COUNTERING-BULLYING POLICY

BACKGROUND

At Woldingham our Code of Conduct is underpinned by the Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart. We live together in a community which is based on:

* Respect for Self
* Respect for Others
* Respect for the Environment
* Responsibility for our Actions

We are very fortunate at Woldingham that Bullying is not a wide-spread issue. However, we would all be naïve to think that it might not exist in some form. More recently, as mobile phone and internet use has become so much a part of our lives, so has the misuse of this technology and cyberbullying is an unpleasant form of bullying, particularly out of school. Bullying behaviour is wholly and always unacceptable.   We aim to create an environment where individuals can grow and flourish without fear. Each student has the right to be happy and safe in school and to be protected when she is feeling vulnerable. We have a duty of care to those in our charge and all members of our community need to be alert to signs of bullying behaviour.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally causes harm, either physical or emotional. This behaviour may be towards another individual or group which makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Bullying behaviour is not the instant repercussions when girls fall in or out of friends with each other.   However, if as a result of a friendship issue any student feels that they are being deliberately and repeatedly 'picked on' or excluded, then that may be perceived as bullying behaviour. Bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves.

It must be remembered that people react differently and it is often very difficult to tell if someone is upset or hurt. No one should underestimate the serious consequences, including psychological damage and even suicide, that bullying behaviour may cause.

(please see also **DfE Preventing and tackling bullying Oct 2014)**
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444862/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

BULLYING BEHAVIOUR INCLUDES:

- **Physical:** hitting; kicking; taking or hiding belongings, including money.

- **Verbal:** name calling; teasing; insulting; writing unkind notes; inappropriate text messaging and emails; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet (cyberbullying).

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, looks, spreading hurtful and/or untruthful rumours.

Types of bullying include:

- bullying related to race, religion or culture;
- bullying related to SEN or disabilities;
- bullying related to appearance or health conditions;
- bullying related to sexual orientation or gender identity;
- bullying related to home circumstances for example a child who is adopted or has caring responsibilities;
- sexist or sexual bullying;
- bullying of a young person who is at risk due to other vulnerabilities.

Bullying can take place:

- between pupils;
- between pupils and staff;
- by individuals or groups;
- face to face, indirectly or using a range of cyberbullying methods.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is 'the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else'. The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school.

Examples may include, but are not restricted to:

- pupils who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a pupil;
- pupils sending insulting and vicious text messages;
- pupils posting fake and/or offensive photographs of the victim via a social networking site, email or mobile phone;
- pupils hacking into social networking sites and removing and circulating material which may be embarrassing or personal.

Cyberbullying differs from "ordinary" bullying and can have a far greater impact because of a number of factors including:

- invasion of personal space – the victim can never escape it;
- the potential anonymity of the bully;

- The ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly over a long period of time;
- Other pupils, who may not normally become involved in bullying behaviour, may be drawn in unwittingly by, for example, forwarding or circulating an image or message.

Of course, everyone is entitled to their private life and to freedom of expression but students must consider whether the material they are sending, or forwarding, may cause upset.

AIMS

- To create a happy, safe and secure environment for all.
- To promote behaviour based on respect for self and others and responsibility for our actions.
- To challenge bullying behaviour, either directly or by dealing with bullying behaviour in the curriculum, as a PHSEE topic, and by using teaching methods that encourage cooperation and emotional health in and out of the classroom.
- To encourage girls to discuss areas of concern with staff to enable potentially 'bullying' situations to be averted and minimised.
- To provide support for the victim and perpetrator of bullying behaviour.

PROCEDURES

- Students will be aware of acceptable behaviour through the Behaviour policy. Awareness of bullying issues will be raised through Thrive (PSHEE), assemblies etc.
- Students are encouraged to avoid rumour and gossip which may exacerbate a situation.
- Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour to academic or pastoral staff, Buddies, Personal Tutors, Chaplain or Counsellor.
- All students will be made aware of their role in countering bullying behaviour, including the significance of the role of bystanders.
- Staff will be alert to signs of bullying behaviour. More detailed guidance on recognising signs are available in the staff handbook. This will be brought to the attention of all staff at the start of each academic year as part of the annual Safeguarding Children update, or on Induction for staff joining mid-year.
- All students and staff agree to the ICT and Mobile communications Acceptable Use Policies. Any breach of these guidelines will be sanctioned, as appropriate.

If bullying behaviour is observed staff will: -

- Talk to the individuals concerned to ascertain the true picture.
- Get pupils to write down the incidences of bullying behaviour and pass on their statements to the Head of Year/Housemistress.
- Encourage pupils to tell about their bullying experiences and to know that they will be listened to and believed and that action will be swiftly but sensitively taken.
- Discuss the issues with the alleged perpetrator and reassure the victim. Further action will be taken, as required, and support given to all concerned.
- If necessary and appropriate, staff will facilitate reconciliation meetings between the students involved. The perpetrator will be held to account for their behaviour and may be sanctioned. As appropriate, they may be subject to a support/learning programme to help them face up to the harm they have caused. The perpetrator may be in need of help themselves.

- For more severe or persistent cases of bullying behaviour, the perpetrator/s will be sanctioned; suspension or even exclusion may be considered.
- The Head of Year will inform parents of both parties of our concerns.
- All documentation must be clear and factual. Records of incidents must be kept in the Year Records central register and passed on to the Deputy Head Pastoral to enable patterns to be identified and for any appropriate action to be taken.
- The threshold for reporting to external agencies is not fixed and will depend on the individual case. If necessary and appropriate, the Police will be consulted on any matters relating to bullying behaviour or Cyberbullying where the laws of harassment or threatening behaviour have been breached. Referral may also be made to the relevant local MASH if a young person is at risk of significant harm.

Cyberbullying
- The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones. Staff will follow the DfE guidance on 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation' (see link below).

Links to further advice and guidance:

DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation Feb 2014
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/554415/searching_screening_confiscation_advice_Sept_2016.pdf