be useful as a means of helping to close the episode and developing a strategy for avoiding such incidents in the future.
- The Housemistress/Housemaster will monitor the situation.
- In very serious cases the bullying incident must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will take over the handling of the episode and may, after consulting with the Head, decide to refer the matter to the police or social care services.
- The threshold for reporting a bullying issue to external agencies is crossed if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm;

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is able to give advice to staff on tackling bullying and, in consultation with the Director of Digital Strategy, are able to advise on tackling and monitoring cyber-bullying.

A record is maintained of all concerns raised and is reviewed by the Pastoral Committee to identify any discernible patterns and to ensure that appropriate action is taken if any are discerned.

1.6. Complaints Procedure

If there is a need to complain about the operation of this Policy, this can be done following Queen Margaret's Complaints Policy, which is available on the school website: www.queenmargarets.com.

Simone Niblock
Deputy Head

Date Agreed: 2015-09-07
Review Date: 2016-09

Appendix 1

Cyberbullying Policy

Queen Margaret's School embraces the advantages of modern technology in terms of the educational benefits it brings; however, the school is mindful of the potential for bullying to occur. Central to the school's anti-bullying policy are the beliefs that all girls have the right not to be bullied and that bullying is always unacceptable. QM also recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside school which spills over into the school.

Definition of Cyberbullying

Cyber-bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend herself.

By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media:

- Bullying by means of texts or messages on mobile phones
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material on websites, blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube
- Hijacking or cloning email accounts

Legal Issues

Cyber-bullying is generally criminal in nature. The law applies to cyberspace.

- It is unlawful to disseminate information in any media, including internet sites.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003- check details here- makes it an offence to send, by public means of a public electronic communication network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or one of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.
- The Protection from Harassment Act of 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

Policy

Queen Margaret's educates its girls about the serious consequences of cyber-bullying and does, in the Academic Extension programme, continue to inform and educate the girls about these emergent technologies.

Queen Margaret's trains its staff to respond effectively to reports of cyber-bullying or harassment and has robust systems in place to respond to it. Queen Margaret's actively endeavours to block access to inappropriate websites, using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems. Where appropriate and responsible, Queen Margaret's audits ICT communications and regularly reviews the security arrangements in place.

Queen Margaret's reserves the right to take action against those who take part in cyber-bullying:

- Queen Margaret's supports victims of cyber-bullying and, when necessary, will work with the Police to detect those involved in criminal acts.
- Queen Margaret's will use, as appropriate, the full range of sanctions to correct, punish or remove girls who bully other girls or members of staff in this way, both in and out of school.
- Queen Margaret's will use its powers of confiscation where necessary to prevent girls from committing crimes or misusing equipment.
- All members of Queen Margaret's community are aware that they have a duty to bring to the attention of the Head, Jessica Miles, any example of cyber-bullying or harassment that they know about or suspect.

Guidance for Staff

Mobile Phones

- Ask the girl to show you the mobile phone
- Note clearly everything on the screen relating to the inappropriate text message or image, including the time, date and names
- Make a transcript of a spoken message, recording date, times and names
- Tell the girl to save the message or image
- Accompany the girl to see the Head, Deputy Head or the Director of Pastoral Care and Boarding

Computer

- Ask the girl to display the on-screen material in question
- Ask the girl to save the material
- Print off the offending material immediately

- Accompany the girl, taking the offending material, to see the Head, Deputy or Director of Pastoral Care and Boarding
- Normal procedures to interview girls and to take statements will then be followed, particularly if a Child Protection issue is presented

Guidance for Girls

- Do not answer abusive messages but log and report them
- Do not delete anything until you have shown it to your Housemistress or Form Tutor
- Do not give out personal details in cyberspace
- Never reply to abusive emails
- Never reply to someone that you do not know

Guidance for Parents

- Parents can help by making sure that their daughter(s) understand the school's policy and, above all, how seriously Queen Margaret's takes incidents of cyberbullying.
- Parents should also explain to their daughters legal issues relating to cyberbullying
- If parents believe that their daughter is being the victim of cyberbullying, they should save the offending material, and make sure that they have all relevant information before deleting anything
- Parents should contact the Head as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged with the Head, which may involve other relevant members of staff

Appendix 2

RECORD OF ALLEGED BULLYING INCIDENT

Following observation or reporting of an incident of alleged bullying please complete section A of this form promptly and send to the Deputy Head (or Director of Pastoral Care in her absence)

Section A

Date and time of incident _____ Where? _____

Girl(s) involved _____

Details of incident:

Signed _____

Section B To be completed by Deputy Head. Action taken

1. Girl(s) Interviewed
2. Tutor informed
3. Senior Tutor/Housemistress/master informed
4. Parents contacted
5. Sanction

OUTCOME: