



6.8 BULLYING

DECEMBER 2008

This policy must be read in conjunction with the following policies, 2.12 Harassment, 5.11 Internet and Computer Use Policy, 6.2 Occupational Health and Safety and 6.5 Child Protection.

If bullying amounts to harm as referred to in 6.5 Child Protection, then the matter must be dealt with under the Child Protection Policy.

St Mary's Coptic Orthodox College is committed to providing a safe and secure community for all of its members and will therefore not tolerate any action that undermines a person's rights in relation to this. The School will take whatever steps are necessary to prevent, or intervene in, such behaviour. As a College we are working to apply the teachings of the Holy Bible, the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

In our daily work we desire to follow the example of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Every individual, both young and old, needs to model his or her life according to this ideal example. In our dealings with each other we always need to refer back to the values and teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church and its beliefs and traditions. In relation to the Bullying Policy we desire to always treat one another with love. Our guide for this Policy is based on 1 Corinthians 13

Every member of the School community has the right to be free from bullying, this includes students, staff, parents and the Coptic Community.

Therefore all members of the School community have a responsibility to actively practise and promote:

- tolerance for individual differences,
- the values of courtesy, respect, compassion, and care for others in the conduct of relationships,
- a supportive and encouraging climate where the achievements and efforts of others are applauded,
- a commitment to adhering to, and upholding, all aspects of this policy

A safe, secure community requires all members to be sensitive to others.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is a systematic abuse of power. It typically involves repeated acts of aggression that aim to dominate and cause hurt, fear, or embarrassment in another person. Bullying is generally deliberate and planned, but can also be a result of thoughtlessness. It can be perpetrated by an individual or by groups.

Bullying may take many forms, for example:

- **Physical bullying:** pushing and shoving (where hurt is intended), kicking, invasion of personal space, the destruction of property, tripping, punching, tearing clothes, standing over someone, pushing books from someone's hands, shooting/throwing objects at someone
- **Verbal bullying:** any comment of an offensive nature that refers to ability, race, religion, gender or sexuality; including name-calling, offensive language, spreading of rumours, using words that suggest stupidity or physical problems, mocking, imitating, teasing, abusive phone calls, laughing at someone's mistakes, using unwelcome nicknames (this can include electronic and digital forms of communication)
- **Gesture bullying:** includes making gestures (physical, verbal and written) to intimidate or to embarrass.
- **Exclusion bullying:** includes the deliberate isolation (both explicit and implicit) of an individual student from his peer group.
- **Extortion bullying:** the use of force to obtain money, food or personal belongings from other students; harassing other boys to do tasks e.g. buying lunch, carrying materials
- **E-bullying:** the use of information and communication technologies such as email (mobile) phone and text messages, instant messaging, defamatory personal websites and defamatory personal polling websites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or a group that is intended to harm others

(This list is by no means exhaustive.)

STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION:

As a School Community all members have the responsibility to work actively towards the prevention of bullying.

Staff:

This requires staff to:

- be positive role models at all times, in both words and in deeds
- be vigilant in monitoring for signs of bullying behaviour amongst the school community including other staff
- speak out against bullying within the school community
- make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by proactive supervision
- take steps to help victims by removing sources of distress
- actively seek appropriate assistance (from classroom teachers, level coordinators and/or counsellors) to help students develop resilience
- actively seek appropriate assistance from the College Management Team if the bullying is between staff
- recognise instances of bullying and be able to differentiate them from playful activity
- report suspected incidents of bullying to the College Management Team, level coordinator, or other appropriate staff member
- develop curriculum materials to develop students' awareness and coping skills

Students:

When a student who is being bullied has the courage to speak out he may help to reduce the distress being experienced and will have a better chance of a long term solution to the problem.

When a student who witnesses bullying has the courage to speak out he helps reduce the distress to the victim and he contributes to the building of a safe and secure school environment.

This requires the students to:

- make a conscious decision not to be involved in any incidents of bullying.
- take some form of preventative action if present when a bullying incident occurs
- report any incidents of bullying (including suspected incidents) to a member of staff or senior student.

Parents:

This requires parents to:

- watch for, and report, signs of distress in their son or daughter - eg. unwillingness to attend school
- advise their son/daughter to tell a member of staff if bullying has occurred
- keep a written record of the incident
- not encourage their son/daughter to retaliate
- be willing to work with the School if their son/daughter is involved in incidents of bullying (either as victim or bully)

- be willing to inform the School of any cases of suspected bullying even if their son/daughter is not directly affected.

When staff, students and parents work together to prevent incidents of bullying there is a much greater chance of creating a safe, secure, tolerant and happy school community.

SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF BULLYING:

The School will provide support to all victims of bullying.

A victim may be assisted by:

- receiving a report as to the outcome of the School's intervention/investigation procedures
- being consulted in respect of the procedure to be followed by the School
- receiving an explanation, apology and/or reimbursement (where appropriate) from the bully
- counselling to help develop strategies for dealing with any future bullying.

REPORTING BULLYING:

It is essential that all forms of bullying be reported. All reports of bullying will be dealt with on a confidential basis. To ignore bullying is to give your approval to bullying and will only serve to foster its existence in the School.

Procedures for reporting

Anyone who is bullied or who witnesses an incident of bullying behaviour should report the incident no matter how minor, and follow the procedures below.

As a student: You should alert your classroom teacher, Level Coordinator or the Head of Primary/Head of Secondary, Welfare Coordinator or a senior student (at school), or a parent or responsible adult (at home).

As a Staff Member: You should alert the Head of Primary/Head of Secondary. If the complaint is against the Head of Primary/Head of Secondary, then alert the College Director.

As a parent: Discuss the situation with the Welfare Coordinator, or the Head of Primary/Head of Secondary as soon as possible.

If an incident of Bullying is reported to you – report it straight away.

INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES:

All reports of bullying will be investigated by the appropriate member of staff. The nature and extent of the investigation will depend upon the seriousness of the bullying.

As far as is reasonably possible the investigation and its outcome will be kept confidential although parents of students involved will be informed.

OUTCOMES

Following the completion of an investigation into bullying the School will implement such measures as are appropriate which could include one, or more, of the following:

- conflict resolution/mediation with students, and or families involved
- counseling
- restitution
- an agreement regarding standards of future behaviour
- detentions (afternoon/Saturday)
- suspension
- expulsion
- Formal warning (staff)
- Possible loss of employment - staff member.

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