



STUDENT ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the College's commitment to the prevention and eradication of bullying among its students, and to detail what actions the College will take in pursuit of these goals.

The College is committed to ensuring that all students who may be subject to disciplinary processes are dealt with in a fair and equitable manner, whilst taking into account the individual circumstances of each student involved.

The Student Disciplinary Procedure will be used to support the Bullying Policy to ensure that there is an environment free of bullying and harassment.

2. Background

One of the College's key values states: 'Within our college community we all treat each other with trust, openness, care and consideration'. In line with this ongoing commitment, the College considers that all students have the right to be treated with dignity and respect and will not tolerate any form of bullying.

3. Consultation with learners

As part of the process of developing this policy, regular consultation occurs throughout the academic year (SPOC, Duty Management Surveys, Online Questionnaires/Polls, Tutor Rep Meetings etc with students. Many of the suggestions made by them as to how bullying should be dealt with have been incorporated into this policy.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all College students (including apprentices and those studying at sub-contracted provision) at their place of study, in College grounds, on College transport, on off-site visits and at other locations while undertaking work placement either physical or online. The College is not responsible for bullying taking place at other locations; however, support is available to students involved in bullying incidents. If serious bullying should occur off site we would encourage learners to involve the Police and keep the College involved.

The policy also applies to all staff who have an active role to play to promote an inclusive culture, can identify the signs of bullying and follow the actions that need to be undertaken if bullying is suspected.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19, pandemic careful consideration and training has taken place to ensure that all staff are able to facilitate remote learning, whilst still maintaining high standards and expectations. Any concerns that staff may have, either online or in the classroom, are reported to the Programme Management team who would investigate and deal with accordingly.

5. Related documentation

- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Student Disciplinary Procedure

- Health & Safety Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Guidance for working safely online with students

6. What is bullying?

- 6.1 Bullying is defined as any unsolicited or unwelcome act by an individual or a group of people which hurts, humiliates, intimidates or undermines the self-esteem and confidence of an individual or group of people. Bullying can occur face to face, via e-mail, text, social networking sites, telephone, in writing, in graffiti/posters, display or circulation of offensive materials/books or via a third party.
- 6.2 Examples of bullying behaviour include:
- **emotional** – ignoring, excluding, tormenting, insensitive jokes or pranks, damaging property belonging to another person, demanding money or property
 - **physical** - pushing, kicking, prodding, hitting, punching or any other use of physical contact
 - **sexual** - unwanted physical contact or inappropriate sexual comments
 - **discriminatory** – bullying behaviour because of, or focusing on, diversity issues such as race, sexuality, disability, age, transgender identity, religion, gender. This may include inappropriate language or taunts, gestures, graffiti etc.
 - **verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making derogatory remarks, intrusive questioning or goading
 - **non-verbal** - hand gestures or text messages
 - **cyber** - all areas of the internet such as email, gaming and internet chat room misuse, threats via messaging and misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera and video facilities
 - **harassment** - harassment may be directed at an individual or a group. Under the Equality Act 2010, harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.”
 - **Child on child abuse** – one child is abusing another child.
- 6.3 People are often bullied because of their (but not limited to)
- appearance
 - race or religion
 - gender
 - transgender identity
 - sexuality
 - disability
 - economic background
 - hobbies and interests
 - age
 - poor mental health e.g. low self-esteem, anxiety

7. Hate Crime

- 7.1 Hate crime is any offence committed against a person or property which is motivated by the offender’s hatred of people because they are seen as being different. People do not have to be a member of a minority community to be a victim of hate crime. Any incident where an individual or group of people are targeted because they are believed to be of a different race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, gender identity or have a disability can be reported as a hate crime.
- 7.2 The College has agreed, in partnership with Cheshire Constabulary, to become a reporting centre for Hate Crimes. Any staff or student with a concern regarding a hate crime, can report this to a member of Programme Management, who will pass the details on to the police on their behalf. These reports can be made anonymously, in which case the police will monitor the situation in the area where the incident took place. Alternatively, if the individual is happy to give their personal details then the matter will be investigated.

8. Signs and symptoms of bullying

8.1 These could include:

- not wanting to go to College or travel on the usual mode of transport
- declining attendance at College
- changing usual routines
- becoming anxious or withdrawn
- attempting or threatening suicide
- Self-harming
- crying without any obvious cause
- feeling ill/feigning illness
- work deteriorating at College
- possessions “going missing”
- becoming aggressive or unreasonable
- bullying other students or siblings
- displaying increasing lack of confidence and self-esteem
- asking for, or stealing money
- having unexplained cuts or bruises
- being excluded from group activities by other students
- being nervous or anxious when a cyber-message is received
- Problems with eating and/or sleeping

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

8.2 All members of staff have a responsibility to ensure that suspected bullying is dealt with fairly and consistently.

9. Recording incidents

9.1 The member of staff who becomes aware of possible bullying should pass the information to the Head of School for the curriculum area where the student is based and the relevant Programme Manager or member of their team. All reports of bullying need to be recorded via the wellbeing or safeguarding referral process to ensure that it is fully investigated.

9.2 The student reporting bullying should be encouraged to make a statement to include the following:

- date(s), times(s) and place(s) of incident(s)
- names of any witnesses
- what actually happened
- how it made them feel
- any action taken e.g. reported to a member of staff
- original copies of any correspondence or written material connected with the issue.
- where cyber bullying has taken place, printouts should be obtained wherever possible (e.g. screenshots), or the member of staff taking the statement should sign it to say they have seen any text messages/call records on the learner’s mobile phone.

9.3 Where a student requests or needs it (e.g. because they have learning difficulties, or their first language is not English), the member of staff can record this for them, taking care to ensure the student’s words are accurately recorded.

9.4 This information will inform the mediation process if it is decided to embark on this. It will also be used as evidence in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

9.5 All reported incidents will be recorded centrally by Programme Management and will be monitored. If necessary, the College safeguarding team will be informed and relevant action will be taken to safeguard those involved. Those investigating the bullying allegation will be mindful of the student’s wishes to ensure that they are not taking steps that the student

does not want the college to take i.e., speaking to the potential perpetrator unless deemed as a safeguarding concern.

- 9.6 The Police may need to be informed if there is evidence that a crime has taken place e.g. up skirting, assault. The student may wish to report this crime with the support of the Programme Management team and/or parent/carer.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 As a general guideline, members of staff will respect confidentiality of the individual as long as it is consistent with the College Safeguarding Policies.
- 10.2 However, where confidentiality has to be broken, then the complainant should be involved in that process. In some cases, the individual may just want to talk about the bullying but may not wish to take matters further. In this case a strategy should be developed with the student to address the situation.

11. Initial meeting and investigation

- 11.1 The Head of School, Programme Manager or Pastoral Support Worker dealing with the allegation of bullying should set up an initial informal interview with both parties separately and explain the College policy on bullying. The victim should be enabled to discuss the incident and all possible courses of action e.g. empowering the victim to address the issue with the perpetrator, mediation or invoking the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 11.2 Counselling can be offered to both parties. Appointments can be made in Programme Management.
- 11.3 If the student is a victim of hate crime, he/she should be offered the opportunity to report this (see above).
- 11.4 The Student Disciplinary Policy may be invoked at this point in the case of alleged bullying. Where Safeguarding concerns are raised, **any** student involved may be suspended as a neutral act until the investigation is concluded.

12. Mediation

The mediator would ordinarily be the learner's Personal Tutor but may also be a member of the Health and wellbeing team or a Pastoral Support Worker. The mediator can help participants to resolve their dispute and to co-exist at the College, through using the following procedure:

- both parties define the problem as they see it, individually with the mediator
- the impartial mediator identifies the key issues for both parties - these are listed on paper
- at the end of the individual session with the mediator, the mediator ascertains whether or not the parties are willing to meet together, along with the mediator. This is the point when real mediation can take place, if both parties are willing to try, to move towards reconciliation

- at the joint meeting, led by the mediator, both parties should be encouraged to speak and express their opinion with only one person allowed to speak at a time. The mediator needs to firmly control the meeting to ensure it does not turn into a battle
- the mediator sets up a plan of action which will satisfy each party and obtains agreement on these
- a follow up meeting is agreed and the situation monitored at agreed intervals

13. Student Disciplinary Procedure

The Student Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked in the case of particularly serious incidents of bullying or, following mediation where no satisfactory plan of action can be formulated or if the perpetrator continues his/her bullying behaviour.

14. Alleged bullying of a student by a member of staff

14.1 A student who feels that she/he is being bullied by a member of staff should discuss the issue with their Personal Tutor, Head of School or Programme Manager as appropriate.

14.2 If it is not possible to resolve the issue, the student can make a formal complaint in writing. This should be handed in to the Programme Office, or directly to the Principalship. The complaint will be investigated in accordance with the College's Complaints Procedure.

15. Supporting the bully

15.1 There is often an underlying reason for bullying behaviour. A bully can be very insecure and may

- have been bullied themselves
- be afraid of becoming a victim to someone else
- want to be accepted into a certain group
- want to be well known for their physical status
- have low levels of self-esteem and self confidence
- Be a victim of criminal and/or sexual exploitation

15.2 Support may be required to enable a bully to change his/her behaviour. Breaking patterns of behaviour and expectations of other students and staff may make him/her a victim to others. Bullies wishing to reform should be encouraged to seek help and advice from a Health and Wellbeing Officer, Pastoral Support Worker or their Personal Tutor, or be put in touch with external support organisations such as Childline.

15.3 A bully should be encouraged to change their behaviour and should not be intimidated, humiliated or made to feel uncomfortable when seeking support