



Anti-Bullying Policy

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Introduction: Statement of Intent

At Queen's Gate we have high personal and social standards for all of our pupils. We believe that school should be a positive and safe environment for every member of our community and for this reason we do not tolerate bullying or bullying type behaviour.

The safety and welfare of pupils is our highest priority, as we believe that children who are unwell or unhappy will be less able to make progress and thrive fully. Bullying, friendship issues and relational aggression are openly discussed in Form Times, assembly and PSHE, so that pupils are able to reflect on their own behaviour and recognise and report bullying behaviour in others.

This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, DFE guidance, Preventing and Tackling Bullying Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies 2017, and Queen's Gate School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Contents

This policy is structured into the following sections:

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Defining Bullying

Queen's Gate defines bullying as deliberately hurtful behaviour. This term will usually be reserved to refer to behaviour that is repeated over a period of time but does not need to be repeated over time for schools to take action. It happens when an individual (or a group) deliberately and persistently threatens, intimidates, abuses or hurt someone else. It is behaviour that a reasonable bystander would say was calculated or intended to hurt or upset the victim. A single, isolated incident of deliberate unkind behaviour may also be defined as bullying, be it emotional and/or physical.

Excluding an individual from activities, events, or social media could be considered bullying, especially in cases where pupils deliberately and maliciously conspire to isolate a victim, or where an objective bystander would perceive the actions as intentional and harmful. However, students have the right to choose their friends and should feel empowered to make considered decisions about their interactions with others, as long as there is no underlying malicious intent. Pupils are taught in PSHE about the importance of personal boundaries, and because of this, if a pupil is not invited to an event, or is blocked or removed by pupils on social media apps, it may not necessarily be defined as bullying.

Defining 'bullying type behaviour'

There may be occasions where behaviour occurs that, while not necessarily deliberate, is careless and the outcome (harm to another pupil) could reasonably have been predicted by the perpetrators. On such occasions, Queen's Gate reserves the right to manage such behaviour under this policy.

Recording of Incidents of Bullying

Queen's Gate records all incidents of bullying. Some behaviour which does not meet the threshold but may be considered to have some element of relational aggression, or where harm has occurred, may be recorded as 'bullying type behaviour'. Where a pupil

has been involved, as the aggressor, in a number of incidents of 'bullying type behaviour', such behaviour may also be managed under this policy. Pupils and parents are usually informed if an incident is recorded.

Specific Categories of Bullying

Psychological bullying is when a victim is taunted and called hurtful names. Often the person who engages in this form of behaviour does not consider it to be bullying, but they consider it to be 'banter' or 'a joke'. If the victim does not find teasing or taunting funny, then it is not. This category can also include the deliberate exclusion of a pupil, spreading of rumours regarding a pupil, or persistent negative discussion of a pupil behind her back.

Physical bullying refers to a pupil being physically assaulted, but it can also include damage done to the victim's property, clothing or schoolwork.

Homophobic bullying involves the targeting of individuals on the basis of their perceived or actual sexuality or sexual orientation. Homophobic bullying can also include name-calling, such as the use of the word "gay" as an insult, gestures, taunts, or 'jokes'. Individuals are commonly singled out for abuse if they do not conform to a stereotypical masculine or feminine gender image.

Examples of *sexual harassment or bullying by gender* include name calling, use of sexual innuendo and unwanted propositioning and commenting on appearance and attractiveness.

Racist bullying is where the bullying behaviour is focused on the target's race, ethnicity or culture. It can include being called racist names or being sent insulting messages or threats; having belongings damaged or being forced to see racist graffiti; personal attacks, include violence or assault; being left out, treated differently, or excluded; assumptions being made based on someone's culture, race or skin colour; being made to feel that one's appearance needs to change; and, jokes about nationality, culture or colour.

Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. Specific features of cyberbullying include:

- the invasion of home and personal space, particularly out of school hours;
- the difficulty in controlling the reach of messages circulated electronically;
- the potential size of audience;
- often the perceived anonymity of the perpetrator.

Forms of cyberbullying include:

- threats and intimidation;
- harassment or 'cyber-stalking' (the repeated sending of unwanted messages or other forms of online attention);
- vilification/defamation;
- exclusion or rejection;
- impersonation; setting up of fake profiles, sometimes known as 'catfishing'
- Grooming (enticing or goading into unwanted or illegal actions);
- unauthorised publication of private information or images;
- sexting (the sharing of indecent images);
- Manipulation

For the purposes of this policy, and for how cases of bullying are handled, the term *perpetrator* will be used to refer to the pupil carrying out the bullying behaviour, and the term *target* will be used to refer to the pupil against whom the behaviour occurs.

Understanding why bullying occurs

The reasons why a pupil chooses to engage in bullying behaviour can be wide-ranging and highly complex. As such, it is not possible nor helpful to see bullying as a straightforward disciplinary issue. Frequently the pupil will have significant unmet pastoral needs, and without addressing these, the pupil has a reduced chance of improving/altering her behaviour, and the problems are therefore likely to reoccur. It is also important to state that these unmet pastoral needs may have safeguarding implications, and how a case of bullying is investigated and managed should have due regard to the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

It is often the case that a pupil demonstrating bullying behaviour will be experiencing some kind of social difficulty or insecurity. As a result:

- she may bully as she believes this will gain her the respect of her peers;
- she may bully as a way of gaining a sense of dominance over pupils she perceives as being weaker, in order to address her own sense of inferiority;
- she seeks to deflect her feelings of low self-esteem by behaviour seeking to reduce the self-esteem of others;
- she becomes jealous of those she perceives as having the social standing and sense of security she craves, and therefore targets them out of spite;
- The bullying type behaviour is a learned behaviour from elsewhere, and could be indicative of wider safeguarding concerns.

It can also be the case that the pupil carrying out the bullying behaviour has herself been bullied, either in school or in her home life, and this kind of behaviour has become normalised to her.

The causes of bullying should not be considered to include the target having deserved or provoked the behaviour. Being the target of bullying behaviour does not infer any weakness or inferiority of character.

The Prevention of Bullying

The School actively promotes an atmosphere of kindness, understanding, tolerance and respect, in which bullying is seen as highly abnormal behaviour, and is therefore less able to take root or become widespread. Issues related to bullying and its causes are addressed in Form Times, assemblies and the PSHE curriculum. Pupils receive regular reminders of our behaviour expectations. Resilience and self-esteem are regular themes for pastoral discussions in assemblies and Form Times, which emphasise everyone's right to be happy and feel safe, and foster pupils' ability to take action and stand up against bullying. This work also includes considering the role of bystanders, and how it is important that pupils speak to a member of staff if they fear someone is being bullied.

It is recognised that low-level friendship issues can be a precursor to bullying behaviour, and have a similarly negative impact on pupils' self-esteem. Where friendship issues are identified, Form Tutors, Class Teachers in the Junior School, Head of Years and the Director/Assistant Director of Pastoral Care will proactively work to facilitate mediation. If necessary/appropriate, Forms or year groups will be given reminders of school expectations regarding their behaviour towards each other, with reference to this policy and other policies - such as the Acceptable Use Policy - if relevant.

Awareness and understanding of cyberbullying is raised through discussion in PSHE lessons, pastoral evenings for parents and assemblies and through the ICT Acceptable Use Policy. The School's clear policy regarding mobile phone use during the School day further hinders the capacity for cyberbullying inside school.

The School's wide range of well-known channels through which bullying behaviour can be reported serves as a deterrent, as pupils are aware their conduct is less likely to go undetected. Similarly, our small class sizes, and our duty system for breaks and lunchtimes, mean staff are well-placed to observe any signs of bullying, which acts as a further deterrent.

The School's co-curricular timetable means that pupils are often busy doing supervised activities during lunch times. Such activities stand as a further barrier for a perpetrator

to undertake bullying or bullying type behaviour. They also give those girls who might be susceptible to perpetrating bullying behaviour an important sense of belonging and purpose.

As a final deterrent, the School makes pupils aware of the range of sanctions that may be used for bullying behaviour.

Detecting and/or identifying cases of bullying

The School receives reports of bullying through a wide range of channels, which are regularly publicised to pupils and parents.

First and foremost, the School ensures that each individual pupil is aware that they can approach any of the following in order to share concerns or worries:

- Form Tutor or Class Teacher
- One of the Safeguarding Leads or Deputy Safeguarding Leads
- Prefect/Peer Mentor or any other older pupil
- School Counsellor
- The anonymous pupil voice form or listening@queensgate.org.uk email.
- Any member of staff with whom they feel safe
- Principal

This list is visible on the 'listening' posters in all Form Rooms and in other key rooms around the School. Pupils are regularly reminded that it is right to share any worries or concerns, so they feel empowered to speak out when they observe inappropriate behaviour.

Parents are able to contact any member of staff via email or by telephoning the Queen's Gate school office or emailing secretary@queensgate.org.uk. Parents can also email the Safeguarding Leads and Deputy Safeguarding Leads on safeguarding@queensgate.org.uk. Parents who contact the office will have their enquiry directed to the most appropriate member of staff. In cases of alleged bullying, this is most likely to be the Director of Pastoral Care or Assistant Director of Pastoral Care, or one of the Safeguarding Leads in the first instance.

Bullying behaviour can be detected through the observations of staff. Throughout the day, staff are alert to signs of unkindness (e.g. name-calling, exclusion) and any physical aggression. Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration, or truancy. All

staff will be aware of these possibilities and must promptly report any suspicions of bullying, or any causes for concern to the Principal, Head of Year, the Designated Safeguarding Leads or one of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads.

Procedures for investigating suspected or alleged bullying

If bullying is suspected or reported, the teacher should make a written record of the incident/allegation, which should then be passed in the first instance to the Principal or Head of Year. The Director of Pastoral Care or the Assistant Director of Pastoral Care should be notified. Staff should be mindful of acting on their suspicions or any report promptly. This is to ensure the perpetrator(s) does/do not have the opportunity to intimidate or otherwise coerce their target and/or other witnesses, nor conspire to devise a 'cover story'. Furthermore, staff should remain aware that bullying has safeguarding implications, under the definitions of 'child-on-child abuse' as detailed in the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. As such, all incidents/allegations will be addressed with the same level of care and attention as one would a safeguarding concern, including rigorous record-keeping.

Staff are trained on receiving disclosures and are made aware of the need to support pupils but to maintain an objective stance and not apportion blame until an investigation has been conducted. Staff should be wary of instant reactions, and be conscious as to whether they have only heard one side of the story. Staff should avoid using the terms “bullying” or “bullying type behaviour” to substantiate any allegations until they are proven to be true.

The Director of Pastoral Care, Assistant Director of Pastoral or one of the Safeguarding Leads will agree a strategy for investigation. This may involve delegating responsibilities to the Principal, Head of Year or Form Tutor. The investigation may be led by the Director of Pastoral Care, a Head of Year or another member of the Safeguarding team. The Principal will usually be consulted on bullying investigations, especially where it is suspected that the case may result in a significant suspension and/or expulsion. When possible, the Principal will be kept updated on the progress of current bullying investigations; if this is not possible the Vice Principal would be informed. The Safeguarding Governor will be notified, along with any other governors as deemed appropriate by the Principal.

The precise steps of the investigation will vary depending on the nature of the report, the severity of the allegations and the number of girls involved. The investigation may comprise a range of steps, including but not limited to:

- the girl(s) involved being asked to write individual written accounts of the incident or responses to the allegation;

- the girl(s) involved being interviewed individually or in small groups, with notes taken by a second member of staff;
- the review of any related evidence, such as screen shots, videos, CCTV footage;
- the review of any past records of concerns regarding the girls involved, in case there are previous incidents/observations that may be relevant.

At all stages, the staff leading the investigation will ensure all parties are given the opportunity to air their views. This may include giving girls the opportunity to come back and speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead confidentially if the first conversation involved other pupils. The staff leading the investigation will be highly mindful of protecting all individuals involved, so as to encourage open, honest testimony, and to lessen the chance of retaliation.

Depending on the nature of the case, the staff leading the investigation will decide whether to contact the parents of all or any of the girls involved.

If it is deemed necessary, the Principal may choose to suspend the alleged perpetrators while the investigation takes place.

At all stages, written records will be kept. At the end of the investigation, those who have led the investigation will report their findings to the Principal, verbally or in the form of a written summary, depending on the severity of the case.

At all times, staff leading the investigation will consider the needs of the pupils, in order to have a student-focused response. However, they will also be best placed to assess the wider implications of the allegations and to consider the next steps and its impact.

Possible outcomes and sanctions

The Principal and those who led the investigation will discuss the findings of their investigation, and agree on whether the allegation is:

- founded (proven);
- false (proven to be untrue);
- unfounded (insufficient evidence to prove or disprove);
- malicious.

Where a case is *false*, for example, where the report/allegation was mistaken, or *unfounded*, the records will be held on file, in case further incidents involving the same girl(s) occur which indicate further attention is warranted. In the immediate timeframe, no further action will be taken. Consideration will be given as to whether any information

should be shared with other pupils and/or parents so as to avoid the spreading of rumours and to ensure all participants can move on cleanly from the incident. It may also be the case that, while the allegations remain unfounded, other pupils should be deployed to protect and support the target. It can also be useful to discuss some aspects of the case with the wider staff body and the Sixth Form Prefects to increase surveillance of any possible bullying behaviour.

Where an allegation is found to be *malicious* consideration will be given as to whether those responsible for the report should face some sort of sanction. Consideration will also be given as to why the pupil(s) or other individual chose to make the allegation, and whether a pastoral intervention is required. Records will be kept on all aspects, and parents may be notified. Careful consideration will be given as to the potential impact among the year group and the wider school community, particularly in terms of the reputational damage to all those involved in the allegation. Pastoral interventions may be required to ensure their successful rehabilitation into the School community.

Where a case is *founded*, and it is proven that bullying behaviour has taken place, the Principal and those who led the investigation will discuss the possible range of sanctions. It is the case that sometimes the perpetrator has bullied through carelessness more than malicious intent. Where this can be soundly proven, their sanction may be adapted accordingly. In deciding what sanction should be applied, the Principal will be mindful of other relevant factors, which include but are not limited to:

- communicating a clear message that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated;
- any mitigating/personal factors relevant to the case and the pastoral needs of the perpetrator;
- how/whether the perpetrator can be rehabilitated into the School community;
- the precise nature of the bullying behaviour;
- the severity of the impact of the bullying on the target(s), including the frequency/duration of the behaviour;
- the perpetrator's past character and behaviour record at the School.

The available sanctions are listed below; these may be used individually or in combination. All proven cases of bullying, as well as those that are considered 'bullying type behaviour' will be recorded on the School's bullying log, which is kept in line with statutory requirements. In all cases the parents of all parties will be informed, unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. a safeguarding concern) which are agreed by the Principal.

Warning

Appropriate in lower level, and/or first offence cases of bullying, a firm verbal warning will be issued by a member of staff, most likely the Principal.

Mediation

Appropriate in lower-level cases of bullying, or particularly when there has been misunderstanding, a carefully facilitated conversation by a member of the Pastoral Team may be conducted between the pupils involved. This could also include other pupils within the Form/year group who are identified by the Pastoral Team as having the capacity to help ensure positive relations going forward. Mediation may involve the perpetrator apologising for their past behaviour, and could also include agreed ground rules/boundaries for ongoing interaction.

Restorative justice

The perpetrator is asked to undertake a task as penitence for their actions. This will most commonly involve writing a letter of apology to their target(s) and any other relevant parties, taking responsibility for their actions, acknowledging the impact on their target(s) and other members of the community, and giving a clear undertaking that it will not happen again.

Detention (after-school or extended after-school)

The perpetrator will be asked to attend a school detention, during which they will be given tasks that require them to reflect on their behaviour and the impact it has had on others.

Suspension

A fixed-term suspension will usually be issued for perpetrators who have repeatedly found to have bullied, or where there is a single, severe incident. The final decision on a suspension rests with the Principal.

Expulsion

In line with the School's policy on Discipline and Exclusions, the Principal reserves the right to issue expulsion to any proven perpetrator where the circumstances of the case (severity, duration, repeat offences) indicate that the perpetrator is likely to represent an ongoing risk to other pupils, and/or is highly unlikely to be able to alter their behaviour.

The Principal may also choose to issue sanctions to any pupils involved as *bystanders* in incidents of bullying, as they will have contravened the School's Behaviour Policy which requires pupils to take action wherever they see wrongdoing. This sanction will usually be some kind of detention, but the Principal may choose to select another sanction depending on the precise circumstances of the case.

Where the outcome of a case meets the threshold for suspension or expulsion, the Safeguarding Governor and Chair of Governors will be notified.

Expected follow up after a case of bullying

All pupils involved (target, bystanders, perpetrator(s)) will be given appropriate, individualised pastoral support which may include an offer to see the School counsellor. Reviews of their ongoing progress will be conducted by their Form Tutor, Head of Year, or another appropriate person. However, sensitivity will also be given to each pupil's right to move on from the incident, and re-establish their identity and reputation within the community.

Work may be done with the wider cohort to ensure the perpetrator is given an opportunity to move on from their mistake and have the opportunity to return to the community and progress successfully through their school career. For the target, efforts may be made to identify and encourage pupils who are well-placed to offer friendship and support.

In all cases of bullying, the Principal may choose to review the incident with other staff to identify whether there are any learning points that should inform future anti-bullying strategy and policy. Furthermore, the bullying log will be reviewed on a termly basis to ascertain any patterns or trends, the findings of which will inform pastoral strategy within the School. Findings in relation to all review work will be discussed with the Safeguarding Governor and reported to the board of governors at the next appropriate juncture; usually the Director of Pastoral Care or the Assistant Director of pastoral care will report to the termly Education and Pastoral Committee Meeting.

Complaints

We hope that there will not be a need to complain about the operation of our Anti-Bullying Policy, and that any difficulty can be sensitively and efficiently handled before it reaches that stage. However, the School's Complaints Procedure Policy is on our website and copies can be sent out on request.

Related documents and policies

Discipline and Exclusions Policy

ICT Acceptable Use Agreement

KCSIE 2024

Preventing and Tackling Bullying Advice for Principal teachers, staff and Governing bodies 2017

Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding Policy