



ST MARY'S SCHOOL HAMPSTEAD

Anti-Bullying POLICY

September 2024

Reviewed September 2024
Next Review Date: September 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

St Mary's School seeks to provide an outstanding education firmly founded on the Catholic Faith.

Spiritual and moral principles are nurtured in a way that is reflected in daily life.

Within a happy and caring environment and based on the recognition of the dignity and worth of each child, where each child is valued and high standards are expected. Intellectual development is emphasised and fostered along with the pursuit of academic excellence to achieve individual potential and spiritual development.

St Mary's values the unique contribution of every child within the school community.

St Mary's is inclusive and welcomes girls from all communities and faith backgrounds, or none, and believes that all benefit from the school's values.

St Mary's aims to encourage an active partnership between home, school, parish and the wider community.

BACKGROUND

It is a Government requirement that all schools have an anti-bullying policy. In 2003 Ofsted published *Bullying: effective action in secondary schools*. This was followed by DfES guidance for schools under two headings: *Don't Suffer in Silence* and *Bullying – A Charter for Action*. Following this the DCSF published a document entitled *“Safe to Learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in Schools.”* Recently the DfE guidance *“Preventing and tackling Bullying – Advice for school leaders, Staff and Governors,”* has been published. St Mary's school community has regard to all of the above guidance.

DfE guidance defines bullying as actions that are meant to be hurtful, and which happen on a regular basis. Bullying can be direct (either physical or verbal) or indirect (for example, being ignored or not spoken to). Cyber bullying may also take place through social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and emails. Bullying can take many forms and may occur due to a person's race, religion, culture, sex, sexual preferences, special educational needs and/or disability.

Bullying can take place among children, staff and parents.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At St Mary's School, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop her full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other inside and outside the School.

St Mary's School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/ guardians have an important role in supporting St Mary's School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential there are consistent expectations of behaviour both at school, online and at home and that the School and parents co-operate closely together.

This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website and on request. It is also communicated to all staff and pupils.

Bullying, cyber-bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination of pupils and staff will not be tolerated by the School. We treat all of our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to respect the staff, the school and each other, in return. All forms of bullying are unacceptable at our school (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) and any instances of bullying will be recorded and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Schools Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

This policy applies to all pupils in the school including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage/Nursery and applies to actions undertaken both inside, and outside of the School.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, which intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Put another way, bullying is the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person. It may take many forms, including physical (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind), sexual (including sharing of nudes/semi nudes), verbal (including cyber-bullying via text messages, email, social media, gaming or other instant messages), and can include the use of images and video), and/or emotional (including by excluding, being sarcastic, name-calling, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours)

means. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, or actions that fall short of direct participation, where someone encourages others to bully, or joins in with laughing at a victim. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidating, and often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s) whether that be a physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone) or intellectual imbalance, or by the perpetrator(s) having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate the victim(s).

Bullying can sometimes amount to child-on-child abuse, which is defined as abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil. It can be standalone or as part of wider abuse and can happen both inside and outside of school, and online. Further information about child-on-child abuse, including the procedures to follow when an incident on child-on-child abuse is reported can be found in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, and may involve actions or comments regarding a person's race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, special education needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions, or because of a child's familial circumstances, such as they are adopted or in care or they have caring responsibilities.). Bullying can be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. For example, bullying can still be homophobic if directed towards a child that is perceived to be gay, whether or not this is the case.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - pupils, other young people, staff and parents.

Where an incident of bullying causes or is likely to cause significant harm to a pupil, the School will follow the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO BULLYING

At St Mary's, we always treat bullying very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the School's social and moral principles, and potentially with its policy on equal opportunities for pupils, and will not be tolerated. When incidents of bullying do occur, they are dealt with quickly and taken seriously. The School will never dismiss or downplay bullying as banter or horseplay, and all reported incidents of bullying will be dealt with by staff in accordance with this policy. Staff will reassure any victim(s) that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

The School understands that bullying can be so serious that it may cause physical, emotional and psychological damage, such as eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide. Stopping violence and ensuring the immediate physical safety of pupils is the School's first priority; however, the School acknowledges that emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical bullying, and therefore staff will use their discretion when dealing with an incident of bullying within the parameters of this policy and the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. Whilst bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment, sexual violence and assault, sexting, the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes (in certain circumstances), upskirting and to violent and threatening behaviour. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying: everybody has the right to be treated with respect.

The School recognises that children with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges and may be more prone to child on child group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children. The School also recognises that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.

Pupils who are victims of bullying will always be supported and will be reassured that they will be kept safe. Pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanction and will

also, where possible, be supported in learning different ways of behaving and offered support for their own circumstances, where appropriate.

Bullying which occurs on school trips, online, or outside of the School's premises will not be tolerated any more than bullying on school premises. Teachers will, where appropriate, discipline pupils for misbehaviour online outside school premises and outside school hours.

SIGNS OF BULLYING

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

- Unwillingness to return to school;
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags, money and other belongings suddenly go "missing", or are damaged;
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Medical Room with symptoms which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance or late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares; or
- Talking of suicide or running away from home or school.

Although there may be other causes of some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers and reported/ recorded as appropriate, in accordance with this policy.

BULLYING - PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

The School's response to bullying does not start at the point at which a pupil has been bullied. We take the following preventative measures in order to create an environment that prevents bullying from becoming a problem at the St Mary's in the first place:

Pupils

- The School promotes an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat each other with respect at all times, inside and outside of School;
- All new pupils including those in the EYFS are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. We guarantee that those who report bullying in good faith will not be punished, will be taken seriously and will be supported and kept safe;
- We use appropriate assemblies to explain the School's policy on bullying (including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying). Our PSHCEE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the School. The programme is structured to enforce messages about community involvement and taking care of each other. It focuses on the importance of equality and diversity and pupils are encouraged to avoid prejudicial and exclusionary language;

- Other lessons highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by developing social skills and by teaching moral and spiritual values that show all bullying to be unacceptable;
- All of our pupils are encouraged to tell any member of staff at once if they are being bullied, or if they know or suspect that bullying is taking place. They are reassured that they will be taken seriously and will be supported and kept safe; All pupils have access to a telephone helpline, enabling them to call for support in private. This helpline is called Childline and is contactable on 08001111
- The School does not tolerate peer-group "initiation ceremonies" or hazing type violence or rituals designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation to pupils, and all staff remain alert to such actions.

Staff

- Upon induction, all new members of staff are given training and guidance on the School's anti-bullying policy and on how to react to, and record allegations of bullying at the School, including cyber-bullying. The School will ensure that all School staff understand the principles of the School's policy, the School's legal responsibilities, actions to be taken to resolve and prevent incidents of bullying from arising or escalating and also details of sources of further support;
- The School recognises that certain children may be more at risk of bullying than others, and may require additional support when dealing with an incident of bullying, for example children with SEND and/or certain health conditions, and LGBTQ+ pupils. The School will ensure that staff receive appropriate training to be able to understand the specific needs of our pupils, and to enable all staff to provide an inclusive environment for all pupils;
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Records of any incidents are kept securely in the office of the Deputy Head in order that patterns of behaviour can be identified and monitored;
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form teachers who support the Deputy Head and are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and who are alert to possible signs of bullying and will know when to apply our Child Protection and Safeguarding policy to bullying incidents;
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies. INSET sessions are held regularly, including using outside experts where appropriate;
- The School Chaplain will give support and guidance to pupils of all faiths who are able to refer themselves to him whenever they wish (for example at a time of family break-up, sickness or bereavement). The Chaplain will provide confidential advice and seek to encourage the development of tolerance, understanding and respect for others in a multi-faith community;
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the School site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour at all times;
- The School has the right, and duty, to investigate incidents of bullying involving our pupils which take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips, online, or that otherwise occur outside of School. The School has the right to take disciplinary measures in respect of such incidents. Disciplinary measures will be taken in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy and will be applied in a fair, consistent and reasonable manner, taking into account the needs of SEND and vulnerable pupils; and
- Staff will always consider the motive behind bullying behaviour and whether it raises any concerns for the welfare of the perpetrator (s). If staff reasonably suspect that a pupil may be suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, they should follow the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and discuss their concerns with the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) without delay.

Parents

- This policy is readily available on the School's website or on request from the School office so that they are clear on the School's approach to bullying and what to do if their child experiences bullying;
- We encourage close contact between the form teacher and parents/ guardians, and will always make contact if we are worried about a pupil's well-being;
- If parents know or suspect that their child, or another pupil, is being bullied, they should contact the School without delay. All concerns will be taken seriously; and We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures and all other aspects and implementation of this anti-bullying policy.

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

The Governing Body supports the Headmistress in all attempts to eliminate bullying from our school. The Governing Body will not condone any form of bullying at St Mary's School. Any incidents of bullying that do occur will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

The Governing Body, through the Education and Staffing Sub Committee, monitors incidents of bullying that do occur and reviews the effectiveness of this policy annually. The Governing Body requires the Headmistress to keep accurate records of all incidents of bullying and to report to the governors, on request, the effectiveness of school anti-bullying strategies.

A parent who is dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with an alleged incident of bullying may request that the Governing Body, through the Chair of Governors look into the matter. In all cases the Governing Body notifies the Headmistress, requests she conducts an investigation into the case and reports back to a named representative of the Governing Body. The Governing Body, through the Chair of Governors, reports back to the parent as soon as is possible.

THE ROLE OF THE HEADMISTRESS

It is the responsibility of the Headmistress to implement the School anti-bullying strategy and to ensure that all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) are aware of the School policy and know how to identify and deal with incidents of bullying. The Headmistress reports to the Education & Staffing Committee about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy on request.

The Headmistress ensures that all children know that bullying is wrong and that it is unacceptable behaviour at St Mary's School. The Headmistress draws the attention of children to this fact at appropriate times. For example, should an incident occur, the Headmistress may decide to use an assembly as the forum in which to discuss with other children why this behaviour was wrong, and what the consequences might be for the child who has been bullying. Other educational elements such as projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events and current affairs may be used to address bullying and related issues.

The Headmistress ensures that all staff undertake sufficient training to equip them to identify and deal appropriately with all incidents of bullying.

The Headmistress sets the school climate of mutual support and praise for success, so making bullying less likely. When children feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviour.

Headteachers 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 Headteachers 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.

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Headmistress will, in consultation with the Governing Body, consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF

All staff at St Mary's School take all forms of bullying seriously and seek to prevent it from taking place.

Teachers keep their own records of all incidents of bullying that happen in their class and the action taken by them to deal with it effectively. Should teachers witness an act of bullying, they may investigate it appropriately or refer it directly to the Headmistress. Teachers and support staff do all they can to support the child who is being bullied. If a child is being bullied over a period of time, then, after consultation with the Headmistress, the teacher informs the child's parents.

There is an Anti-bullying Logbook in which staff record all incidents of bullying that occur both in and out of class. This allows patterns of bullying to be identified. Any adult who witnesses an act of bullying is required to record it in the logbook. The Logbook is monitored by the Headmistress.

When any bullying is taking place between members of a class, the teacher will deal with the issue immediately. This may involve counselling and support for the victim of the bullying, and punishment for the child who has carried out the bullying. Time is spent talking to the child who has bullied: explaining why her action was wrong, and that child is encouraged to change her behaviour in future. If a child is repeatedly involved in bullying other children, the Headmistress is informed. The child's parents may be invited into the school to discuss the situation. Persistent offenders or those involved in perpetrating severe bullying may be excluded from activities, excluded from school for a fixed period or asked to leave the school permanently. At all times the procedures and sanctions laid out in the school's Behaviour and Discipline Policy are taken into consideration to ensure that all involved receive clear and consistent messages about the high expectations of behaviour at St Mary's School.

All members of staff routinely attend training, which equips them to identify bullying and to follow school policy and procedures with regard to behaviour management. Records of this training are kept by the Deputy Head and Early Years Leader.

Teachers use a range of methods to help prevent bullying and to establish a climate of trust and respect for all. They use drama, role-play, stories, assemblies, projects, reference to historical events and current affairs etc., within the formal curriculum, to help pupils understand the feelings of bullied children, and to practise the restraint required to avoid lapsing into bullying behaviour. Circle time is used to praise, reward and celebrate the success of all children, and thus to help create a positive atmosphere. The PSHCEE curriculum contains a topic aimed at raising awareness of bullying issues and providing children with strategies for dealing with all forms of bullying. This is taught annually. The school aims for this topic to coincide with National Anti-Bullying week.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents who are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact their child's class teacher immediately. If they are not satisfied with the response, they should contact the Headmistress. If they remain dissatisfied, they should follow the school's Complaints Procedure.

Parents have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school. Parents, and children, are reminded of their responsibility to inform the school when they find themselves as bystanders.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING

St Mary's School ensures that all instances of or concerns about bullying and cyber-bullying, both on and away from School premises are easy to report and that they are recorded properly. Records of instances of bullying and allegations of bullying will be kept in the Deputy Head's files, and also on pupil files. Where appropriate this will also be maintained within the school MIS. Records will also be kept on files relating to safeguarding where appropriate, in order to enable the school to identify patterns of behaviour and to evaluate the effectiveness of our anti-bullying policy.

The School recognises that pupils are likely to report bullying to someone they trust: this could be any member of staff. The School also recognises that children may not find it easy to tell staff about bullying verbally and that instead they may show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to. It is also recognised that an incident may come to a member of staff's attention through a report of a friend, or by overhearing conversations. All staff will be trained in handling an allegation, and will be aware that they must listen to the pupil, not ask leading questions and make a written record of the allegation to the best of their ability.

The School also recognises that a first disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported. It is not necessarily representative of a singular incident. Staff will take all reports seriously regardless of how long it has taken for the child to come forward. Staff will act immediately and will support the victim(s) when they raise a concern.

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The member of staff to whom the incident was reported, or who first discovers the situation (the case handler), will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved, without promising absolute confidentiality;
- The case handler will inform an appropriate member of the School's pastoral team about the bullying allegation as soon as possible. This will normally be the Deputy Head or Headmistress when being escalated;
- Where an issue of pupil behaviour or bullying gives 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm', staff should follow the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy rather than the procedure set out below.
- The victim (s) and the alleged perpetrator(s) will each be interviewed individually by the case handler on their own (or, if appropriate, with a suitable person present for support) and asked to write their account of events;
- Where the case handler considers that the reported bullying behaviour may be criminal, or considers that there may be a risk of harm to someone, the Case Handler will discuss this with the Headmistress, and will report the matter to the Police without delay if considered necessary. The School will then follow the procedures set out in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy as well as any guidance from the Police;
- The incident should be recorded on a school incident form and signed and dated by the case handler. It should then be given to the Deputy Head who is responsible for securely storing all records of bullying and

other serious disciplinary offences, securely in a locked cabinet in her office. If it is not practicable to use the form, the incident must still be written down, signed and dated, and held securely by the Deputy Head;

- The Deputy Head will inform the Form Teacher, of both the alleged perpetrator(s) and the victim(s) as soon as possible. In very serious incidents, the Headmistress should be informed;
- The victim(s) will be interviewed again at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the alleged perpetrator. She will be offered support to develop a strategy to help herself. It will be made clear to her why revenge or retaliation is inappropriate;
- The perpetrator(s) will be interviewed again at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim(s), and it will be made clear why her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. They will be offered guidance on modifying her behaviour. The school's Behaviour and Discipline Policy may also be invoked. Sanctions under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy might include, for example, withdrawal of privileges or suspension from school. The school may exclude a pupil, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe or persistent bullying or in the event that the support put in place for the perpetrator(s) does not result in the modification of behaviour to an acceptable level.
- The parents/ guardians of all parties will be informed and may be invited into school to discuss the matter and the appropriate sanctions under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. The parents' support will be sought in respect of preventative measures, and any concerns of either party will be addressed;
- A way forward, including where appropriate disciplinary sanctions and support for the perpetrator(s), should be determined, and where possible agreed with all parties. This should recognise that suitable support may be needed both for pupils who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with disciplinary measures in accordance with the school's Behaviour and discipline Policy if appropriate;
- As part of this process, a meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, may be convened to help develop a strategy which enables all concerned to close the episode;
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place and put on record;
- In very serious cases, and only after the Headmistress has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police, the DSL or to Social Services. However, in many cases it will be possible to resolve such issues internally under this policy and the school's Behaviour and Discipline Policy.

CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying can be defined as "*the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others*" (Belsey, <http://www.cyber-bullying.org/>). It is an aggressive, intentional act often carried out repeatedly (but can be a one-off instance) over time, and often against a victim who cannot easily defend herself. The School acknowledges that cyber-bullying may take place inside School, outside of School and at any time of the day.

Cyber-bullying could involve communications by various electronic media, including for example:

- Texts, instant messages or calls on mobile phones;
- The use of mobile phone camera images to cause distress, fear or humiliation;
- Posting threatening, abusive, sexual, discriminatory, offensive or humiliating material or comments on websites (including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube);
- Using e-mail to message others in a threatening or abusive manner; or
- Hijacking/ cloning e-mail accounts.

The School acknowledges that cyber-bullying may take many different forms including: cyber-stalking, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised publication of private information or images, encouraging derogative comments on online platforms, sharing nudes/semi-nudes upskirting and sexting.

The School has a role to play in teaching pupils about the underpinning knowledge and behaviours that can help them to navigate the online world safely and confidently regardless of the device, platform or app. In taking this forward, the School has regard to the DfE's non-statutory guidance on *Teaching online safety in school* (updated June 2019).

Prevention of cyber-bullying

For the prevention of cyber-bullying, in addition to the measures described above, the School:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its Pupils use of ICT. Mobile phones and other electronic devices (E safety). Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use;
- May impose disciplinary sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse, of the internet Behaviour and Discipline Policy.
- Issues all pupils with their own personal School email address. Access to all social media sites and personal email sites such as "Hotmail" is not allowed from School computers/ tablets inside the School;
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber-bullying in PSHCEE lessons, which covers blocking, removing contacts from "friend" lists and sharing their personal data;
- Ensures its pupils are aware of the various forms in which cyber-bullying can take place, that it can have severe and distressing consequences, and that participation in cyber-bullying will not be tolerated;
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details private and secure;
- Does not allow the use of mobile phones in classrooms, public areas of the School, or where they may cause annoyance, humiliation or distress to others; and
- Does not allow the use of cameras/ mobile phone cameras in toilets, washing and changing areas

Procedures for dealing with cyber-bullying

The School will follow the procedures set out in this policy and in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy where relevant for incidents of cyber-bullying, taking such disciplinary action that is considered reasonable in the circumstances, with a view to regulating pupil conduct and protecting the reputation of the School, and the welfare of its pupils.

Although cyber-bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are however criminal laws that may apply to communications of a harassing or threatening manner or the unauthorised publication of private images, upskirting, sharing nudes/semi nudes, and sexting. Where the School considers that a reported incident of cyber-bullying may amount to a criminal offence, it will inform the Police.

The School's procedure for dealing with incidents involving the sharing of nudes or semi-nudes is set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

If staff are notified or become aware of an incident of nudes or semi-nudes being shared by a pupil or of a pupil, they will refer the incident to the DSL as soon as possible. The DSL will follow the DDMSC / UKIS guidance " Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people " (February 2024) when responding to a report of sharing nudes and/or semi-nudes. In some circumstances the DSL may make an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care.

Electronic devices

In response to an allegation of cyber-bullying (in any form), certain staff are permitted to conduct a search for electronic devices, such as a pupil's mobile phone, with the authority of the Head. Staff do not require the consent of the pupil, or their parents to undertake a search, provided they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item, or an item that has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to any person (including the pupil being searched), or cause damage to property, and provided they have the Head's prior consent to undertake a search.

The search will be conducted in accordance with the procedure set out in the Behaviour and discipline Policy.

Where a search finds an electronic device that is prohibited by the School rules, or where the member of staff undertaking the search reasonably suspects that the electronic device has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or cause personal injury or damage to property, the School may examine any data or files on the device, where there is good reason to do so, for example, where there has been an allegation of cyber-bullying. Parental consent to search through electronic devices is not required but they will be informed after the event unless doing so presents a further risk to any child.

The School may also erase any data or files from the device if the School considers there to be good reason to do so, unless there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the device may contain evidence in relation to a criminal offence, where the files should not be deleted and the device must be given to the Police without delay.

If, following a search, the member of staff determines that the device does not contain any evidence in relation to a criminal offence, or are advised by the Police following a report to them that they will not take any further action to investigate an alleged offence, the School can decide whether it is appropriate to delete any files or data from the device, and may retain the device as evidence of a breach of this policy and the Behaviour and discipline Policy. The School may then take steps to punish the student in accordance with the Behaviour and discipline Policy, where appropriate. In the event that the search highlights a safeguarding concern in respect of any pupil, the School will follow the procedures set out in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The School will keep a record of all searches carried out, including the results of any search, and the actions taken following that search.

EYFS CHILDREN

Even the youngest children at St Mary's School are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration. They are encouraged to learn to look after their own possessions and to respect others' possessions. We expect them to be honest, helpful and polite, and to work hard and to listen to others. They should respect everyone and learn to value differences and diversity. The Head of EYFS, is in charge of the management of behaviour in the EYFS Department.

We explain to children why some forms of behaviour are unacceptable and hurtful to others. We rarely need to impose sanctions in the EYFS Department; but sometimes we may remove a treat for hurtful behaviour. Occasionally, a child may be sent to see the Head of EYFS, who will explain the inappropriateness of a particular action; but such instances are rare.

Parents are always informed when any sanction or reproof is needed, and in cases of repeated instances of hurtful or inappropriate behaviour, parents will be invited into the school to discuss the situation with their child's teacher to agree a joint way of handling the difficulty.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that any concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly. Parents of EYFS children should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted, if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled (The Complaints Procedure explains how to complain to Ofsted).

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the Headmistress, who reports to Governors in the Education and Staffing Committee on request, about the effectiveness of the policy.

The School will record all incidents of reported bullying in accordance with this policy.

The Deputy Head, Headmistress or a designated member of SMT will review all incidents of reported bullying to help identify patterns of behaviour, so that the School can take appropriate steps to address bullying behaviours within the School. Records of bullying incidents will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the School's anti-bullying procedures, and to highlight any necessary amendments.

This anti-bullying policy is the Governors' responsibility, and they review its effectiveness on a regular basis. They do this by examining the School's anti-bullying logbook, where incidents of bullying are recorded, and by discussion with the Headmistress. Governors analyse information for patterns of people, places or groups. They look out in particular for racist bullying, religious bullying, cultural bullying, sexual/sexist bullying, homophobic bullying, cyber bullying or bullying directed at children with disabilities or special educational needs.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Head and Governors. It should be read in conjunction with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy.