

Our approach:

Bullying is understood as any behavior that causes distress or hurt to someone else. If bullying is allowed to go unchecked, it can destroy a school community. At RBS, we take robust action to deter and educate potential bullies.

We define bullying as targeted or deliberate, repeated and/or systematic actions (physical, verbal, direct or indirect) that aim to harm another person and/or undermine their confidence and self-esteem. Any such behavior is not tolerated at RBS. We aim to prevent such actions by educating students in “right from wrong” within a positive culture that optimizes incentives, reward and sanction, and is always grounded in dialogue and excellent interpersonal relations.

Forms and impact:

Bullying can take several forms, for example:

- **Emotional** (e.g. the ‘silent treatment’, leaving someone out)
- **Verbal** (e.g. spreading rumors, name-calling, abusive graffiti)
- **Non-verbal abuse** (e.g. such as making hand signs, text messaging or making silent phone calls)
- **Physical** (e.g. hitting, shoving, pulling hair, damaging someone’s property)
- **Exclusion** (e.g. such as deliberately ignoring or isolating someone)
- **Online bullying** (‘cyberbullying’), e.g. using text messages and online social networks to abuse others.

Bullying can have serious effects, including “sadness, loneliness, low self-esteem, fear, anxiety and poor concentration, and lead to self-harm, depression, suicidal thoughts and, in some cases, suicide”

Signals:

There are many signals that a student may be being bullied including, but not limited to, the following:

- truancy or not wanting to go to school
- suddenly becoming ill when it is time for school
- losing interest in school work
- sudden or unexpected changes in behavior, e.g. becoming anxious or aggressive
- loss of appetite
- having nightmares at home
- self-harm, e.g. cutting, burning, scratching, or hitting oneself
- ‘losing’ possessions at school
- Bruises, scratches or injuries with no rational explanation for them

Principles

We believe that all our students have the right to feel happy and safe from bullying. We aim to

create a safe and welcoming environment for all. To achieve this, we promote self-respect and discipline so that:

- Students feel good about themselves and do not feel the need to hurt or belittle others
- Students can control their words and actions, even when angry or upset
- Everyone in our school community speaks and acts against bullying, showing that we do not accept acts of bullying in our school.

As a teaching and learning community, we can minimize or prevent bullying in many ways including:

- Finding ways to develop positive attitudes through what we teach and learn
- Showing respect at all times
- Valuing everyone as an individual and appreciating our interdependence
- Encouraging social responsibility, tolerance and understanding
- Recognizing and promoting equality, e.g. between genders, nationalities and ethnicities
- Working with parents to ensure consistent expectations and boundaries between school and home
- Regularly reviewing our progress in tackling bullying and making changes to ensure continuous improvement in the school culture.

Our Strategy

Both targets and bullies need pastoral support. People who bully others often need help to deal with issues such as aggression, low self-esteem, difficult family backgrounds and other factors. The school is therefore committed to ensuring bullying is prevented by promoting the values of self and mutual respect thorough understanding and kindness in many ways including, but again not limited to:

- **Curriculum:** Bullying is addressed in assemblies, via discussions in tutor groups and through the school's PSHE programmer.
- **Reporting:** All reported cases of suspected bullying are taken seriously and dealt with in a timely, holistic and an appropriate manner in line with the School's Behavior Policy. Disciplinary consequences may include suspension or expulsion in cases of particularly serious or persistent bullying. The school seeks the involvement and support of parents in all cases.
- **Open Door Culture:** One of the most effective deterrents to bullying is openness and communication. Students and parents are asked to inform a member of staff (e.g. the Head of School) immediately if they are aware of such behavior, so that it can be dealt with at an early stage. Students also have access to the 'Trust Box' if they wish to disclose any bullying incidents or concerns.
- **Mentoring:** The target will be supported and mentored by their class teacher/form tutor, Head of School or the Deputy Head as appropriate. Strategies will be discussed and agreed upon between the students and relevant staff but will often involve the bully being offered guidance on modifying his or her behavior, as well as appropriate disciplinary sanctions based on the school's Behavior Policy.
- **Parents:** The parents of all parties should be immediately informed and invited into

school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought. Parents should be kept informed throughout and a reintegration meeting arranged in serious cases of poor behavior to ensure home-school expectations are aligned thereby reducing the likelihood of further incidents.

- **Action Plan:** An action plan should be formulated, including disciplinary sanctions and counseling, and where possible agreed to by all parties. This will be carefully overseen and monitored by the Head of School.

Procedures

The school follows the following procedures in the event of a suspected bullying being reported, but must also follow the guidance “conducting investigations” as per the school’s [‘Behavior Policy’](#).

1. **Safety First:** Ensure everyone is safe before offering reassurances and support to the students affected
2. **Take Notes:** Ensure you take detailed notes about the incident using the school’s Incident Report form, e.g. date, time, place, witnesses, nature of incident, who was there, who did what (and how do you know) being sure to distinguish between “allegations” and “facts” that be proven beyond reasonable doubt
3. **Communication:** Ensure you promptly inform an appropriate member of the team. This will usually be the Head of School in the first instance, or in more serious situations, the Deputy Head
4. **Follow up interviews:** Ensure written accounts of follow up interviews with the alleged perpetrators and/or witnesses (including staff) documented
5. **Documentation:** Ensure to document the incident on the school’s Management Information System (ISAMS) and/or Google Drive as this information may be important in the future (use the title ‘bullying incident’ as this assists data analysis).

Those involved must feel that their voice has been fairly heard with timely and appropriate action taken.

Online Bullying (‘cyberbullying’)

Definition

Online bullying (sometimes referred to as ‘cyberbullying’) can be defined as “*the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for bullying purposes*”. It is sometimes an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another way of harassing their target; it can also take place in isolation. However, there are particular features of online bullying that are distinct from other forms of bullying. These need to be recognized and considered when determining how to respond effectively.

Features of online bullying:

- **Immediacy and Impact:** The scale and scope of online bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying, as online bullying can spread instantaneously and widely. It can also be impossible to eradicate messages and images once posted online.

- **Targets and perpetrators:** The people involved may have a different profile from traditional bullies and their targets.
- **Access and Location:** Online bullying can happen at any time, and anywhere. Targets may find that they have no refuge or 'safe place' from bullying.
- **Anonymity:** The person being bullied may not know who is targeting them making a difficult situation even more upsetting and stressful.
- **Motivation:** Some students *may not* be aware that what they are doing is bullying. The curriculum including tutor time, assemblies and PSHE time are particularly important in realigning students' understanding of the impact of their actions.
- **Evidence:** Unlike other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying may have evidence of its occurrence.

Forms: Can take much the same form as non-online bullying and include the following: threats and intimidation, harassment or 'stalking' (e.g. repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages); vilification; defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorized publication of private information or images (e.g. posting or sharing a photograph without someone's consent), and manipulation (e.g. using the threat of posting embarrassing images for the purpose of extortion).

Momentum:

Whilst some online bullying is deliberate and aggressive, it is important to recognize that some incidents of online bullying are the result of not thinking about the consequences. What may be sent initially as a 'joke' may not be received as one, and the sender may not see the impact of the message on the receiver. With online bullying, bystanders can easily become perpetrators, e.g. by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, or by taking part in discussion groups. They may not see this as participating in bullying. It is important that students are aware that their actions online, whether as bullies or bystanders, can have severe and distressing consequences for themselves and others.

We believe that every student should be taught how to stay safe online and the difference between 'right and wrong'. The rapid development of technology means that it is becoming increasingly difficult to monitor and control what students can access online. The emphasis must be on educating all users as to the risks involved and their obligation to act responsibly while online.

Our aim is to safeguard students by educating them about how to protect themselves in both the 'real' and virtual world. This can be done through the ICT curriculum, PSHE, assemblies, guest speakers and tutor time. It is everyone's responsibility and all staff should be aware of this policy and how to respond to safety incidents. Students and staff must also be aware of what to do if they have any online safety concerns.

Acceptable Use of ICT Policy

The school's **Acceptable Use of ICT Policy** defines acceptable and unacceptable use of ICT within the school in greater scope and detail.

The following 'SMART' code provides five important tips to protect students from being

involved in online bullying and advice on how to report it when it does happen.

- **Safe:** Stay safe by not giving personal information when you are online. Personal information includes your email address, phone number and password.
- **Meeting:** Meeting someone you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' permission and only if they can be present. Online friends are still strangers even if you have been talking to them for a long time.
- **Accepting:** Accepting emails, messages, or opening files, pictures or texts from people you do not know or trust can lead to problems – as well as the risk of online bullying, they may contain viruses.
- **Reliable:** People online can lie about who they are and information on the internet may not be true. Always check information with other websites, books or someone who knows. If you like chatting online it is always best to only chat to your real- world friends and family.
- **Tell:** Tell your parents or a trusted adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Online Bullying

- If a student or a friend of a student receives an abusive e-mail or text, they should report the matter to a member of staff as soon as possible.
- No matter how upsetting these messages might be, students should save the message with a screenshot and should not delete the messages.
- Depending on the nature of the bullying, and the impact on the student, the case may be taken up by the Head of School or Deputy Head.
- Interviews will be conducted fairly, giving all sides the opportunity to state their case, to establish what has happened.
- The school's Behavior Policy procedures are applied and written records maintained.

Advice to Parents

Regrettably, and whilst we do not accept it, we understand that bullying occurs in all schools and places of work from time to time. We do not tolerate any form of bullying at RBS and we will always respond to reported incidents.

We value our relationship with parents. Effective communication between home and school enables us to deal with difficult situations quickly.

If you notice anything unusual about your child's behavior or attitude to school, please inform your child's Form Tutor (secondary) or Class Teacher (primary). They will discuss your concerns with the Head of School. Similarly, if your child says that they are being bullied, or that they know someone who is, please let us know immediately so that we can act promptly and fairly.

Advice to Students:

Treat everyone with respect and courtesy – not just your friends. Do not get involved in name-calling or gossiping about other people, either in school or online.

If you feel you are being bullied, inform a member of staff whom you trust and feel comfortable talking to: for example, your class teacher/form tutor, a subject teacher, Head of School or the

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school nurse. Most importantly, do not keep the problem to yourself! Remember, teachers are here to help you work through any problems you may have. Silence or violence are not helpful responses to bullying.

If you see someone bullying another person, tell a member of staff. If you know that someone is being bullied, and you do not do something to help, you are letting the bully get away with it! If you are concerned about bullying for any reason, you may also leave a message in the **Trust Box**.

Advice to Staff:

- **Set an excellent example.** Be an excellent role model for the students and show that you do not tolerate bullying.
- **Be alert** for students who appear upset. If you have a concern, **take immediate action**.
- **Look out for** students who appear to be isolated or are the target of jokes by their peers. Raise issues with your line manager, e.g. Head of School.
- **Be on time** for lessons. The absence of a staff member creates opportunities for bullying (including via Virtual Lessons). Some areas of the school, such as the playground and changing rooms, must be appropriately supervised to minimize risks of bullying behavior.
- **Be watchful** for any signs of bruising or other marks on students that are not easily accounted for. If you have any concerns then please contact the Deputy Head. See the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for guidelines.
- **Be sensitive** at all times to the feelings of students and especially to the possibility of bullying.
- **Make time** for students to speak to you, and take students' requests for help seriously – otherwise, they may not approach you or another member of staff again.
- **Respect** each student's individuality, views and circumstances.
- **Recognize** the need to counsel the bully as well as the target of the bullying.

Sometimes students complain that they are being 'picked on' by a teacher. In some cases, this can be due to a 'clash of personality'. However, actions by a teacher can be interpreted or be perceived as bullying. Staff must therefore refrain from making comments or acting which could be misconstrued, and never use sarcasm when talking to students. If a member of staff is having problems with a student, that information should be shared with the relevant line manager so that it can be seen whether it is an isolated incident or part of a general picture. If there is a specific complaint from a student or a parent, it should be investigated according to the School's Complaint Handling Procedures.

Approval and Review.

Reviewed by: Head of Primary, Andrew Du Lieu / Date: 1.08.24

Confirmed by: Principal / Date: 08.08.24