

**VICTORIA COLLEGE BELFAST**  
(incorporating Richmond Lodge School)

Preparatory Department

**ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

**1. Introduction:**

This policy has been developed consistent with 2003 Statutory Requirements (Education & Libraries NI Order) which requires Board of Governors and Principals to consult with all key stakeholders (pupils, parents, and staff) regarding positive behaviour and bullying prevention measures which must be in place. Specific articles of the legislation include the following:

**ARTICLE 17 – DUTY TO SAFEGUARD AND PROMOTE THE WELFARE OF PUPILS**

**ARTICLE 18 – CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES**

**ARTICLE 19 – SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: MEASURES TO PREVENT BULLYING**

Reference DE Circular 2003/13

**WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF PUPILS EDUCATION  
AND LIBRARIES (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 2003**

*‘Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour’ (2001)*

*‘Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection’ (1999)*

**2. Rationale:**

Victoria College Preparatory Department provides education within an environment which has regard for the personal well being of all our pupils, promotes personal and social development and a feeling of self worth for every pupil, and is based upon good relations between staff, pupils and parents<sup>1</sup>.

The Anti-Bullying policy reflects the Pastoral Care policy in relation to providing a secure and caring environment where there is effective learning and teaching and everyone has the best opportunities to develop their full potential.

The Preparatory Department aims to foster tolerance and mutual respect through promoting positive self esteem for all members of the school community. In Victoria College Preparatory Department bullying behaviour is contrary to the school ethos.

1 “Parent” refers to the parent or guardian of the pupil.

### 3. Aims:

- to clarify for pupils, staff and parents<sup>1</sup> that bullying is always unacceptable, and is regarded by the school as a serious offence. In some instances it can have legal consequences.
- to create a feeling of confidence and safety throughout the school.
- to encourage an environment where individuals can develop without fear and fulfil their true potential.
- to emphasise the importance of and to strengthen communication links between parents<sup>1</sup> and the school.
- to foster an ethos of responsibility and caring among all staff and pupils irrespective of race, creed, age, sexual orientation or disability.
- to ensure that pupils' needs, whether bully or targeted pupil, are separated from their behaviour.
- when bullying concerns are identified to work in a restorative and solution focused way to achieve the necessary change.
- to provide awareness-raising training strategies for staff regarding bullying prevention including effective, appropriate strategies for intervention.

### 4. Definition of Bullying:

*“The repeated use of power by one or more people intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others”*

*Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (2005).*

### **Forms of Bullying:**

The following are unacceptable behaviours **BUT** only constitute bullying behaviours when they are recurrent/persistent, targeted with intent and where a power imbalance between pupils is evident.

### **Type of incident:**

1. **Emotional bullying** - being deliberately unfriendly, excluding individual from peer group, tormenting, looks.
2. **Physical bullying** - hitting, kicking, “horseplay”, stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying personal property.
3. **Verbal/Written bullying** - verbal threats, taunting, name calling, sectarian or racist remarks or writing, malicious rumours, verbal asides in class, writing on books or unkind notes, taking photographs without permission or knowledge.

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4. **Extortion bullying** - demanding money, personal property or homework.
5. **Gesture bullying** - different forms of non-verbal, threatening gestures which carry intimidatory messages.
6. **Cyberbullying** – this has been defined as ‘an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly over time, against an individual.’ (see ICT Policy)

There are 7 recognized categories of cyberbullying:

- inappropriate text messaging;
- insulting/embarrassing material/pictures/video clips via mobile phone camera;
- silent or abusive messages;
- email bullying;
- chat room bullying;
- inappropriate instant messaging;
- inappropriate use of websites including web logs (blogs), social networking and online polling sites.

7. **Indirect bullying** (includes isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others, interfering with personal property) and includes Cyber-bullying: misusing mobile phones and internet sites to humiliate, threaten and isolate another.

The 2003 Statutory Requirements (Education & Libraries NI Order) requires schools to “encouraging **good behaviour and respect for others**” and in particular **prevent all** forms of bullying.

## 5. **Possible Signs:**

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming anxious or nervous, feigning illness, loss of appetite, withdrawn demeanor etc. They may also show changes in their work patterns, may lack concentration or even truant from school.

## 6. **Promoting an Anti-Bullying Climate**

*All members of our school community have a right to be valued and respected. Our pupils have a right to be educated in a secure and caring environment, and to have their abilities and talents nurtured and developed to their full potential.*

### **Promoting Positive Behaviour, DENI, 2001**

All pupils should feel free from the threat of psychological and physical abuse. Pupils should be encouraged to feel free to tell a teacher if they are being bullied and should know that the school does not tolerate bullying.

Bullying should be addressed in every class year group through the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) programme. Assemblies should deal with the topic of bullying on a regular basis.

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Positive strategies which combat bullying should be employed e.g.:

- inclusion of pupil code of conduct- Prep Golden Rules.
- “Effective responses to bullying behaviour” Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum poster prominently displayed in all classrooms.
- inclusion in Circle time.
- inclusion in PDMU Programme.
- rewarding good behavior.
- peer support schemes, e.g. Buddy system, Prep 7 Prefects.
- Anti-Bullying awareness week.
- Anti-Bullying Policy should be visited annually by all classes.
- teaching pupils mediation and conflict resolution strategies.
- developing all pupils’ self confidence and self esteem on a daily basis.
- creative writing about experiences of bullying either as a target or witness.
- discussion of novels/plays which depict bullying instances.
- drama and role play the parts of bullies and bullied pupils.
- pupils investigate school premises, identify areas where bullying may take place and identify measures which could be taken to lessen reoccurrences.

Sanctions will be in line with the Behaviour Management Policy and guidelines for dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Counselling will be offered to both bullied and bullying pupils. Parents should have access to the Anti-Bullying policy and be aware of their responsibilities.

## 7. **Responsibilities of the School Community:**

Staff, pupils and parents<sup>1</sup> have a shared responsibility in any proactive strategy for countering bullying.

### **Responsibilities of Staff:**

Staff of the Preparatory Department will:

- foster in our pupils self-esteem, a sense of their rights and their responsibilities to others.
- demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.

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- discuss bullying behaviour with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the pupil who is targeted and the pupil who engages in bullying behaviour.
- emphasise the importance of telling a trusted adult about bullying behaviour when it happens or is observed.
- be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and respond appropriately.
- follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
- respond to bullying behaviour promptly and effectively, in an assertive and confident manner, with an expectation of change in accordance with agreed procedures.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils:**

Pupils are expected:

- to behave in a caring and respectful manner towards each other and other members of the school community.
- to refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying behaviour, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- to intervene to support any pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe for them to do so.
- to provide support for the victim by talking to her and advising her to seek help from parents or teachers or outside organisations e.g. Childline.
- if the victim is unwilling to seek help then offer to speak to someone she can trust on her behalf.
- if the victim does not want an adult to be informed, it is the responsibility of the pupil friend to inform an adult she trusts and anonymity will be guaranteed.
- to make it clear to the bully that you do not agree with her actions and if possible try to find out why she is bullying and try to persuade her to change her behaviour.
- to report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.
- to request anonymity or put a written report in the Class Worry Box.

### **Responsibilities of Parents:**

Parents are requested to support their children and the Preparatory Department by:

- watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
- advising their children to report any bullying to a Class Teacher or another member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying behaviour to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils.
- advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying behaviour.

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- being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
- keeping written records of any reported instances of bullying
- informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved; anonymity will be protected.
- co-operating with the school, if their child is involved in a bullying concern, to resolve the difficulty in a way which stops the behaviour recurring and meets the needs of all children

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## 8. **Sanctions and Procedures:**

### **Responses**

\*initial response strategies/basic actions

#### **LEVEL 1- CLASS TEACHER**

- Relationship issues
- Alleged bullying
- Pupil's reaction to the incident of alleged bullying represents a low level of concern

#### **LEVEL 2- KEY STAGE LEADER**

- Continued relationship issues which have been assessed as bullying
- Pupil's reaction to the bullying behaviour represents a higher level of concern

#### **LEVEL 3 – DEPUTY HEAD OF PREP**

- Severe Bullying Behaviours – resistant to change
- Pupil's reaction to the bullying behaviour is severe

#### **LEVEL 4 –DEPUTY HEAD OF PREP/ HEAD OF PREP/ SENCO/ COLLEGE PRINCIPAL INFORMED**

- Severe Bullying Behaviours - leading to suspension/expulsion
- There are significant mental health and/or Child Protection “safeguarding concerns” for the pupil involved

#### **Procedures for Dealing with Alleged Bullying Incidents:**

- All concerns raised will be treated on an individual basis, with the Class Teacher liaising with the Senior Leadership Team to determine which level of response will be taken.
- Minor cases are dealt with by Class Teacher.
- More serious incidents are referred to Key Stage Leader or Deputy Head and Head of Prep, and when appropriate to designated teacher for child protection.
- Any reported or suspected instances of bullying will be thoroughly investigated. Steps will be taken to identify those responsible, deploy appropriate consequences and give the pupils involved help to change their behaviour. Appropriate interventions will be applied with reference to the School's Behaviour Management Policy and NIABF Interventions Framework and Guidance Document, Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour.
- The parents of those pupils involved in alleged bullying incidents will be contacted on the day where possible.

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- All incidents will be recorded and closely monitored.
- The school will endeavor to work closely with all parties involved to ensure everyone feels safe to learn at Victoria College Preparatory Department.

#### **9. Boarding Department:**

The Boarding Department follows the guidelines as set out in the College's Anti-Bullying policy.

#### **10. Links to Other Policies:**

- Behaviour Management Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use of the Internet Policy
- Safe Handling

#### **11. Staff Development:**

Staff received training on the clarification of procedures for reporting and dealing with alleged bullying incidents and their roles within such cases.

#### **12. Review and Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Governors and will be kept under review by senior members of staff who will keep Governors informed of any difficulties that may arise.

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