



## The Royal Grammar School

### Anti-Bullying Policy – Guidance

The following guidance is for students, parents/carers and staff and is included to support the Anti-Bullying Policy. Many points have been prompted by the comments written by students during the annual bullying survey:

#### a. Procedures to follow when bullying has occurred

##### i. **Students**

- If a student witnesses bullying behaviour, or has bullying behaviour directed at them, they should talk to their Form Tutor or a member of staff they feel comfortable talking to. A friend can accompany this student if they wish.
- Trying to ignore bullying behaviour is not the best option; it only delays stopping it.
- Students may feel safer if they stay with a group of friends while the bullying behaviour is being investigated. Retaliation should be avoided if the bullying is repeated; it is best to see their Form Tutor.
- Retaliation using friends makes the situation worse and often becomes twice as hard to resolve.

Staff at RGS will listen to what a victim has to say and involve them in deciding how to resolve the issues. Staff understand that students who report bullying may wish their name to be kept confidential.

The school can always offer help, support and guidance; **the aim is to stop the bullying behaviour.**

## **ii. Prefects**

Prefects receive guidance during their induction training on the issue of bullying. Prefects are encouraged to:

- Be aware as they move around the school and travel to and from school of the behaviour of other students including possible bullying behaviour
- Stop bullying behaviour if it is possible
- Report bullying behaviour to a Form Tutor, Head of Year or the Director of 6<sup>th</sup> Form who is responsible for prefects

## **iii. Bystanders & Upstanders**

Bystanders are all those who are not directly engaged in bullying behaviour or are on the receiving end but know that it is occurring.

**If you think a student is experiencing bullying behaviour Upstanders should help that person by:**

- Telling a member of staff
- Confiding in a friend who will help them speak to a member of staff
- Telling a prefect
- Telling the person who is being bullied that it will be reported
- Inviting the person who is being bullied to join your group
- Telling someone at home

**Students must not become part of the bullying behaviour by:**

- Joining in (to support the bullying behaviour)
- Watching (making it look as if you agree with the behaviour)
- Keeping quiet (instead of telling the person to stop)

## **iv. Staff**

Throughout the school day staff should be alert to bullying behaviour and be proactive in stopping it. Staff should:

- Expect positive behaviour in all lessons.
- Use prompt, positive correction for low level disruption that targets individuals by reprimanding and correction of verbal put downs, taking of possessions, pushing and shoving etc.

- Always “separate the behaviour from the child” by making it clear that the school does not accept bullying behaviour (see definition in policy).
- A calm request to stop the bullying behaviour and a warning that should the behaviour continue a sanction will be imposed is often sufficient.
- If the bullying behaviour is repeated, or it is possible that what you have witnessed may be part of a wider picture, or the initial incident is at a serious level, then the incident should be reported to the Form Tutor and the Head of Year as soon as possible. It is also helpful to inform Matron, the SEND Manager and boarding tutors if this is applicable.
- In lessons forward planning should aim to achieve social inclusion of all students by careful seating plans and management of groups.

### **Form Tutor and Head of Year**

If bullying is reported, the following guidelines should be followed:

- All reports of bullying should be taken seriously.
- If a student is making the report they should be told they have made the right decision.
- Adopt an unprejudiced approach and be prepared to listen carefully to all students involved. They should ideally be interviewed individually.
- Ask all those directly involved in the bullying incident, and if appropriate selected witnesses indicated by both “sides”, to complete an Incident Report.
- Discuss with the victim the possible actions that could be taken.
- Empower the students who have been bullied by involving them in the choice of how the incident will be dealt with.
- Offer the support of a safe room/area if it is necessary.
- Ensure that parents of those directly involved are notified that an investigation is being carried out – arrange to keep them informed of the outcomes and if necessary invite them into school for a meeting.
- Once the investigation has been completed the action that is required will be determined, this may need discussion with an Assistant Head or the Deputy Headmaster. The agreed action should be communicated to all the appropriate people.
- Check with the student, who has suffered from the bullying behaviour, at regular intervals (every couple of days and then weekly) that the bullying has stopped.
- Finally, the Head of Year must complete a Serious Incident Form and forward it to the Deputy Headmaster’s PA. If the bullying behaviour was of a racist nature it should also be recorded as a racist incident on CPOMS. All written records should be put in the files of the students directly involved.

## **v. Parents/Carers**

The consequences of bullying behaviour can take the form of unexplained distress or uncharacteristic behaviour:

- Lack of confidence, withdrawal from social activities
- Personality change – snappy, withdrawn, tired, weepy, loss of appetite
- School refusal
- Avoidance of specific lessons or days
- Damaged clothing and belongings

If parents/carers think that something may be amiss; it should be reported to the school so that we can observe their child to see if the concerns are substantiated.

If a child tells a parent/carer that they are experiencing bullying behaviour they should:

- Calmly talk to their child about it.
- Remember, students who are experiencing bullying behaviour can become upset, anxious and confused about what has actually happened.
- Make a note of what the child says - who was involved, how it occurred, where it happened and what has happened.
- Reassure their child that telling you was the right thing to do.
- Not let their child talk them out of contacting the school.
- If the problem is to be solved, parents and school need to work together and if the school is to take action, the situation needs to be known. No knowledge means the school cannot respond and the bullying will continue. It is also much easier to stop the behaviour in the early stages rather than when it becomes a serious issue, over a long time.
- Telephone or email the school asking to speak to their child's Form Tutor or Head of Year about a bullying issue in order to inform the school of the problems their child is experiencing.
- The school will investigate promptly: parents/carers should accept there are always different viewpoints for any incident. Parents/carers should not assume they have the complete picture of what has been happening – all they have is an account from their child's perspective. The school will use the procedures outlined in the policy to gain a fuller perspective before actions are taken.

## vi. Confidentiality

Students who report bullying often say they are anxious that the bully will find out and will bully them more.

- All students should be reassured that what they say will be kept confidential from the bully.
- They will not be publicly named when their accounts are used to determine what happened.

## b. Actions that will be taken in response to bullying behaviour

Each incident of bullying behaviour is different and unique to the individuals who display it and who experience it. Reports of bullying behaviour, on investigation, may be cases of “relational conflict” rather than bullying. In such cases repair and rebuild is more appropriate than sanctions and will be managed by a Form Tutor or a Head of Year.

Sanctions applied for bullying behaviour will depend on several factors that may include:

- The level of intent
- Any provocation
- The duration of the bullying behaviour
- The nature of the bullying behaviour and its impact
- Whether it is the first report or a repeat of bullying behaviour
- Whether the student engaging in the bullying behaviour has received previous warnings and/or sanctions

## **Guidelines on actions available as sanctions for the student engaged in bullying behaviour**

### ***On the first occasion when there is no apparent intent to hurt another student***

- A verbal warning may be given. This would be at a formal meeting between a teacher and the student. The student would be made aware that a more severe sanction will be given if the bullying behaviours continue.
- The Form Tutor and Head of Year should be made aware of the actions and they should keep a record of the behaviour and the actions.
- To make a phone call home to parents/carers of all the students involved.

### ***One off serious incidents or repeated bullying behaviours***

- A meeting with the student's parents to discuss necessary changes to their child's behaviour towards his peers and any other underlying issues.
- Written warning by letter from the Head of Year, Assistant Head or Deputy Head outlining the bullying behaviour and the sanctions that will be taken.
- Lunchtime or after school detention.
- Head of Year, Assistant Head or Deputy Head detention after school.
- Saturday morning detention.
- Internal suspension.
- Fixed term external suspension.
- Permanent exclusion.

### **c. Support for the individuals who display bullying behaviour and those who experience it**

#### ***Helping the student who experiences bullying to gain control over their life***

Students should be reassured and empowered by telling them:

- Being bullied is not their fault
- Seeking help is the right thing to do
- They don't have to put up with it

If they are fearful the bullying behaviour may continue, they should be asked to keep a log of any bullying so they can report any further incidents. Victims may need time to talk about their experiences and given strategies to counteract/avoid bullying by others.

#### ***Helping a student to gain an understanding of their bullying behaviour***

The parents of the student who has engaged in bullying behaviour will often be involved in this process to provide further support. The school will also explain to the parents/carers of the student who has been bullied the actions the school is undertaking and the role they can play in providing support for their child.

**Students** often display bullying behaviour in order to:

- Feel powerful
- Hurt someone
- Gain attention
- Express feelings/emotions of sadness or anger
- Cope with jealousy
- Impress and entertain
- Gain friendships

- Or because they have had bullying behaviour directed at them

If during discussions a student identifies an underlying reason for their bullying behaviour, they should be offered strategies to help them change their behaviour.

Often students don't understand the impact of their bullying behaviour and can be in denial; they justify their behaviour to themselves and make wrong assumptions about how the other student feels.

### ***Further strategies and actions that can be taken***

- Befriending – students are encouraged to make friends with a peer who is experiencing difficulties.
- Circle time - this can be used as an opportunity to evaluate friendship problems and bullying behaviour in an open forum usually overseen by a Head of Year. It is a non-punitive approach that places an emphasis on mutual respect, active listening, empathy and problem solving. Ground rules are usually established for the ways in which students should conduct themselves during circle time. In the case of a bullying behaviour those directly involved may choose not to participate when circle time is being used to raise awareness of a situation and to elicit support to stop the bullying behaviour.
- Written apology – the student that engaged in the bullying behaviour may want to write a written apology acknowledging their behaviour was wrong, that it had a negative impact on the other student and that they do not intend to repeat the bullying behaviour. A copy of this letter should be placed in the relevant students' files.
- Repair and rebuild meeting – once an investigation is complete it may be appropriate to briefly bring the students involved together. A member of staff, often a Form Tutor or Head of Year, will facilitate this meeting if both parties express a wish to meet. A verbal apology should be offered and reassurances that the student who experienced the bullying behaviour should have no future causes for concern.
- Restorative justice meeting – this is a more formal meeting than a repair and rebuild meeting. It places greater emphasis on the need for the student to acknowledge the impact of their bullying behaviour. Usually a Head of Year will facilitate this meeting and prepare for it carefully with both the student who has experienced the bullying behaviours and the student who has shown the bullying behaviours.
- Acceptable Behaviour Agreement – this is an agreement between the bully and the school, usually drawn up by the Head of Year and countersigned by the parent. It provides a formal record of the intention of the student engaged in the

bullying behaviour not to continue with specific behaviours. It can also list possible consequences should they break the agreement.

- Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) – this is a more intensive strategy to prevent exclusion. A meeting will be set up to include parents, the student, the Head of Year and the Assistant Head or the Deputy Headmaster (external agencies may also be included). The objective of the meeting is to set targets and define the monitoring systems to support the bully in modifying his bullying behaviours.
- Outreach support – this could be via the school nurse, Connexions, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) or Aspire.

**d. Online Safety and cyberbullying**

“New technologies provide an apparently anonymous method by which bullies can torment their victims at any time of the day or night. While the victims may not be in physical danger, they may receive an email, chat or text messages or be the target of unfavourable websites or social networking profiles that make them feel embarrassed, upset depressed or afraid.” Childnet

At the RGS we are aware and concerned about students keeping themselves safe online and on their mobile phones. These topics and cyberbullying are covered in PSHCE, form period and in assemblies. Every year the Year 7 also attend a presentation on these topics. Students in year 8-11 who are new to the school, are also expected to attend this presentation. The parents/carers of Year 7 and new students are also sent information about keeping your child safe online.

Our strong advice to RGS students who are being bullied, or know of someone who is being bullied, online or via a mobile phone is to follow the RGS Anti-Bullying Charter and tell someone they trust or report it on our confidential reporting system Tootoot. It is important that bullying messages, conversations or pictures are saved. The clear message the school wishes to communicate is that bullying behaviour is not acceptable online or offline.

One of the reasons for the implementation of the RGS Valuables Policy is to prevent mobile phones and other items being used for bullying behaviours during the school day.

Every student at the RGS has signed the “Acceptable Use of ICT Systems and the Learning Gateway” policy. Students sign this policy in Year 7 and again in Year 12 and students are made aware of the policy annually in form period.

The policy quotes from the “Telecommunications Act 1984” which states it is an offence to send “by means of a public telecommunications system, a message or other material that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.”



The Telecommunications Act 1984 also states that a person who “sends by those means, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, a message that he knows to be false or persistently makes use for that purpose of a public telecommunications system, shall be guilty of an offence.”

This shows the seriousness of the offences which may be seen as a joke by the perpetrators but which can cause distress to the victim. Cyberbullying is explicitly included in the definition of bullying in the RGS Anti-Bullying Policy.

**e. Racism**

The RGS Anti-Bullying Policy should be used in conjunction with the RGS Equal Opportunities and Race Equality Policy. All staff are responsible for:

- Dealing appropriately with racial incidents
- Being able to identify and challenge racial and cultural stereotyping and bias
- Promoting equal opportunities and good race relations
- Avoiding and eliminating discrimination against anyone on the grounds of race, colour, language, religion, cultural background, nationality or ethnic backgrounds

When students make racist comments they are often unaware that their comments are perceived as being hurtful and racist. They often focus on their intentions, which usually are to have a joke, and do not stop to consider the racist and bullying outcome. For this reason it is vital that all staff should not tolerate students’ racial “banter”. The aim is that all students at the RGS should understand that if a comment or “banter” involves a negative racial idea then it is not acceptable. This message is stressed through PSHCE lessons, regular assemblies, Form Time activities. Racism is explicitly included in the definition of bullying in the RGS Anti-Bullying Policy.

**Bullying, cyberbullying bullying and racism are discussed at least once a year through student voice and regularly at the student belonging group meetings.**

**f. Bullying behaviour outside the school premises**

Whilst schools are not directly responsible for bullying behaviour away from their premises, nevertheless students are encouraged not to suffer in silence. If the bullying incident involves two or more students from the RGS, if appropriate, the response will be the same as an incident occurring at school.