

# THE VALE COLLEGE

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# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Approved by:

Principal -

Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator -

## Principles and Values

As a school we take bullying and its impact seriously. Students and parents should be assured that known incidents of bullying will be responded to.

Bullying will not be tolerated. The school will seek ways to counter the effects of bullying that may occur within school or in the local community. The ethos of our school fosters high expectations of outstanding behaviour and we will consistently challenge any behaviour that falls below this.

## Objectives of this Policy

- All governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All governors and teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All students and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

All of us have encountered bullying at some point in our lives, but we all deal with it differently. The aim of this policy is to work together to ensure that our school is a safe place for children and adults to be; whether the school community is directly or indirectly affected by bullying or not.

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is unacceptable behaviour used by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

In other words, bullying at The Vale College is considered to be, “unacceptable behaviour which occurs **‘lots of times, on purpose’**.”

Bullying can be short term or continuous over long periods of time.

## Bullying can be:

Emotional	being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
Physical	pushing, kicking, biting, hitting, punching or any use of violence
Racial	racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
Sexual	unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
Direct or Indirect Verbal	name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber bullying	All areas of internet ,such as email and internet chat Twitter, Facebook misuse Mobile threats by text messaging and calls Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities, I-pad, games consoles etc

Bullying may be related to:

- Race
- Gender
- Religion
- Culture
- Special Educational Needs (SEN) or disability
- Appearance or health condition
- Home circumstances
- Sexual orientation, sexism, or sexual bullying, homophobia

Bullying can take place in the classroom, playground, toilets, on the journey to and from school, on residential trips and cyberspace. It can take place in group activities and between families in the local community.

### **Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?**

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Bullying has the potential to damage the mental health of a victim. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

### **Perpetrators and Victims**

Bullying takes place where there is an imbalance of power of one person or persons over another. This can be achieved by:

- The size of the individual,
- The strength of the individual
- The numbers or group size involved
- Anonymity – through the use of cyber bullying or using email, social networking sites, texts etc

Staff must remain vigilant about bullying behaviours and approach this in the same way as any other category of Child Abuse; that is, do not wait to be told before you raise concerns or deal directly with the matter. Students may not be aware that they are being bullied; because they may be too young or have a low understanding of what bullying is they may be unable to realise what others may be doing to them.

Staff must also be aware of those students who may be vulnerable students; those coming from troubled families, or those responding to emotional problems or mental health issues which may bring about a propensity to be unkind to others, or may make them more likely to fall victim to the behaviour of others.

### **Signs and Symptoms For Parents and Staff**

A student may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to make less effort with school work than previously
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home hungry (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings

- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received
- lack of eye contact
- becoming short tempered
- change in attitude to people at home.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other social, emotional and/or mental health problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### **Outcomes**

All known/reported incidences of bullying will be investigated by the class teacher or by a senior member of staff.

Parents of the perpetrator may also be questioned about the incident or about any concerns that they may be having.

The student displaying unacceptable behaviour, may be asked to genuinely apologise (as appropriate to the child's age and level of understanding).

Other consequences may take place. Eg a parent being informed about their child's behaviour and a request that the parents support the school with any sanctions that it takes. Wherever possible, the students will be reconciled.

In some cases, outside agencies may be requested to support the school or family in dealing with a child continually demonstrating unacceptable behaviour towards others. eg police, counsellor/psychologist etc.

In serious cases (this is defined as children displaying an on-going lack of response to sanctions, that is, no change in behaviour of the perpetrator and an unwillingness to alter their behaviour choices), support from behaviour outreach, counselling, reduced timetables, or even fixed or permanent exclusion will be considered.

During and after the incident(s) have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be recorded in the **Bullying Log** and monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

The Disciplinary Committee will be informed of any incidents recorded in the log along with incidents, sanctions and reconciliation.

### **Prevention**

At The Vale College we use a variety of methods to support children in preventing and understanding the consequences of bullying through school and gender assemblies, citizenship lessons, the School Vision and Assembly Themes, messages in schools programmes, Anti-Bullying Team, Anti-bullying week etc. Children are also consulted through in-school students' questionnaires

The ethos and working philosophy of The Vale College means that all staff actively encourage students to have respect for each other and for other people's property. Good and kind/polite behaviour is regularly acknowledged and rewarded.

Staff will regularly discuss bullying, this will inform students that we are serious about dealing with bullying and leads to open conversations and increased confidence in students to want to discuss bullying and report any incidents and concerns about other students' behaviour.

Staff will reinforce expectations of behaviour as a regular theme in line with our Vision and our expectations.

Staff will follow the equality policy; supporting every child in our school. Staff must be careful not to highlight differences of children or an individual child, even if this is done in jest. This gives other children advocacy to use this difference to begin calling names or teasing.

Staff must be vigilant regarding groups of friends together. Friendship groups may bring about the imbalance of power and must be led towards welcoming others to join them and not excluding others from their group.

Staff must reinforce a general message that children do not have to be friends with everyone else, but they must be respectful of everyone else's feelings and be kind to each other.

Students are involved in the prevention of bullying as and when appropriate, these may include:

- writing a set of school or class rules
- Writing a personal pledge or promise against bullying
- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly
- making up role-plays about what to do through scenarios of bullying
- having discussions about bullying and why it matters that students who use unacceptable behaviour towards others are dealt with quickly
- Creating an item for the school website.

If a child feels that they are being bullied then there are several procedures that they are encouraged to follow: (not hierarchical)

- Tell a friend
- Tell your School counsellor or Disciplinary Committee/ Anti-Bullying Team
- Tell a teacher or adult whom you feel you can trust
- Tell a parent or adult at home whom you feel you can trust

### **Advice to Parents**

As the parent of a child whom you suspect is being bullied-

1. Report bullying incidents to the class teacher or Principal
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff and the Principal notified.
3. In serious cases parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will be made to help the student using unacceptable behaviour towards others, to change their behaviour.

### **Do Not:**

1. Attempt to sort the problem out yourself by speaking to the child whom you think may be behaving inappropriately towards your child or by speaking to their parents.

2. Encourage your child to be ‘a bully’ back.

Both of these will only make the problem much harder to solve.

### **Our School Culture discourages bullying**

- The Vale College believes that all learners are of equal value - whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status, whatever their gender and gender identity, whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background and social status. We have a culture of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students. We reward students when they show thoughtfulness and respect for peers, adults, and the school.
- We make sure students interact safely. Teachers constantly monitor bullying “hot spots” in and around the building. Students may be at higher risk of bullying in settings where there is little or no adult monitoring or supervision, such as bathrooms, playgrounds, and the tuck-shop. Our closed circuit television also limits opportunities for bullying.
- We set a tone of respect in the classroom. This means all teachers make it a prerogative to manage student behaviour in the classroom well. Well-managed classrooms are the least likely to have bullying.
- The school posts classroom signs prohibiting bullying and listing the consequences. This puts would-be bullies on notice and outlines the risks they are taking. Staff consistently enforce the rules for them to have meaning. The signs are in each classroom and lab, including the age-appropriate penalties.
- Students and parents need to know that the school takes bullying seriously and will take any actions, including arrest to prevent its occurrence.
- Our high-level school administrators inform late-enrolling students and their parents about the school’s bullying policy. This removes any excuse new students have for bullying, puts parents on notice that the school takes bullying seriously, and stresses the importance the school places on countering it.
- We constantly provide our teachers with effective classroom-management training in spotting and handling bullying.
- The Vale College has a bullying prevention coordinating committee (a small group of energetic teachers who plan and monitor school activities). This committee should develop school rules and sanctions against bullying, systems to reinforce pro-social behaviour, and events to raise school and community awareness about bullying.
- The school also has a targeted form of mentoring for students who are at risk for or are engaging in peer aggression or bullying behaviour, or who are experiencing victimization by peers. Our Peer mentoring raises standards for student behaviour among the students themselves and erodes student apathy about negative behaviours.

### **Recording of Bullying Incidents**

When an incident of bullying has taken place, staff must be prepared to record and report each incident.

General incidences of bullying should be recorded in the **Behaviour Log** this would include incidents where staff have had to become involved and speak with children, and/or where parents have raised concerns regarding bullying

All incidents of bullying will be discussed with all relevant staff and parents of the students involved, in order that everyone can be vigilant and that further incidents by the same student(s) may be prevented from happening in the future.

Incidents of bullying will be discussed with the Governing Body.

**The Vale College Anti-Bullying Contract**  
**Student and Parent/Guardian Agreement**

Everyone has the right to feel physically and emotionally safe at school. I will do everything I can personally, as a member of my school's community, to create and preserve a physically and emotionally safe environment. In my school, The Vale College, bullying is not tolerated.

Bullying refers to verbal acts, physical acts, or other acts of harassment by using electronic devices.

Some examples of specific behaviors that constitute bullying include:

- Spreading rumors or posting degrading, harmful, or explicit pictures, messages, or information using social media or other forms of electronic communication (also known as "[cyber-bullying](#)").
- Taunting or making sexual slurs about a person's gender orientation or sexual status.
- Name-calling, joking, or making offensive remarks about a person's body, religion, gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.
- Physical acts of bullying, such as punching, slapping, or tripping someone.

*We understand that bullying, whether it is cyberbullying, physical, or verbal acts that disrupt the learning environment, will result in the following disciplinary actions:*

- **1st Offence:** Name reported to The Principal or Anti-Bullying Coordinator. Sign the behaviour log; conference with The Principal or Anti-Bullying Coordinator; conference with The Principal; peer conference and parental contact. If an immediate consequence is needed, it will be based on severity.
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Offence:** Name reported to The Principal. Sign the behaviour log; conference with The Principal; 2 days out of school suspension, with mandatory parent meeting. **(2 out of school suspensions will result in an expulsion.)**

**Student's responsibility:**

I commit that I will not bully my peers. When I witness bullying, I will report it to an adult. I understand the anti-bullying policy and procedures.

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Student's Name

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Grade

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Teacher's Signature

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Date

**Parent/Guardian's responsibility:**

I commit to encouraging my child to always respect others. I have instructed my child not to bully. I have advised my child to report any bullying to the authorities. I understand the anti-bullying policy and procedures.

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Parent/Guardian's Signature

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Date