

St. Lawrence College

Senior School

Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying Policy

Our school is one community, united in our respect for each other, tolerant of differences and proud of our diversity, honest and positive about our learning and behaviour every day.

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For the purpose of this policy, "bullying" includes "cyberbullying". This is in addition to the separate section of this policy referring to cyberbullying. Furthermore, this policy document sets out the policy for the senior school (Years 7-13) and the word "school" throughout this document refers to the "senior school". That said the junior school does not differ in any meaningful regard for the seriousness of the issue of bullying nor on the intolerance held for cases of bullying.

THE SCHOOL STATEMENT ON THE ISSUE OF BULLYING

St. Lawrence College acknowledges and believes that:

- Every pupil has the right to learn in a safe and caring environment
- Bullying destroys the safety of the school environment for a pupil
- Bullying is immensely damaging to any pupil's wellbeing
- Bullying can never be tolerated in our school
- St. Lawrence College will act swiftly, firmly, consistently and in line with this policy in order to deal appropriately with every incidence of bullying at school that it is made aware of

THE SCHOOL'S DUTY REGARDING ISSUES RELATED TO BULLYING

The school has a duty to ensure every pupil, parent and teacher has a clear understanding as to:

- What bullying is and the many ways it can manifest itself
- What behavioural traits from a pupil might indicate they are being bullied
- What procedures are in place within the school to deal with instances of bullying
- How the victims of bullying will be supported
- How bullies and idle spectators of bullying will be sanctioned
- How the school will promote the need for and expectation of an anti-bullying environment where pupils are safe to learn, play and go about their daily school experience free from fear of this unwanted menace

WHAT BULLYING IS AND HOW IT SHOWS ITSELF IN SCHOOLS

The school decides what constitutes bullying – not the pupil who bullies, nor the victim. The school will not accept from either party an explanation similar to:

- “it was just a joke”
- “I never meant any harm”
- “he/she enjoyed it – it was just a game”
- “we were only messing around – it was nothing serious”
- Or, on the part of the victim, “it was my own fault”, or “I kind of asked for it.”

Bullying is:

- deliberately aggressive
- persistent
- happens in an unequal power relationship
- and results in pain and distress which, in extreme cases, has even resulted in the target's suicide.

Bullying can be defined as the repeated intimidation of a pupil, intentionally carried out by a more powerful pupil or group of pupils in order to cause physical and/or emotional harm.

Bullying could be:

- emotional
excluding, tormenting, humiliating, using threatening gestures, giving unpleasant looks, being deliberately unfriendly

- verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing (whether orally or in writing)
- cyber electronically via phone calls, silent calls, text messages, email, websites, blogs, social networking websites, unwanted spreading of digital images and more
- physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- an invasion of privacy tampering with and/or damaging another pupil's property, theft, extortion
- racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- homophobic because of, or focusing on the issue of homosexuality
- against people with special educational needs and disabilities because of, or focusing on issues of mental or physical disability
- against people from a particular religion because of, or focusing on issues of religion
- against people from a particular culture because of, or focusing on issues of culture

It is important to respond to bullying because:

- bullying hurts; no one deserves to be a target of bullying
- everybody has the right to be treated with respect
- bullies need to learn different ways of behaving
- spectators / followers need to learn different ways of behaving

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF BEHAVIOUR FROM A CHILD THAT MIGHT INDICATE THEY ARE BEING BULLIED

The school recognises that not all instances of bullying are reported to teachers or parents. It is therefore essential that teachers at school and parents at home are alert to observing the characteristics of behaviour that might indicate a child is the victim of bullying. These characteristics will frequently be indicated by a change in a child's behaviour.

Specifically, the signs and symptoms may be described in one or more of the following ways:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes his/her 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 himself/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber-message is received

THE SCHOOL'S PROCEDURE WHEN IT SUSPECTS BULLYING IS ONGOING/HAS TAKEN PLACE

When a teacher suspects bullying/witnesses bullying/has a case of bullying reported to them

When a teacher or adult within the school suspects bullying is taking place or has a case of bullying reported to them, they should immediately alert the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the school either face-to-face, or by email. If this is reported face-to-face, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) will write down the details as described by the reporting adult so that an initial written record, dated, is created. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will then act from the following list of procedures as they feel appropriate and always promptly:

- Observe the reported bully and victim in lessons or common areas as appropriate
- Gather appropriate opinions from subject teachers/form teachers of the observed dynamics between these pupils
- Engineer an opportunity as early as possible to talk to the "alleged victim", assuring them of the support they will receive from that moment on
- Ask the pupil to write down their version of events in moderate details with names and places at school where they were bullied – ask them to sign and date the written account

- Arrange to see the “alleged bully” separately, informing them of accusations of bullying and ask them to write down their version of what has happened between themselves and the “alleged victim”, signing and dating their account
- Contact parents of both children explaining what has happened and, if necessary ask the parents to come at earliest opportunity to school to meet formally
- Explain to the “alleged bully” why their behaviour is unacceptable in any environment and specifically will not be tolerated at our school
- Explain to the “alleged bully” what sanctions they will experience as a consequence of their bullying behaviour (see section below, for sanctions)
- Seek to, if possible, enact a reconciliation between the pupils
- Make clear to the “alleged bully” expectations of future behaviour
- Periodically monitor the dynamic between these pupils through open discussion with the pupils (separately) and through silent observation of the pupils either personally or through the direction of an appropriate teacher
- When the Deputy Head (Pastoral) feels it is appropriate, she will complete a Bullying Incidence Report on the case, attaching any pupil statements. This report will remain in the senior school office in an appropriate file
- When the Deputy Head (Pastoral) feels it is appropriate, she will involve the Headmaster in any of the above stages

When a parent suspects their child is being bullied, is told by their child that they are being bullied or suspects that their child is acting as a bully

When a parent suspects that their child is being bullied (irrespective of whether the child has himself or herself revealed as much to the parent) or if a parent suspects that their child is bullying another child they are expected to act along the following procedural lines as far as possible:

- Contact the school immediately and ask to speak to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) of the senior school or to another senior teacher/school leader.
- If appropriate, ask their child to write down all relevant information regarding the case, to sign and date it and to hand it (via child or parent) to the Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- In the case of cyberbullying, to print-off the offending comments/photographs from social media sites in order to maintain a hard copy of the offense in case it is deleted afterwards. The parent should date the hard copy at the time of printing.
- From the moment the school is made aware by a parent of the report of potential bullying taking place, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) will act according to the procedures detailed above.
- In any case of bullying, pupils who were aware of the ongoing bullying and did not report the incident(s) to a teacher or school leader will be treated as being complicit with the bully and will also be dealt with according to the above procedures and will be subject to the same scale of possible sanctions according to the decision of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Headmaster.
- If the pupil accused of bullying persists in denying to have used bullying behaviour, the school will still pursue this policy if it is satisfied that the alleged bullying did happen. The pupil and his/her parents will have the right to complain to the school and it will be the

duty of the school to explain to the said pupil and parents why they believe, on balance of probability, that the events did happen.

THE SCHOOL'S SPECIFIC STANCE ON CYBERBULLYING.

Given the particular nature of this form of bullying and the fact that the victim and bully do not have to be in close proximity for the bullying to take place, tackling cyberbullying can present particular challenges:

- its scale and the scope of its impact can be greater
- the act of bullying can be remote given that its perpetrator and victim are physically separate
- the cyberbully has a long reach and can easily carry out 'cyberstalking'
- the bullying can be more intense – 24/7
- defamatory material can be easily published to a wide audience

The particular forms of cyberbullying can include any of the following:

- harassment or cyberstalking
- defamation or vilification (intentional false communication, either written or spoken, that harms a person's reputation)
- impersonation
- unauthorised publication of private images
- manipulation
- peer rejection

Technology allows the user to bully anonymously or from an unknown location, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Cyberbullying leaves no physical scars so it is less evident to a parent or teacher, but it is nevertheless highly intrusive and the hurt it causes can be very severe.

There are many different methods by which cyberbullying takes place.

The following list is not exhaustive; the development of information and communications technology is so rapid that new styles of cyberbullying are emerging constantly. Moreover, young people are particularly adept at adapting to new technology.

- **Text messages:** messages that are threatening or cause discomfort, including 'bluejacking' (the sending of messages over short distances using Bluetooth wireless technology).
- **Picture/video clips via mobile phone cameras:** images sent to others to make the victim feel threatened or embarrassed.
- **Mobile phone calls:** silent calls or abusive messages; stealing a victim's phone and using it to harass others, making them believe that the victim is responsible.
- **Emails:** threatening or bullying emails, often sent using a pseudonym or somebody else's name.

- **Chatroom bullying:** menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chatroom.
- **Instant messaging (IM):** unpleasant messages sent while children conduct real time conversations online using services such as MSN or Yahoo Chat.
- **Bullying via websites:** use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites, online personal 'own web space' and social media such as Instagram.

THE SCHOOL'S EXPECTATIONS IN RESPECT OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying, even more so than other forms of bullying, throws up many challenges for schools in a world which is increasingly digital. The school has clear expectations in respect of the use of information and communication technology and, where possible, will tackle incidents of bullying and cyberbullying in order to prevent them escalating and causing serious damage to individuals, the broader school community and the school's reputation. It must, however, be acknowledged that much cyberbullying takes place beyond the confines of the school and over which the school has no control or jurisdiction.

While the school will act to its full power and on every occasion it can to prevent cyberbullying and to support pupils who are victims of cyberbullying, parents must decide whether to contact the appropriate authorities when cyberbullying occurs.

All pupils are expected to adhere to the following expectations:

- Pupils must not behave in a way or use information and communication technology, both inside and outside school, to engage in any activity that is intended deliberately to upset another person, to bully or defame.
- Pupils should not participate in activities as 'bystanders' or accessories such as taking part in online polls or discussion groups where individuals are the object of defamation or vilification.
- Any pupil engaging in bullying or cyberbullying in any of its forms, whether or not the behaviour takes place on the school premises, can expect to be subject to the school's full range of disciplinary sanctions.
- All pupils are expected to collaborate fully in any enquiry the school may need to conduct regarding bullying and/or cyberbullying. This may relate to a pupil's use of ICT both in and out of school where there is reasonable belief that cyberbullying has taken place and that this will assist in bringing an end to such activity.

THE SCHOOL'S SANCTIONS WHEN A CASE OF BULLYING IS CONFIRMED

Bullying deserves to be punished through disciplinary sanctions in addition to support being offered to the bully who must be expected to have it demonstrated to him/her why their actions are intolerable. Sanctions can only be decided upon on a case-by-case approach.

More leniency will likely be shown when the offence is out-of-character, when it is a single reported offence, when it is the first instance of such behaviour, when genuine remorse is considered to be apparent, when full apologies have been made and accepted.

Pupils who have bullied will be subject to the following disciplinary sanctions as felt appropriate by the school leaders who have investigated the case in question. The following sanctions are listed in order of rising severity:

- Lunchtime Detention(s)
- Extended writing on a relevant theme
- Community Service(s) at lunchtime
- Internal isolation from lessons and break times within the school for a specific time period
- Suspension from school for a specific number of days
- Permanent exclusion from the school

THE PROMOTION OF THE EXPECTATION OF A BULLY-FREE SCHOOL

It is the duty of the school to instil consistently and regularly the expectation among the pupil body and staff body of a bully-free school. This will be done in variety of ways, some of which are employed more regularly than others. These methods will include:

- Publication of the school rules of Ready, Respect and Safe in every classroom.
- A list of what qualifies as bullying behaviour in every classroom.
- Form teacher-led discussion in form class.
- Whole school assemblies.
- Permanent anti-bullying wall displays as produced in Science lessons by lower senior school grades as part of the science curriculum.
- Promotion of the “need to speak up and not put up” through professionally designed wall displays.
- Policy being reviewed and discussed at staff meetings and Senior Management Committee meetings.
- Promotion of outside specialist helplines and sources of further education on the issue of bullying.
- Guest speakers for pupil body from local and national organisations.

It is the duty of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the Headmaster to ensure the ongoing promotion of these methods to promote a bully-free school at St. Lawrence College.