



10a COUNTERING PEER-ON-PEER POLICY

As the mission statement of Queen Mary's is to be a Christian community that values, nurtures and respects every individual it goes to the heart of the School's philosophy to counter bullying. In addition, the School aims to respect individuality and embrace diversity and to enhance character and build resilience, and demonstrate our commitment to creating a compassionate community where all are valued and respected. Likewise for many years the four cornerstones of trustworthiness, public spirit, good manners and hard-work have underpinned all aspects of school life.

We aim to provide a safe and caring environment in which pupils can fulfil their true potential without fear. The pupils at Queen Mary's are very supportive of each other and form firm and lasting friendships. However, as a school we are not complacent and our views on peer-on-peer abuse are made very clear. We believe that bullying behaviour adversely affects the safety and happiness of pupils and can lead to psychological damage. Bullying causes low self-esteem and a negative self-image; it is likely to affect concentration and levels of achievement both inside and outside of the classroom.

This Policy has regard to non-statutory DfE advice:

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017)
- Supporting children and young people who are bullied: advice for schools (2014)
- Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and school staff (2014)
- The School's Behaviour Management Policy, E-Safety Policy and IT Acceptable Use Policy
- The Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements 2021
- The Ofsted Sexual Abuse Review 2021
- The Equality Act 2010: Advice for Schools
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- [Development Matters - Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the early years foundation stage \(Sep 2020, revised Jul 2021\)](#)

as well as to statutory DfE advice:

- The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2021
- Keeping Children Safe In Education 2021

Aims of this Policy

- To ensure that the unacceptable nature of peer on-peer abuse and the consequences of such actions are made clear to the whole community, including parents

- To ensure there is a clear procedure for staff, pupils and parents to follow once an incident perceived as bullying has been reported
- To result in consistent prevention and appropriate responses

Definition of peer-on-peer abuse:

We define peer-on-peer abuse as wilfully saying or doing anything to hurt, humiliate, threaten or frighten someone. Such behaviour makes other people feel uncomfortable or threatened. It may be a process rather than a single act and can use any form of perceived difference as a weapon. Examples include, but are not limited to, comments about race, religion, culture, sexuality, gender, special educational needs, disability or a child's home circumstances, such as adoption, being a young carer or a Looked After Child.

There are many definitions of peer-on-peer abuse, but some common features include:

- That it is deliberate and intentionally hurtful behaviour
- That it is repeated over a period of time
- That it makes the victim feel powerless
- That it lowers the victim's self esteem

It should be remembered that harassment and threatening behaviour are criminal offences. Queen Mary's treats peer-on-peer abuse with utmost seriousness and it is entirely unacceptable to view it as a part of growing up or as a means of toughening up young people. There is a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and it should never be passed off as banter or "having a laugh."

It is recognised that children are capable of abusing their peers (including online) and it is assumed that sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening at Queen Mary's School, even when there are no specific reports. However a whole-school approach is taken to such situations and all staff should be clear about the policy and procedures with regard to peer-on-peer abuse.

An abuser may well involve a third party, for example using a friend to tease or torment their victim. The bully can often influence others to take no action, often through fear that they might in time become a victim themselves. Peer-on-peer abuse can be overt and intimidating but is often hidden and subtle and is often motivated by prejudice. It may be a particular problem for those with special educational needs or disabilities, or where it is related to other protected characteristics such as age differences, gender identity, race or religion.

Younger children such as those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are more likely to take part in direct forms of aggression. For them, bullying is simply aggression in general rather than being a repeated act by someone perceived to be more powerful.

The four main types of peer-on-peer abuse are:

- **Physical:** hitting; kicking; pinching; taking; hiding or damaging belongings.

- **Verbal:** name calling; teasing; insulting; writing and/or passing unkind or malicious notes
- **Emotional:** being unfriendly; excluding; blanking; tormenting; spreading malicious rumours
- **Cyber:** includes the misuse of mobile phones and other electronic devices in or out of school and includes the sending of unkind or malicious messages, inappropriate emails, postings, photographs or videos to social websites or other web spaces (please also see IT Acceptable Use Policy and e-Safety Policy).

Signs of peer-on-peer abuse:

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to attend 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 spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly going missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Health Hub with symptoms such as stomach pains or headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and having poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping or 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 peer-on-peer abuse will be fully investigated and strategies put in place to address each and every aspect by all members of staff.

Preventative Measures

The issue of bullying is raised in Prayers, Chapel Services and via PSHE courses delivered through the PSHE programme.

There are specific opportunities for pupils to raise matters of concern:

- Tutorials
- Individual conversations with teachers
- At any time with one of the Boarding Staff
- Small discussion groups with the Chaplain
- PSHE lessons
- School Council
- The School Nurse
- The School Counsellor

- Religious Studies, English and Drama lessons often highlight the issues of abuse and reinforce the message that peer-on-peer abuse is wrong and unacceptable
- All pupils have access to a telephone and helpline numbers are displayed in the Pupil Planners, boarding areas and classrooms
- There is a "good neighbour" system for new pupils to help them settle in
- The Year 11 pupils receive training in Safeguarding from the DSL which focuses on listening skills and supporting younger and vulnerable pupils.
- The school rules relating to countering peer-on-peer abuse apply at all times not just in school and during term time.
- Potential victims are identified and mentoring or support measures are put in place.
- The School Counsellor provides a termly report to the Deputy Head listing the issues raised by pupils
- The Pastoral Assistant closely monitors pupil behaviour in the senior school.

Communication of such a policy will involve:

1. The whole school community including governors.
2. The PSHE programme and other opportunities within the curriculum for example in drama, Religious Studies, literature, with discussion of differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language.
3. Opportunities in Prayers and Chapel Services to explore topics such as relationships, friendship, conflict, forgiveness, mutual trust and respect through stories, historical events and/or current affairs in order to reinforce the school's ethos and zero tolerance of abusive behaviours, including peer-on-peer abuse. Age-appropriate information about staying safe online to prevent grooming, access to internet sites containing violent or adult content and sharing personal information and photographs through PSHE and IT lessons. The unacceptability of sharing nudes and semi-nudes is also strongly communicated.
4. Raising awareness of staff through training, so that the principles of the policy are understood, and legal responsibilities are known. The responsibilities on staff to resolve and prevent problems, as well as the sources of support are set out. If specialist skills are needed to support those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, bisexual and transgender pupils, or other specific needs, these are made available.

Pupils should:

- Be aware that it is a person's perception of an action towards them that is important
- Be aware that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated
- Be vigilant for signs that a pupil may perceive they are being bullied
- Be clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders, when they should challenge unacceptable behaviour
- Be ready to inform a member of staff if they become aware of bullying incidents

Staff will:

- Take any allegations of peer-on-peer abuse seriously by talking with pupils about their behaviour towards others which could be perceived as bullying and know what to do if they themselves encounter such treatment
- Encourage pupils to tell an adult if they perceive they are being bullied
- Always be vigilant for any signs of bullying especially if more vulnerable pupils with SEND or other protected characteristics are involved
- Respond quickly and appropriately using the procedures outlined below in accordance with their experience and the training they have received

Parents should:

- Always respond quickly
- Take any allegations their child makes seriously
- Notify their child's tutor or the Deputy Head if they think their child is involved in bullying
- Reassure their child

Procedures for Staff

Appropriate training in all aspects of care is arranged to ensure that staff have the professional skills especially an awareness of the risk and indications of peer-on-peer abuse and how to deal with such cases. Staff should be aware that pupils involved in a bullying incident either do not see their actions as 'bullying' or may even feel their action is justified and therefore will often be very reluctant to admit to them.

- It is imperative that staff build an accurate picture of what has happened and be sure who is telling the truth.
- Any witnessed peer-on-peer abuse must be challenged and dealt with immediately and the episode reported to the tutor and Deputy Head.
- The Deputy Head will ask to see those involved and get a written account of events.
- The victim is offered support & advice and may be offered additional emotional support.
- The alleged abuser will be interviewed by the Deputy Head and 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 in the Bullying File.
- Parents of all pupils involved will be informed of what has happened and invited to discuss the matter.
- Peer-on-peer abuse records will be kept by the Deputy Head, using the iSams database, to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedure and to enable possible patterns or trends to be identified.
- Peer-on-peer abuse should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer harm.
- Two levels of concern are recorded; where the harm threshold is met and low-level concerns.
- In very serious cases, or when the bullying is repeated, the Deputy Head who is also the DSL, with support from the Head and Chairman of Governors, will decide whether to refer the matter to the police or social care services.

If the incident is deemed not too serious, for example a first instance of name calling:

- Staff should adopt a 'problem solving' approach by remaining neutral
- Enable pupils to have an opportunity to talk and focus on finding a solution
- The incident should be recorded, potentially as a low-level concern
- It may be appropriate to issue a sanction or reprimand which reflects the seriousness of the incident given at the staff's discretion in accordance with Queen Mary's School Behaviour Policy
- The victim and perpetrator should be monitored closely over a period of time following any incident that is reported
- The victim and perpetrator will both need considerable support from staff
- If appropriate all staff will be alerted in a Staff Briefing

At all times the Tutor and Deputy Head should be kept informed who will ensure that full records are kept to enable patterns to be identified and will ensure that appropriate intervention is implemented. These are reviewed weekly at the Pastoral Meeting where regular monitoring takes place. If the incident is serious e.g. physical assault, repeated abusive behaviour including name calling and deliberate exclusion from friendship groups, the Deputy Head will inform the Head and a joint decision will be made as to the appropriate course of action.

In keeping with Queen Mary's Christian ethos we do not wish to give up on a pupil and exclusion as a response to bullying is used sparingly and always as a very last resort. Exclusion, however, may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying. Reported incidents of bullying and how they were resolved are monitored very closely by the Deputy Head and pastoral staff. Attention is given to who, what, where and when, as well as the action taken; and the 'follow up'. This allows for reflection on the effectiveness of the response and to effect any changes in policy or procedure to ensure the best possible outcomes for all our pupils. Monitoring such incidents also enables patterns to be identified, both in relation to individual pupils and across the School as a whole.

This policy focuses on peer-on-peer abuse although it is recognised that a staff member could be a victim and on occasion may be perceived to be guilty of bullying. Staff members who are concerned about being bullied or harassed should contact the Deputy Head or Head and refer to the Whistle Blowing Policy. Pupils and parents who feel that a member of staff is being abusive should report this in accordance with the procedures set out.

Complaints against members of staff will be dealt with in accordance with staff disciplinary procedures.

The Early Years Foundation Stage:

- Understand our individual children's experiences and needs
- Support parents and families
- Liaise with outside agencies, as appropriate
- Develop opportunities for creativity, given our understanding that creativity is fundamental to successful learning
- Challenge negative attitudes and behaviour, including bullying.

We take all incidents seriously and always endeavour to act swiftly and sensitively. However, by creating an environment of good behaviour, trust and respect, with helpful examples set by staff and older pupils, we hope to go a long way in preventing the negative relationships that can lead to peer-on-peer abuse.

Use storytelling: books and dolls to act out scenarios to explore empathy and cover sensitive topics, for example about children not being good friends or not playing together nicely.

Challenge stereotypes such as 'these are boys' toys' in a positive and friendly way.

If we see instances of bullying or conflict in the setting, we think carefully about any ways that we might prevent this happening again. For example, are there areas that are less supervised than others or are there ways to empower children to alert us to issues as they arise? We challenge negative language.

We are clear about how children should behave respectfully towards each other. For example: we have ground rules such as not being able to say 'you can't play with me/us'?

Encourage restorative approaches including supporting children to express their feelings in a safe space and to apologise to each other in meaningful ways.

Undertake empathy building activities which help young children learn how to express their feelings and recognise emotions in others, discussing the way that people are different, talking about kindness and helping others to feel better when they are upset.

Encourage assertiveness in children who might find it difficult to stand up for themselves. For example, you could role-play scenarios or undertake activities that show children how to express their emotions clearly and calmly.

Work closely with parents to ensure they understand our approach to bullying and relational conflict.

Have a clear route for them to report anything they might be worried about. Be clear that it is important to not tell their child to fight back as this may make matters worse.

Help young children make sense of differences: present positive attitudes and messages about differences amongst us all and the benefits such attitudes bring to all people.

Mrs C Cameron
Head

Reviewed: November 2021
Next Review: November 2022