



The Anti-Bullying Policy should be read alongside and in conjunction with the Safeguarding, Health and Safety, Physical Intervention and Whistleblowing policies. Together these constitute the suite of policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Rochester Independent College.

Schools have a moral and legal duty to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among students and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parent/guardian and students. All College staff and students should note that this policy must be followed at all times. It is not appropriate to shout at, use intimidating body language or to use swear words. This policy is promoted and implemented throughout the College.

The College has a zero tolerance attitude to bullying of all kinds and insists that staff and students behave with consideration and show respect to all, whatever their role in the College, or outside community.

The College ensures that all the students and staff are aware of the seriousness of bullying in causing psychological damage and is mindful of some forms of bullying can constitute criminal activities under laws applying to harassment and threatening behaviour.

We aim to ensure that all students learn in a supportive and secure environment without the fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour which affects everyone, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Many students join Rochester Independent College after having difficult experiences of bullying elsewhere and it is therefore particularly important that we are alert to this issue.

It is important that EVERY incident of bullying is reported to one of our Designated Safeguarding Leads, Maeva Elliott and Kelly Flatman, IMMEDIATELY so the matter can be dealt with swiftly.

The College maintains records of all bullying incidents and these are monitored by the Principals to enable patterns to be identified.

Unreported bullying allows bullies to continue their antisocial behaviour.

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The types of bullying as defined by Kidscape are as follows:

Emotional gestures)	unfriendliness, excluding, tormenting (hiding belongings, threatening
Physical	pushing, hitting, kicking, punching, any use of violence
Racist	racial taunts, racial graffiti, gestures
Sexual	sexually abusive comments, unwanted physical contact
Homophobic	focusing on the issue of sexuality or sexual orientation
Verbal	sarcasm, name-calling, spreading rumours, teasing

Cyber	all areas of the internet (email, social websites and internet chat room misuse), mobile phone threats via text messages and calls, misuse of camera/video on mobile phone
Religious	dismissive or deliberately antagonistic comments or actions against any religion
Cultural	name calling, taunting, teasing against a person's upbringing and beliefs
Special Educational Needs/Disability	name calling, taunting, teasing about a physical or mental disability

The widespread use of technology has provided a different form of bullying. According to the NSPCC, cyberbullying is a form of bullying behaviour that happens on social networks and mobile phones, taking the form of spreading rumours about a person or posting/sending messages, images or videos intended to humiliate a person. It is easy to be anonymous online, which may increase the likelihood of engaging in online bullying. Cyberbullying is particularly damaging because it can happen anytime, anywhere, and potentially reach a wider audience, as people are easily able to share and forward content.

It includes:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

With students having ready access to mobile phones and the internet, it is important that they are aware of what can happen and the wider implications of being involved in cyberbullying. This means teaching them to engage with social media in a conscious and responsible way. There is a lot of e-safety information at www.thinkuknow.co.uk, which gives advice about staying safe online. Students at the College also sign an IT agreement, which gives details of acceptable and unacceptable use of ICT.

We raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through PHSEE, regular Form/Personal Tutor interviews, class discussions and form times to help minimize such behaviour. We try to maintain an atmosphere where students can feel at ease and confident enough to speak about their problems with someone they trust.

Bullied students may suffer psychologically. Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour. All staff, whether teaching or ancillary, must be aware of the signs of bullying and be aware of patterns emerging. They should act promptly against it in accordance with this policy. The signs of bullying are given in the appendix at the end of this policy. Parents/Guardians and students should also know the College policy on bullying and what to do if bullying takes place.

Any person who has reasonable cause to suspect a student of being racially harassed or bullied in any form MUST report the incident IMMEDIATELY to one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads Maeva Elliott or Kelly Flatman. The aim is to bring the bullying to an end as quickly as possible.

All acts of bullying will be investigated by a DSL initially and an overall decision made by the Principal in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy.

Following advice directly from the local authority, where there are concerns about where a particular case of bullying may be a safeguarding issue advice should be sought from Specialist Children's Services (Kent)/Children's Social Care Services (Medway).

A bullying incident will be addressed as a Safeguarding concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the DSL will report their concerns to Kent/Medway Children's Services. If a criminal offence is thought to have occurred the College will inform the Police. Cases of serious bullying that are subsequently referred to Police or Children's Services will also be recorded as a safeguarding incident.

If the bullying involves a physical assault, as well as seeking medical attention where necessary, consideration should be given to whether there are any child protection issues to consider and whether there should be a referral to the Police where a criminal offence may have been committed. Where bullying involves an allegation of crime e.g. assault, theft, and harassment this should be reported to the Police at the earliest opportunity.

Those students concerned will be interviewed by one of the Principals; the incident will be recorded and placed in the students' files. It may be necessary to take into consideration previous bullying incidents.

Form/Personal Tutors will be kept informed and if the bullying persists, they will advise the subject tutors.

The bully's and victim's parents/guardians will be kept informed and if necessary, the Principals may ask to see them to discuss matters.

Areas where bullying could occur

- mainly areas which do not have a member of staff present, for example:
- gardens
- corridors
- walking from room to room
- walking from building to building
- sports pitch
- minibuses – on them and waiting for them, for home or sport
- common rooms – day and boarding
- toilets

Rochester Independent College is mindful of the fact that head teachers in the state sector have a specific statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives head teachers the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

While this legislation does not specifically apply to independent schools, Rochester Independent College will consider carefully whether reported instances of bullying outside school should be acted upon by college staff or passed on to parents to deal with. The Principal should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the Police or Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator in their Local Authority of the action taken against a student. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

All reported incidents will be taken seriously. Students and parents/guardians will be supported if they report bullying is taking place.

Students who have been bullied will be supported by:

- offering the immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their Form/Personal Tutor or a member of staff of their choice
- reassuring the student
- offering continued support
- restoring confidence and self-esteem

Students who have bullied will be helped by:

- discussing what happened
- discovering why the student became involved
- establishing the wrong doing and the need to change their behaviour and attitude
- making them aware of the effect of their behaviour upon others
- informing parents/guardians to help change the attitude of the student
- the bully will be asked to offer a genuine apology, verbally or in writing

The following disciplinary steps can be taken:

- official warnings to stop offending
- detention
- minor fixed-term exclusion
- major fixed-term exclusion
- permanent exclusion

Staff involved will work towards both the bully and victim finding a way forward. After the incident has been dealt with, monitoring will continue to ensure that there is no reoccurrence. This will be done through Form/Personal Tutor interviews and meetings to check that the situation is better than previously.

During College hours

There will always be a trained member of staff available for students to confide in if they are being bullied, or know of another student who is a victim of bullying or racial remarks. Normally this will be a DSL. However other members of staff will also be available should the student prefer to talk to him/her. If a boarding student wishes to speak to somebody not related to the College they can contact the Independent Listener, or other outside contact, whose numbers can be found in the Boarding Student Handbook, as well as in the Staff Handbook and on the College website.

Outside College hours

Any one of the helpline numbers in the Handbooks (also on the College website) can be contacted. Lists are also displayed on College notice boards and in boarders' rooms.

Training

All staff are issued with the Staff Handbook including our Anti Bullying and Safeguarding Policies and also receive basic Safeguarding training as part of their induction when they start working at RIC.

Our ongoing professional development includes key staff attending relevant INSET meetings as and when they deem necessary. Staff are strongly recommended to follow the DfE Guidance 2014 Preventing and Tackling Bullying on the DfE website www.gov.uk.

When they join RIC, all staff undergo basic Safeguarding training which includes covering bullying.

Other contacts

Bullying Online www.bullying.co.uk and www.ceop.police.uk/reportabuse
Youth Access 0208 772 9900
Children's Legal Centre 0845 345 4345
Kidscape Parent's Helpline 0845 1 205204
Stonewall –Tackling Homophobic Bullying 0207 593 1850
Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 0808 800 5793

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Everyone should be aware of the signs and symptoms as given by Kidscape and report if a student:

- is scared of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go to school on the bus
- begs to be driven to school
- makes a change to their usual routine
- does not want to go to school (school phobic)
- starts to play truant
- becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacks self-confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- has nightmares or cries themselves to sleep
- feels ill or sick in the morning
- starts to underperform at school
- comes home with torn clothes or belongings
- has damaged belongings or things go missing
- starts stealing money or asks for money (to pay the bully)
- 'loses' dinner money
- has unexplained cuts and bruises
- comes home starving because dinner money has been taken
- becomes aggressive or unreasonable
- bullies others in turn
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong
- offers unlikely excuses for the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is agitated when a text message is received

The above signs and symptoms may or may not be because of bullying but bullying should be a consideration.

This Policy has been written with regard to DfE guidelines.

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