

A CHECK LIST FOR INVESTIGATING A POSSIBLE CASE OF BULLYING

In essence the term 'bullying' is most properly used when referring to repeated incidents. If the word 'bullying' is used then the anti-bullying policy MUST be activated by the member of staff concerned. Certain circumstances may be better addressed, at least initially, by using terms such as 'unkind', 'unthinking', 'unpleasant', 'insulting', etc.

Although a pupil's House Master/Mistress or, in the case of Lower School Day pupils, the Head of Lower School is the first point of referral for all pastoral matters, all staff have an obligation to act immediately when 'bullying' is suspected or reported. Members of staff should respond personally by carrying out the initial investigation, and inform the DHP through the Head of Sixth Form, Middle School and Lower School as soon as possible. House Master/Mistress and Tutor of the pupils concerned should also be informed.

If, after investigations by the member of staff concerned, it is felt that 'bullying' may indeed be the appropriate terminology the requirements of the anti-bullying policy must be followed.

COMMENT		Date done
1.	The member of CR is to inform the Tutor, HsM, HoLMS and DHP. (via the White Slip system – ensuring that it is flagged that the situation is probably 'bullying'.)	
2.	The HsM (in LS for HsM read Tutor) and HoLMS to take over the investigation.	
3.	Parents of the victim should be contacted by the HsM to explain the position.	
4.	The member of staff to pass on any evidence or statements etc.	
5.	HsM and Holms to conduct interviews (witnessed and documented) with the victim . (please see notes attached re possible best order of interviewing those involved)	
6.	HsM and Holms to conduct interviews (witnessed and documented) with any witnesses .	
7.	HsM and Holms to conduct interviews (witnessed and documented) with the suspected bully or bullies .	
8.	The victim should be spoken to again now that a clearer picture has been obtained.	
9.	Parents of the victim to be kept informed. (Please note the dates / times as appropriate.)	
7.	Parents of the suspected bully to be informed by his or her HsM that an investigation is taking / has taken place.	
8.	A 'case conference' to be held with the DHP to decide upon the appropriate sanction / course of action should any be required.	
9.	All pupils and parents informed of outcome by their HsM unless agreed otherwise. (In person or by phone – not email.)	
10.	FOLLOW-UP. A week or so after deciding a course of action it is important to ask the victim whether the problem has been dealt with or whether there have been any consequences or re-occurrences.	
11.	Further follow up if thought necessary. It may also be useful to do a further follow-up in about a month's time. If there have been reprisals then the Deputy Head must be informed immediately for further action.	
12.	The following should be attached to this form and copies placed in the files of both the victim and the 'bully': all statements from victim, witnesses, possible bully.	
13.	The following should be attached to this form and copies placed in the files of both the victim and the 'bully': statement of outcome and any action taken.	
14.	The following should be attached to this form and copies placed in the files of both the victim and the 'bully': record of communication with parents of any parties involved.	

Notes for guidance

Time requirements

Dealing with a situation involving bullying takes time – there are few instant solutions. It is important that if there is likely to be a delay before seeing a suspected victim then he or she must:

- a. Be reassured that the matter will be dealt with.
- b. Be notified of a time when he or she can be spoken to.

If a pupil is distressed he or she must be allowed to miss lessons until things have settled down.

Interviews

If the problem is reported by the victim he or she must be spoken to first; it is essential that he or she be reassured of the school's intention to deal with the problem.

If attention has been drawn by someone else, it is recommended that the following procedures be used:

1. As much information as possible be gathered from witnesses.
2. The suspected bully be interviewed after as much corroborated evidence as possible has been gathered.

The victim should be spoken to at this final stage now that a fairly clear picture has been obtained.

Interviews need to be conducted in a calm, professional and non-confrontational manner with all those involved being allowed to tell their story in their own way. There should be no need to accuse, threaten, issue warnings or ask leading questions no matter how outrageous the behaviour being described.

It is important that:

- The victim feels that he or she is receiving support
- The witness feels comfortable and safe knowing that the school will act upon any actual or threat of reprisal.
- The suspected bully or bullies feel that they are getting a fair hearing.
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Documentation

A summary should be made of what has been said by all those involved. Judgement and discretion must be used to decide the extent of documentation necessary: it should be remembered that writing statements down can increase anxiety amongst pupils and therefore prevent the full truth from coming out.

The following need to be included in the files of both bully and victim:

1. The pertinent information from the interviews.
2. A statement of action taken and subsequent follow up.
3. Parental correspondence / communications.

Action

The victim will be told what action will be taken to relieve the situation. The bully will be spoken to.

The bully needs to understand how his or her actions are affecting the victim, and if this is acknowledged, he or she can be encouraged to modify his or her behaviour including, where necessary, access to counselling. The bully will also be required to make appropriate reparation.

If it is obvious that little progress is being made in this direction, or the situation is felt to be serious enough to warrant it, then a more direct approach involving sanctions will have to be adopted.

Sanctions

Possible sanctions include:

- A verbal warning as to his or her further conduct, and that this warning is being recorded in the pupil's file.
- A letter of apology from the bully to the victim.
- A letter of apology from the bully to the parents of the victim with a copy to the parents of the bully.
- Withdrawal of House privileges.
- Withdrawal of School privileges.
- Suitable community service either in the House or School.
- Referral to the DHP and then the Headmaster, if the case is extreme, or the bully persistently re-offends.

As with all offences, the Headmaster has at his discretion the options of rustication, suspension and, ultimately, expulsion.